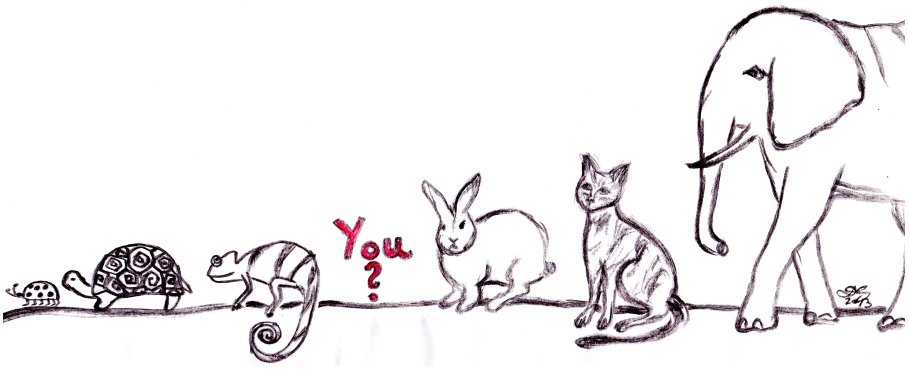
How to deal with being more sensitive than others



You've felt "different" all your life and you remember being told off for being "too sensitive" by well-meaning friends and family. Now, you hear that some people are *naturally* more sensitive than others. But what to do with this revelation?

Depending on how you came about the discovery, you may be confused, intrigued or... depressed. “You mean this thing is... permanent??? Heeelp!!!”

A completely understandable reaction. You and me grew up in the world of unacknowledged bias for “bigger”, “brighter” and “louder”. Owning sensitivity as your nature seems like a rough deal in this context. It can be a difficult thing to want.

Please, let me be something else

Ten years ago I witnessed the wish to be “something else” on a workshop discerning one’s colour and style “personality”. Clothes, not whole life was at stake there, but even so, the participants were full of dreams and dread around the possible results.

I had signed up for the workshop because I had been struck by an unusually natural beauty and congruence emanating from the several people I knew who had.

Yet you wonder about potential self-discovery: “Will life get better or ... boxed in?”

Liberation and the role of labels

You may well be uneasy contemplating the label of *sensitivity*. The word can sound weak if not negative and aren’t we more than labels and boxes people try to put us in anyway?

Similarly, when the clothing “verdicts” came, on my course back then, people needed to process their reactions. Like wishing to be the style a friend was, instead. Or hoping to be the style that was in vogue at the time. I was lucky: felt intrigued about the support.

Because I wanted the ease of deeper understanding (in that case of beauty) but struggled with it by myself. I brought along my whole wardrobe to get help sorting out what was or wasn’t “me”. Shopping and dressing was about to become fun.

And it has! It also opened my eyes to the value of operating within one’s nature-given “specs” (the course was based on body parts length, shapes, pigments and proportions).

The wise woman who taught us suggested we explore the difference between being limited by a label and the liberation that comes from understanding what works for you. You need to be gentle and compassionate as you start relating to yourself anew!

What is your type of sensitivity?

Since I've had mainly joy with clothing ever since my course, I'm inspired to bring the power of knowing your "parameters" across into the area of sensitivity.

Like with the tapestry of colours and styles, there is a *spectrum* of sensitivity and *everyone* is somewhere on it. Knowing HOW you are sensitive is powerful because it gives you the guidance to find daily choices and alternatives that will work well for you.

In turn, as Neil Crofts said so succinctly, "finding alternatives that work for you will mean that you no longer have to do things that create a tension for you."

Being *highly* sensitive is a natural and now scientifically documented variety of human psyche that has an implication on the levels of stimulation that are optimal for you.

You won't be surprised to hear that only a minority of 15-20% are at the more sensitive end of the spectrum. It's why sensitive "norms" are not much known or understood yet!

Some sensitives tend to overwhelm, some to frustration, yet others pendulum between both. It's not a question of "yes or no?". Sensitivity is a *journey* in self-understanding!

Key questions to ask yourself to start enjoying sensitivity

When I finished my colour and style workshop, I came home with booklets, diagrams and role models to assist me on the journey of relating to myself.

There's nowhere near the complexity of resources for high sensitivity as yet. But I am working on it and can start you off with some key questions to ask yourself about it.

1. How do I feel about being more sensitive than others? Paradox: To be able to integrate something, you first need to admit and allow uncomfortable feelings about it.

Example: When I have vulnerable feelings to engage with, I look for a "container" to help me feel safe with them, e.g. a journal or a friend who'll listen without comments.

2. What beautiful sides of sensitivity are there? What do I most like about myself or about a sensitive person I like and admire? How can I be lifted by the goodness of it?

Example: I use images of gentleness, quotes, ideas and stories about breakthroughs.

3. What are the aspects of sensitivity I struggle with and could do with support for?

Example: Self-acceptance? Overwhelm? Frustration? Being real in relationships?

4. What can I do to increase my understanding of my type of sensitivity and of better alternatives for my health, work and relationships?

Hint: Stay tuned for future editions of my articles. Also, research the options available via the internet (e.g. self-test by E. Aron on www.hsperson.com). Go well, choose well.



I help naturally highly sensitive people to turn around a personal challenge with a loved one, with someone at work or with yourself. Bristol & Bath, UK and online. You can get more articles like this one via:

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