

## The HSP Subcultures, Definitions, Tasks & Challenges ©2005

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**\*New Additions ©2013**

**The Anomalous HSP; The Empath, The Extraverted High Sensation Seeker,  
The Gifted HSP**

**These additional HSP Subcultures are still a work in progress.**

**As always, your input is welcome.**

After working with HSPs since 1999 and facilitating and presenting at over 26 HSP national and international HSP Gathering Retreats\*, I have become aware of these different HSP Subcultures within the world-wide HSP community. I realize that many HSPs will find they fit into many of the subcultures, or, perhaps, none at all. And I suspect, with time, most HSPs just might develop all the gifts of all of the subcultures.

And, now in alphabetical order - The HSP Subcultures:

### **The Anomalous HSP\***

A very small percentage of HSPs as defined by independent researchers, David Ritchey in *The Anomalous Sensitive* and Michael Jawer in *The Sensitive Anatomy of Emotion* (reviewed by Elaine Aron in the November 2010 issue of The Comfort Zone).

**Challenges** – Similar to the HSP Physical Reactor , except with more pronounced , and sometimes painful, reactions to external stimuli via the body's senses, which if not carefully managed, may result in poor physical health with a variety of symptomatic illnesses.

**Tasks:** To begin (often) lifelong research to discover, understand and implement actions plans which protect and enhance your body's unique physiological needs in order to maintain physical healthy and ward off illnesses.

### **The Calloused, Unrecognized HSP**

The HSP who has either ignored traits of sensitivity, or who were never given the gift of knowledge about the trait. May appear unfeeling, scornful or contemptuous, usually not capable of being in loving relationships. (We might see our parents in this subculture?)

**Challenges:** Becoming knowledgeable about the trait of high sensitivity is a major break through for the Calloused HSP.

**Tasks:** Avoiding becoming embittered, sick, dysfunctional, addicted to drugs or alcohol. Must be willing to find appropriate intervention to begin long process of healing.

## **The Caregivers and Guardians of Childhood, the Elderly, and the Dying**

Those who find that teaching, guiding and caring for children, the elderly, animals, and the dying come naturally. They have a unique ability to serve those with special needs.

**Challenges:** Finding support and structure to provide unique HSP-style care and instruction.

**Task:** Finding time away from giving to others; Practicing self-care. Not giving as much that they are ultimately less helpful and poor role models. Teaching at a level appropriate to the situation.

## **The Core Issue HSP**

The HSP from a traumatic, troubled and sometimes abandoned childhood. May have suffered from some type of abuse, or felt abandoned, neglected, dominated, or used. Often suffer from chronic anxiety or depression.

**Challenges:** Finding and investigating the appropriate healing venue(s) whether that is therapy, medications, new environments, books, so that healing and learning to integrate the HSP trait in a positive way can be accomplished.

**Tasks:** Reaching out for help, staying committed to the healing path, acknowledging there is a problem without feeling deep shame, and finding new kinds of support, friendship, and community as this healing progresses. Perhaps eventually their insight eventually with others having similar wounds.

## **Creative/Artistic HSP**

Those HSPs who need to create and manifest their ideas or visions. Medium may be music, drama, art, ideas, books, poetry, painting, etc.

**Challenges:** Accepting, understanding, and honoring the creative process and finding a medium for this expression.

**Tasks:** Learning how to manifest creative urges, finding support, education, and time to create. Patience, perseverance, and developing self-confidence.

## **The Empath HSP**

The HSP who is not only affected by other's moods, but can also experience other's emotions as if they were their own.

**Challenges:** Becoming overwhelmed with too many emotions, not being able to determine why mood may shift without notice; learning to discern which emotions belong to them, and which belong to others.

**Tasks:** Becoming aware of when one's mood is suddenly effected, determining the source; learning when to turn off empathic abilities; learning when to use empathic abilities as a service and when to not use the skill at all.

## Empowered Priestly Advisor

Evidenced by energetic, purposeful and spiritual direction in their lives.

**Challenges:** Expecting others to think like them; Taking on too many causes.

**Tasks:** Finding support and like-minded individuals to work with. Avoiding burn out. Accepting small changes as progress.

Note: I love Elaine Aron's definition of the Priestly Advisory, as written in The Highly Sensitive Person's Workbook. She describes the priestly advisor role as one in which the HSP

"teaches, counsels, advises, heals, keeps the history in words or art forms, envisions the future, thinks about the meaning of life and death, leads rituals, studies the subtleties of nature or law, and puts the brakes on the more impulsive warrior kings."

The Extraverted High Sensation Seeking HSP\* - A minority within the HSP population, who is challenged to both: pause to check and to seek (novel) stimulation or adventure – not necessarily of a physical kind.

**Challenges:** May often feel torn -- as if one foot is on the “accelerator” and the other on the “brake”. May become as easily overstimulated as under stimulated.

**Tasks:** To recognize and respond to one’s physiological and psychological need to withdraw from too much stimulation, yet also recognize the need to seek novel, comforting and gently energizing options for stimulation.

The Gifted HSP\* – The HSP who is unusually capable of deeply understanding, processing and synthesizing information from a wide variety of sources. Are ALL HSPs gifted? There are differing views on this ... but since all HSPs do process information very deeply, on many different levels, they perhaps all have the capability of giftedness

**Challenges:** To learn how to contain and manifest their unique gifts or risk the possibility of not being able to direct or manifest their gifts in the world. To learn when and how to share themselves with the world, and to understand that they may feel different from others.

**Tasks:** To become self-aware of “multiple levels of intelligence” and to self-identify which one’s they are drawn, so that they can choose to develop one or more of these for the joy it brings themselves, and to for the service it might offer the world.

## The HSP Healer

Medical doctors and alternative healers who are unusually intuitive using their gifts to offer healing to others. Alternative healing modalities may be Reiki, massage, medical intuitive, acupuncture, etc.

**Challenges:** Gaining the right education to express this gift. Avoiding burnout.

**Tasks:** Finding support and encouragement from like minded individuals, and learning to trust these gifts and use them appropriately.

### **HSP Physical Reactor**

HSPs who are unusually physically reactive to certain foods, noise, lights, stress. Physical reactions may include allergies, sweaty palms, nervousness, nausea, migraine headaches, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, "leaky gut" syndrome, etc.

**Challenges:** Finding or creating supportive environments which honor these physical sensitivities.

**Tasks:** Determining what triggers physical reactions and what alleviates any negative ones. Accepting that not all people will understand these reactions.

### **Reserved Intellectual HSP**

Usually introverts with keen intellect. May appear either unreasonable shy or arrogant, but may not necessarily be that way. They just like to think very deeply, and talk about their ideas only when they believe someone will be interested. Might be drawn to the sciences (more often the 'thinking type' of HPS) or to psychological, social or spiritual studies (more the 'feeling type'.) arrogant, but may not necessarily *be* that way.

**Challenges:** Finding ways to share this gift with others and the world.

**Tasks:** Avoiding isolation; learning to accept others with different opinions or different mental styles; reaching out, becoming involved.

### **The Social Justice/Activist HSP**

Deeply moved to action by injustices whether upon people or the environment. Usually dedicated to many causes to improve human and earthly conditions...view new paradigms for a new world.

**Challenges:** Being overwhelmed with too many causes, not finding like-minded support groups to work with, feeling isolated, and perhaps feeling judgmental of others.

**Tasks:** To find support chose causes wisely, and realize that small changes do make a difference. Avoid burn out by taking time off to rejuvenate.

### **The HSP in Transition**

The person who has just discovered the trait of high sensitivity. May feel relief about understanding why they are different, but may feel alone, misunderstood, judged or discouraged about themselves and their seeming limits.

**Challenges:** Acknowledging, reframing, and healing from the internalized negativity about the trait. Must learn to set boundaries and assert newly understood needs.

**Tasks:** Taking time to investigate the trait, set new boundaries, practice new coping skills.

## **The Wise, Saintly HSP**

The Mother Teresa's of the world, who feels a supreme devotion to a higher spiritual calling, or have achieved unusual levels of wisdom.

**Challenges:** Finding the precise expression for this calling.

**Tasks:** Avoiding isolation, burn out, psychological inflation. Practicing self-care.

\*The HSP Gathering Retreats were co-created by Jacquelyn Strickland and Dr. Elaine Aron in 2001.

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### ***HSP Subculture Questions to Ponder***

**I invite you to share your answers to these questions by sending them to  
Jacquelyn@jacquelynstrickland.com**

**Which subcultures do you most identify with?**

**What adjectives best describe you?**

**What 'theme' has been present for you throughout most of your life?**

**Is there a theme you remember from your childhood?**

**What brings you the most pleasure?**

**What are you driven' to do?**

**Do you have a calling? A bliss?**

**What legacy would you like to leave to the world?**

**What challenges do you face?**

**What tasks do you need to accomplish?**

**What are your gifts to the world?**

**What is your Myers Briggs type, if know?**

**What is your Enneagram type, if known?**

