

“What It Means to Be a Highly Sensitive Person (HSP)”

By UnconventionallyWise.com

High sensitivity affects 15 to 20 percent of the population and is known as sensory processing sensitivity. It's not a disorder or something to fix, just a different way the nervous system works.

Highly Sensitive People (HSPs) have nervous systems that react more intensely to both external and internal input. This sensitivity can lead to overstimulation but also allows for deep perception, emotional insight and appreciation of beauty.

HSPs are often misunderstood as shy or fragile, but the trait is distinct from conditions like ADHD or autism. It is a natural, non-pathological difference that deserves recognition and respect.

Common signs of being a Highly Sensitive Person include:

- Becoming overwhelmed in chaotic environments
- Struggling with time pressure and overstimulation
- Requiring more recovery time after social interactions
- Needing smaller doses of medications, supplements, or stimulants
- Having heightened sensitivity to temperature, smells, loud noises or light
- Being bothered by subtle cues others miss (tone of voice, body language, mood shifts)
- Feeling emotions deeply, whether joy, sadness, beauty, or discomfort
- Becoming unsettled after watching violent, graphic, or emotionally intense media

Daily Strategies to Support Sensitivity

Nervous System Care

- Prioritize rest and recovery
- Practice gentle daily movement like walking, yoga, or stretching
- Avoid high-intensity workouts that require long recovery time
- Sleep in a dark, cool, quiet room and respect your body's natural rhythm

Sensory Environment

- Designate a quiet decompression zone at home
- Carry a comfort kit with snacks, water and anything else you deem a necessity
- Choose clothing with comfortable fabrics and fit and avoid harsh textures
- Avoid strong scents, including cleaning supplies and perfumes
- Limit exposure to violent media, disturbing news or loud events
- Curate your workspace to reduce interruptions and visual clutter

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Emotional Boundaries

- Learn to say no without guilt
- Communicate simply such as saying “I need some quiet time”
- Avoid absorbing others’ emotions, support without carrying
- Journal or talk things out instead of ruminating

Planning and Energy Management

- Don’t over-schedule, space things out and allow downtime between activities
- Plan ahead for events that may drain your energy, leave early, and rest afterward
- Accept that you may need longer recovery time than others
- Create and stick to routines they build nervous system resilience

Mindset and Self-Acceptance

- Remind yourself sensitivity is not a flaw
- Release past shame about being too much or too sensitive
- Don’t force yourself to fit in

Relationships and Communication

- Explain your needs to loved ones
- Remember that not everyone will understand and that’s okay
- Seek relationships where you feel supported, not drained or thrown off balance

Tip: For more insights, check out the book *The Highly Sensitive Person* by Dr. Elaine Aron.

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