What is a Highly Sensitive Child?
We must first understand the research done by Dr. Elaine Aron, who first identified the concept and coined the title, “HSP,” back in 1991.

Highly Sensitive Person

* Not “on the spectrum” (ASD, SPD, or NVLD).
* Not in the DSM-5 (or any other medical diagnosis).
* Not a personality disorder or disease; not a weakness or necessarily shyness.
* Not identified through any formal assessments/evaluations.
* Also called SPS (Sensory Processing Sensitivity).
* Studies in 2015 have now linked this trait to a specific gene variant (ADRA2B) and differences in neurotransmitters affecting the amygdala, brain function and neuronal sensitization.
* HSPs are known to experience overstimulation from even slight stimuli, demonstrate a greater depth of cognitive processing, and have access to an intense range of emotions.
HSPs are 12-15% of Every Population

- HSP is a genetic trait we are born with and does not “go away.”
- HSP has been formally studied for over 25 years; it has biological, neurological, and psychological angles.
- This trait is characterized by deep processing external cues, and has been documented in over ten species.
- Often, HSPs are misdiagnosed with other conditions and disorders.
- “If you've met one HSP you've met one HSP.”
- HSPs can be introverted or extroverted, as well as high-sensation seeking and from a variety of cultures/countries.
- HSCs often feel “fatally flawed,” which can cause a myriad of issues and obstacles, both in childhood and later in adulthood.

Let’s take a moment to review the self-assessment, developed by Dr. Elaine Aron…

Here’s the online link:

http://hsperson.com/test/highly-sensitive-test/

“HSPs seem to have such a doorway…We have more vivid dreams, more unusual states of consciousness, and more difficulty denying and repressing what’s been put out of consciousness.”

(Aron 1999).

Can we see as ETs why this trait might be especially tricky for children in the context of learning?
“Although HSCs notice more, they do not necessarily have better eyes, ears, sense of smell, or taste buds—although some do report having at least one sense that is very keen. **Mainly, their brains process information more thoroughly.** This processing is not just in the brain, however, since highly sensitive people, children or adults, have faster reflexes (a reaction usually from the spinal cord); are more affected by pain, medications, and stimulants; and have more reactive immune systems and more allergies. In a sense, their entire body is designed to detect and understand precisely whatever comes in” (Aron 2002).

**Misdiagnosis of HSCs**

**Desire for a Label ~ vs. Understanding a Nuanced Trait**

* Often in gifted populations.
* Debrowski’s Theory of Overexcitabilities, or “super-sensitivities” in five domains: psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginational, and emotional.
* A tendency towards creativity and inner conflict (both perfectionism and feelings of existentialism) can lead to bouts of both elation and depression.

“Positive developmental potential includes genetic traits…developmental instincts, a strong sense of needing to be oneself, special abilities and talents, and over-excitability—to name a few…” (xiii).

**Dabrowski’s Theory of Positive Disintegration**

“In education, the theory emphasizes the importance of developmental crises and of symptoms of positive disintegration. It provides a new view of conduct difficulties, school phobias, dyslexia, and nervousness in children. An awareness of the effect of multilevel disintegration on the inner psychic milieu is of basic importance for educators” (y).
A Definition of Giftedness: Who you ARE, not what you do...

“Giftedness is a greater awareness, a greater sensitivity, and a greater ability to understand and transform perceptions into intellectual and emotional experiences.”

- Annemarie Roeper
SENG 2016 National Conference, Williamsburg, VA

Similarities & Differences between ADHD & Gifted Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADHD</th>
<th>Gifted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poorly sustained attention in social situations</td>
<td>Poor attention, boredom, daydreaming in specific situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diminished persistence on tasks not having immediate gratification</td>
<td>Low tolerance for persistence on tasks that seem irrelevant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impulsivity, poor ability to delay gratification</td>
<td>Judgment lies behind intellect</td>
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<td>Impaired adherence to commands to regulate or inhibit behavior in social contexts</td>
<td>Intensity may lead to power struggles with authorities</td>
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<tr>
<td>More active &amp; restless than normal children</td>
<td>High activity level may need less sleep, psychomotor OE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty adhering to rules and regulations</td>
<td>Questions rules, customs, and traditions</td>
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Ruling Warrior-Kings (“Other 80%”)… midst Priestly Advisors, Artists, Creatives, Innovators

“The truly creative mind in any field is no more than this: A human creature born abnormally, inhumanly sensitive. To him... a touch is a blow, a sound is a noise, a misfortune is a tragedy, a joy is an ecstasy, a friend is a lover, a lover is a god, and failure is death. Add to this cruelly delicate organism the overpowering necessity to create, create, create — so that without the creating of music or poetry or books or buildings or something of meaning, his very breath is cut off from him. He must create, must pour out creation. By some strange, unknown, inward urgency he is not really alive unless he is creating.”

Pearl S. Buck
Probable HSPs in History…

- King David (*Coat of Many Colors*), Beethoven, Carl Jung,
- Anne Frank, Pearl S. Buck,
- James Baldwin, Maya Angelou,
- Audrey Hepburn, Marcel Proust,
- Michael Jackson, Steve Jobs,
- George A. “Frolic” Weymouth

HSPs often have a unique “animal affinity” and connection to nature that is both transformative and healing.

“Frolic was one of the most extraordinary human beings. He exuded such warmth. He got lots done, but thoughtfully, with peace.” That was part of his charisma and magic. “He was like one with the horses. He had his only conversation with them in perfect nonverbal harmony, living and breathing the landscape and feeling the moment.” - Virginia Weymouth, Weymouth Family

School Trauma

...especially for HSCs, signs and symptoms can be sudden, subtle, or silent...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_yx8txEM1g
Reframing Our Understanding of Trauma

Many HSCs are Empaths

...they are absorbing energy at home, school, and beyond...
(fand this can be a source of complex trauma).

Safe & Supportive Schools

"... schools that foster a safe, positive, healthy and inclusive whole-school learning environment that (i) enables students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being and (ii) integrates services and aligns initiatives that promote students' behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children's mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives."

On August 13, 2014, a law titled The Safe and Supportive Schools Framework (MGL Ch 69 Section 1P) which was signed in Massachusetts as a collaboration with MA Advocates for Children & Harvard Law School.

Some Perspectives

...for supporting the HSC...

routine, flexibility, creativity
Attachment, Attunement, & Optimal Environment

- Secure Attachment: Parents, ETs, and Trust of Self
- Co-regulation of Emotions through Relationships, Nature & Animals (vs. self-regulation: in solitary or with an object)
- SEL & Safe Spaces: tools to understand and a "container" to navigate both a rich inner terrain and conflicting external landscapes...

“Safety IS the treatment.”

Dr. Stephen Porges, “The Neuroscience of Safety: Impact of Trauma, Abuse, and Chronic Stress on Mental Health,” UNC-Chapel Hill, February 13th

Dabrowski essentially referred to post-traumatic growth as **positive disintegration**

"The distinction between mental health and mental illness rests on the presence or absence of the capacity for positive psychological development" (Tillier, xix).

"Dabrowski concluded that the different outcomes of trauma are determined by the personality development, and developmental potential of the individual" (Tillier, xviii).

"Dabrowski highlighted the important role played by positive psychology in his thinking. He said the absence of symptoms was not sufficient to define mental health. Mental health must be based on personalities and personal growth, not just the absence of symptoms. To him, mental health is the development of a unique, self-developed, self-directed, and autonomous personality. This exemplifies the tenets of positive psychology." (Tillier, xiv)
Some Resources

- [SENG](http://sengifted.org/overexcitability) - SENG: Overexcitability and the Gifted
- [Medical Daily](http://www.medicaldaily.com/highly-sensitive-person-emotional-sensitivity-may-stem-from-genes-enhancing-way-to-experience-emotions) - Highly Sensitive Person: Emotional Sensitivity May Stem From Genes Enhancing Way to Experience Emotions
- [ScienceDirect](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S019188691500464X) - Hypervigilance and High Sensitive People
- [HighlySensitive.org](http://www.highlysensitive.org/75/developing-creativity-hypervigilance-and-highly-sensitive-people/) - Developing Creativity, Hypervigilance and Highly Sensitive People
- [Therapist for Sensitive and Gifted](http://therapistforsensitiveandgifted.com/seven-strategiescope-differences-highly-sensitive-gifted-person-part-1/) - Seven Strategies to Cope with Differences Highly Sensitive Gifted Person
- [Central PA School District](http://www.wearecentralpa.com/news/sensory-room-helps-students-with-autism/) - Sensory Room Helps Students with Autism
- [Herald Review](https://herald-review.com/news/local/education/area-teachers-learn-to-see-trauma-behind-students-actions/article_86c6-5bf2-9616-5b51ec1f980b.html) - Area Teachers Learn to See Trauma Behind Students' Actions
- [TraumasensitiveSchools.org](https://traumasensitiveSchools.org/) - TraumasensitiveSchools.org
- [Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/to-manage-the-stress-of-trauma-schools-are-teaching-students-how-to-relax/2016/06/18/ee4b0844-2f17-11e6-9de3-6e6e7a14000c_story.html?utm_term=.47925fdf4a7d) - To Manage the Stress of Trauma, Schools Are Teaching Students How to Relax


Questions?

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For More Info, Please Reach Out:

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