

THE HIDDEN POWER
of the HIGHLY SENSITIVE PERSON *in a*
LOUD, FAST, TOO-MUCH WORLD

sensitive

Jenn Granneman & Andre Sólo

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Introduction

It starts with a boy and a girl. They've never met, but their stories begin the same. They're from the Midwest, with blue-collar parents and not enough money. Neither of their families knows what to make of them. They're different from other kids, you see, and it's starting to show.

Sometimes the boy seems normal enough. He follows the rules in kindergarten. He's polite to his teachers, and kind to the other kids, but when recess rolls around, he shrinks. Something about the playground is too much for him. Instead of joining for kickball, or tag, or king of the jungle gym, he runs away. He flees from the screaming and laughing and hides in the only place he can find: an old storm sewer pipe.

At first, the teachers don't even notice, because he always slinks back at the end-of-recess bell. But one day he takes a kickball with him so he won't be alone. It might be cute under different circumstances, but there are never enough balls to go around, and the other kids complain when they see him run off with it. That's when the teachers find him, and the concern starts. His parents don't understand: Why do you hide in a sewer pipe? What do you *do* in there? His answer—that it's quiet—doesn't help. He'll need to learn to play with the other kids, they tell him, no matter how loud or overstimulating it is.

The girl, on the other hand, doesn't run away. In fact, she seems to have a knack for reading people. She becomes the ringleader of her group of friends, sensing easily what each kid wants or what will make them happy. Soon, she organizes them to pull off neighborhood events: a family carnival, complete with games and prizes, or a particularly elaborate haunted house for Halloween. These events take weeks of effort, and she's perfectly at home refining every detail. Yet when the big day comes, she's

not out in the middle of the action, howling at the puppet show or running from game to game. Instead, she stays on the edges. There are just too many people, too many emotions, too much laughing and shouting and winning and losing. Her own carnival overwhelms her.

It's not the only time she gets overstimulated. She has to modify her clothes, cutting off straps so the fabric doesn't rub her skin (when she was a baby, her mom recalls, they had to cut the feet off her footed sleepers, too). In the summer, she's excited to go to a week-long camp, but her mom has to drive her home early; she can't sleep in a crowded bunk, let alone one crackling with the feelings and intrigues of a dozen little girls. These reactions surprise and disappoint people, and their reactions in turn surprise and disappoint the girl. For her parents, her behavior is a cause of worry: what if she can't handle the real world? Still, her mom does her best to encourage her, and her dad reminds her she has to say things out loud rather than just thinking them in her head. But she has a *lot* of thoughts—libraries of them—and people rarely understand them. She is called many things, sometimes even sensitive, but it's not always a good thing. It's something to be fixed.

No one calls the boy sensitive. They do call him gifted when he reads and writes above his grade level, and he eventually gets permission to spend lunch hours in the school library—it frees him from the roar of the lunchroom, and it's less alarming than a drainpipe. His peers have other words for him. They call him weird. Or that worst-of-all word, *wuss*. It doesn't help that he can never hide his big feelings, that he sometimes cries at school, and that he breaks down when he sees bullying—even if he's not the victim.

But as he grows older, he increasingly is. The other boys have little respect for the dreamy kid who prefers a walk in a forest over a football game, who writes novels instead of coming to parties. And he has no interest in vying for their approval. It costs him: He gets shoved in hallways and mocked at lunch, and gym class may as well be a firing squad. He is seen as so soft, so weak that an older girl becomes his biggest bully, laughing as she writes obscenities on his shirt with a marker. He cannot admit any of this to his parents, least of all his dad, who told him

the way to handle a bully is to punch the person in the face. The boy has never punched anyone.

Both the girl and the boy, in their separate lives, start to feel as if there is no one else like them in the world. And both seek a way out. For the girl, the solution is to withdraw. By high school, each day overwhelms her, and she comes home so fatigued that she hides in her room from her friends. She often stays home sick, and though her parents are nice about it, she wonders if they worry about her. For the boy, the way out is to learn to act tough. It's to say he doesn't care about anyone—as if he could take them all on. The attitude fits him about as well as a grown-up's army helmet. Nor does it have the intended effect: Rather than coming to respect him, the other kids avoid him completely.

Soon the boy is skipping school and hanging out with a clique of stoner artists—people who feel as deeply as he does, who don't judge his way of seeing the world. The girl finds acceptance in an abusive church. The church members don't think she's weird, they assure her. They think she has miracle powers, even a special purpose, as long as she does everything they say.

What no one says is, You're perfectly normal. You're sensitive. And if you learn how to use this gift, you can do incredible things.

The Missing Personality Trait

In common usage, *sensitive* can mean a person has *big emotions*—crying for joy, bursting with warmth, wilting from critique. It can also be *physical*; you may be sensitive to temperature or fragrance or sound. A growing body of scientific evidence tells us that these two types of sensitive are real and that they are in fact the same. Physical and emotional sensitivity are so closely linked that if you take Tylenol to numb a headache, research shows you will score lower on an empathy test until the medication wears off.

Sensitivity is an essential human trait, and one that is tied to some of our species' best qualities. But as we'll see, it is still not widely understood

by the public, despite being well studied by the scientific community. These days, thanks to advances in technology, scientists can reliably test how sensitive a person is. They can spot differences in the brains of sensitive people on functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans, and they can accurately identify the behavior of sensitive people in scientific studies, including the powerful advantages that come with being sensitive. Yet most people—perhaps your boss, your parents, or your spouse—do not think of sensitivity in this way, as a real, measurable personality trait.

More to the point, sensitivity is often seen as a bad thing. We discourage it in our kids (“stop crying!” or “shake it off!”), and we weaponize it against adults (“you’re overreacting” or “you’re being too sensitive”). We hope this book will change that. We envision a world where the word *sensitive* is commonplace in our everyday conversations, so that a person can say “I’m very sensitive” at a job interview or on a first date and receive an approving smile. This is a tall order, but it’s not impossible. *Introverted* was once a dirty word, too, but today there’s nothing unusual about introducing oneself in this way. We want to create a world where the same is true of sensitivity. We believe that normalizing this deeply human quality will finally allow sensitive people to thrive—and when they do, society will benefit from their unique gifts.

Over the last decade, we’ve been privy to many conversations in which someone learns for the first time what sensitivity really is. When they do, something that was previously missing clicks into place. They have an aha moment about who they are and why they do the things they do—or they finally understand their child, coworker, or spouse in a different way. Thus, we believe that sensitivity is often the missing personality trait. It is missing from our daily conversations and from our awareness as a society. It’s missing from our schools, workplaces, politics, institutions, families, and relationships.

This missing knowledge matters. It’s what makes sensitive people hide who they are, like our boy, or feel so out of place, like our girl. Perhaps this knowledge has been missing from your life, too. If so, we hope you find comfort in these pages and gain a deeper understanding of yourself.

Who This Book Is For

This book is written for three types of people. The first is the reader who already knows they are sensitive, and perhaps even identifies as a *highly sensitive person*. If this is you, we hope everything in this book will be of value to you and that you will learn something new. We have drawn on the most recent research, across many disciplines, to offer you the tools you need to harness your tremendous gifts and to protect yourself from overstimulation. More than that, we aim to help you do the crucial work of flipping the conversation about being sensitive. You will learn how to thrive in an often overbearing world, how to change shame-based patterns, and how to step up when needed as a leader (even if you don't feel like one). In the end, we hope you will feel empowered to advocate for a better, more sensitive age in our increasingly loud and cruel world.

The second is the person who may never have thought of themselves as sensitive but who is starting to wonder. Perhaps you've always known you're different in how you think and react to situations. Perhaps you have a deep sensitivity on the inside that you do not always show on the outside. Or perhaps you are simply starting to recognize a part of yourself in what we've described. If this is you, we hope our book will give you some answers. You may even find a sense of peace in learning that others have shared struggles much like your own and that you are not alone in what you've experienced. In the end, it may feel good to call yourself a sensitive person. There is power in words, names, and labels, as sensitive people already know. Often, when we give something a name, it helps us make sense of it and embrace and nurture it in a healthy way.

The third type of person is our treasured guest. It's the reader who was handed this book by a friend, a spouse, a child, or an employee. If this is you, someone in your life knows that they are sensitive, and they want you to understand them. This is a sign of trust. It may mean they've been cautious sharing their sensitivity up until now, worrying that others would see it as a weakness. Or it may mean they have struggled to put it into

words. Either way, this person is probably hoping that as you read, you will come to understand their experiences and needs—and accept them as valid. They are asking you to be on their side.

What's in This Book

The first half of this book will give you a clear picture of what it really means to be sensitive and what strengths sensitive people bring to the world. It will also help you see which parts of sensitivity you relate to and determine for yourself if you are a sensitive person. We'll get into the science behind sensitivity and the five mighty gifts that all sensitive people are born with. We'll also look at the cost of those gifts—overstimulation—and how sensitive people can overcome that cost and thrive. Finally, we'll zoom in on one of the most misunderstood gifts of all, empathy, and how to transform it from a source of hurt to a world-changing strength.

The second half of this book will get into the specifics: How, exactly, does a sensitive person thrive in life—and how are their needs different from those of less-sensitive people? We'll look at sensitive people in love and friendship, raising a sensitive child, building a meaningful career, and the powerful traits of sensitive leaders, who are often the most effective leaders of all. Finally, we'll paint a picture of what comes next: how we can stop hiding our sensitivity and start valuing it. Despite living in a loud, fast, and too-much world—one that is increasingly harsh and divided—we believe there has never been a better time to be sensitive. In fact, our world's biggest challenges are sensitive people's greatest opportunities to shine. We believe they are the leaders, healers, and visionaries that our world needs the most right now, if only we can recognize their strengths.

Sensitive Is Strong

None of this is easy, as our boy and our girl discovered. As adults, both found only half the solution. The boy built an independent lifestyle that let

his mind roam free, riding a bicycle across Mexico and sleeping under the stars while he wrote books. It was a meaningful way to live, and he didn't have to worry about overstimulation. But he still denied he was sensitive and hid his powerful emotions.

The girl knew very well that she was sensitive and led with her heart in all things, but she struggled to build a life that worked for her. She burned through a series of relationships and careers that she had hoped would fill her life with meaning—journalism, marketing, and teaching—but each bombarded her sensitive mind until she came home in a fog. She could feel herself burning out—again.

And then they met.

A curious thing happened. The girl taught the boy what it means to be sensitive, and he finally stopped hiding his feelings. The boy taught the girl how to live a different life, one where she no longer spent every waking minute worn out. Soon they joined forces. They began to work together, they founded a website together, and bit by bit, they each built a happy sensitive life.

And they became the authors of this book.

Those little kids were us. Jenn got out of the harmful church and made a life in which her strength came from inside, not from the approval of others. Andre retired his bicycle—temporarily, he insists—and he learned to take pride in his sensitive mind. And, together, we created Sensitive Refuge, the world's largest website for sensitive people. We are sensitive, and we are proud of it.

Our story is just one of many, many ways that sensitive can be strong. Every sensitive person gets to choose their own path. But there's one step that we all have to take, and it's the hardest of all: to stop seeing sensitivity as a flaw and to start seeing it as a gift.

chapter 1

Sensitivity: Stigma or Superpower?

I can't stand chaos. I hate loud environments. Art makes me cry. No, I'm not crazy; I'm a textbook example of a highly sensitive person.

—Anne Marie Crosthwaite

The year was 1903. Picasso danced at the Moulin Rouge, electric lights burned at all-night clubs, and Europe's cities thundered into a new era. Streetcars rushed commuters down buggy-packed streets, telegraphs connected faraway places, and breaking news crossed continents in minutes. Technology charmed its way into people's homes, too, with phonographs squawking out music on demand for parties. The songs may have been a prelude to an evening at the picture house—or they may have covered up the sound of streets being ripped up to install modern sewers. Even the countryside was abuzz, with farmers using mechanized equipment for the first time. Life was changing, and progress, it was believed, was good.

The German city of Dresden wasn't about to be left behind. Its leaders wanted to show off their own steps forward and crib achievements from other cities. Votes were held, committees were formed, and a citywide expo was announced, complete with a series of public lectures. One of the speakers was the early sociologist Georg Simmel. Although little known today, Simmel was influential in his time. He was one of the first people to apply a scientific approach to human interaction, and his work tackled every part of modern life, from the role of money in human happiness to why people flirt. If city officials hoped he would praise progress, however, they were badly mistaken. Simmel took the podium and promptly threw out the topic he'd been given. He wasn't there to talk about the glories of modern life. He was there to discuss its effect on the human soul.

Innovation, he suggested, had not just given us more efficiency; it gave us a world that taxed the human brain and its ability to keep up. He described a nonstop stream of "external and internal stimuli" in a loud, fast, overscheduled world. Far ahead of his time, he suggested that people have a limited amount of "mental energy"—something we now know to be more or less true—and that a highly stimulating environment consumes far more of it. One side of our psyche, the side built around achievement and work, may be able to keep up, he explained, but our spiritual and emotional side was absolutely spent. Humanity, Simmel was saying, was too sensitive for such a life.

Of particular concern to Simmel was how people coped. Unable to react meaningfully to every new piece of information, overstimulated citizens were apt to become "blasé" or, simply put, apathetic. They learned to suppress their feelings, to treat one another transactionally, to care less. After all, they had to. They heard terrible news from around the world daily, like the eruption of Mount Pelée, which killed twenty-eight thousand people in minutes, or the horrors of British concentration camps in Africa. Meanwhile, they tripped over homeless people and tuned out strangers packed tightly in the streetcar. How could they possibly extend empathy, or even simple acknowledgment, to everyone they met? Instead, they closed off their hearts out of necessity. Their demanding outer world had devoured their inner world and, with it, their ability to connect.

Simmel warned that by living under such overload, we face “being levelled down and swallowed up.” As you might expect, his words were initially met with scorn. But once published, they became his most-talked-about essay. The piece spread quickly because it put to words something that many people secretly felt: The world had become too fast, too loud, too much.

That was more than 120 years ago, when much of life still moved at the speed of the horse and buggy. It was before the invention of the internet, the smartphone, and social media. Today, life is even busier, as we work long hours, care for our children or aging parents with little support, and squeeze friendships into text threads between errands. No wonder we are stressed, burned out, and anxious. Even the world itself is objectively more overstimulating than in Simmel’s day. By some estimates, we are now exposed to more information each day than a person living in the Renaissance encountered in their entire lifetime: As of 2020, we produce 2,500,000,000,000,000,000 bytes of data *per day*. At that rate, roughly 90 percent of all the data in human history has been created in the last five years. Every scrap of this data, in theory, is aimed at someone’s brain.

The human animal is not designed for such unlimited input. Rather, our brain is a sensitive instrument. Researchers who study that instrument now agree that, just as Simmel warned, it can only process so much. Push its limit, and everyone, no matter their personality or how tough they are, eventually hits overload. Their reactions start to slow, their decisions suffer, they become irate or exhausted, and if they keep pushing, they burn out. This is the reality of being an intelligent and emotional species: Like an overworked engine, our big brain eventually needs time to cool off. Humanity really is, as Simmel knew, a sensitive creature.

What Simmel did not know, however, is that not everyone is sensitive to the same degree. In fact, there is one group of people who are wired to be more physically and emotionally responsive than others. These people—the sensitive people—feel our too-much world very deeply.

The Stigma of Being Sensitive

Although you are reading this book, you may not want to be called sensitive, let alone *highly* sensitive. To many people, *sensitive* is a dirty word. It sounds like a weak spot, a guilty admission, or, worse, an insult. In common usage, *sensitive* can mean many things, and most of them are based in shame:

- When we call someone sensitive, what we really mean is they can't take a joke, are easily offended, cry too much, get their feelings hurt too easily, or can't handle feedback or criticism.
- When we refer to ourselves as sensitive, what we often mean is we have a habit of overreacting.
- Sensitivity is associated with softness and femininity; in general, men especially do not want to be seen as sensitive.
- A sensitive subject is one that is likely to offend, hurt, anger, or embarrass the listeners.
- Likewise, the word *sensitive* is often paired with an intensifier: Don't be *too* sensitive; why are you so sensitive?

In light of these definitions, it makes sense why you might bristle at being called sensitive. Case in point: As we wrote this book, curious friends and family asked us what our book was about. "Highly sensitive people," we'd reply. Occasionally, people would get excited because they knew what this term meant. "That's me!" they'd tell us enthusiastically. "You're describing me." But the vast majority of the time, people had the wrong idea of what we were talking about, and their misconceptions about sensitivity became clear. Some thought we were writing a book about how our society has become too politically correct. Others thought we were giving advice on how to be less easily offended (the word *snowflake* came up more than once).

Another time, we asked a friend who is an author to read an early draft of our book and give us feedback on it. While reading, she realized that she herself is a sensitive person and that the man she is dating fits the sensitive description as well. For her, this revelation was deeply affirming.

Yet when she broached the topic with her boyfriend, he got defensive. “If someone called me sensitive,” he retorted, “I’d be really offended.”

Sensitivity, then, as a dimension of human personality, has gained an unfortunate reputation: It has wrongly become associated with weakness. It’s seen as a defect that must be fixed. Just type the word *sensitive* into Google, and you’ll see what we mean: As of December 2021, the top three related searches were “suspicious,” “embarrassed,” and “inferior.” Or, type the phrase “I’m too sensitive,” and you’ll find articles with titles like “I’m Too Sensitive. How Can I Toughen Up?” and “How to Stop Being So Sensitive.” Because of the misconceptions around sensitivity, even sensitive people themselves have internalized a sense of shame about who they are. For years, we have run an online community for sensitive people called Sensitive Refuge. Although there is growing awareness around the topic, readers still frequently ask us, “How do I stop being so sensitive?”

The answer, of course, is *not* to stop being sensitive—because, in reality, these shame-based definitions are not what sensitive means at all.

What Being Sensitive Really Means

It began with a simple observation about babies: Some were upset by new sights and smells, while others remained unfazed. In his lab in the 1980s, psychologist Jerome Kagan and his team performed a series of tests on about five hundred babies. They dangled Winnie the Pooh mobiles before them, held cotton swabs dipped in diluted alcohol to their noses, and projected a face onto a screen that seemed to speak in an eerie synthetic voice. Some babies hardly reacted at all, remaining calm throughout the entire forty-five-minute session. Others moved constantly, kicking, thrashing, arching their backs, and even crying. Kagan labeled these babies “high reactive,” while the others were “low reactive” or fell somewhere in the middle. The high-reactive babies, it seemed, were more sensitive to their environment and had probably had this trait since birth. But would this temperament stay with them for life?

Today, we know that it does. Kagan and his associates followed many of the babies into adulthood. Those high-reactive infants, now in their thirties and forties, have become high-reactive adults. They still have big

reactions—they confess to getting nervous in crowds, overthinking things, and worrying about the future. But they also work hard and excel in many ways. Most earned high grades in school, built good careers, and made friends just as easily as anyone else did; many were thriving. And many described how they had built confidence and calm in their lives while still preserving their sensitivity.

While Kagan associated this temperament with fearfulness and worry, connecting it to the amygdala (the “fear center” of the brain), today we know it’s a healthy trait. Dozens of researchers have confirmed this finding—most notably Elaine Aron, arguably the founder of the field of sensitivity research. (In fact, the fearfulness that Kagan observed in some of those high-reactive kids largely went away by adulthood.) Today, the same trait Kagan studied is known by many names: highly sensitive people (HSPs), sensory processing sensitivity, biological sensitivity to context, differential susceptibility, or even “orchids and dandelions,” with sensitive people being the orchids. The experts behind each of these terms agree they all refer to the same trait, however. And, recently, there has been a move to bring these theories together under a single umbrella term: *environmental sensitivity*. We take our cue from these researchers and will refer to the trait as environmental sensitivity, or just sensitivity for short.

No matter what you call it, sensitivity is defined as the ability to perceive, process, and respond deeply to one’s environment. This ability happens at two levels: (1) perceiving information from the senses and (2) thinking about that information thoroughly or finding many connections between it and other memories, knowledge, or ideas. People who are sensitive do more of both. They naturally pick up more information from their environment, process it more deeply, and are ultimately more shaped by it. Much of this deep processing happens unconsciously, and many sensitive people aren’t even aware that they do it. This process applies to everything a sensitive person takes in.

However, we prefer a simpler definition: If you’re sensitive, everything affects you more, but you do more with it.

In fact, a better word for *sensitive* might be *responsive*. If you are a sensitive person, your body and mind respond more to the world around you. You respond more to heartbreak, pain, and loss, but you also respond

more to beauty, new ideas, and joy. You go deep where others only skim the surface. You keep thinking when others have given up and moved on to something else.

Not Just Artists and Geniuses

Sensitivity, then, is a normal part of life. All humans—and even animals—are sensitive to their environment to some degree. There are times when all of us cry, get our feelings hurt, and feel overwhelmed by stressful events, and there are times when all of us reflect deeply, marvel at beauty, and pore over a subject that fascinates us. But some individuals are fundamentally more responsive to their surroundings and experiences than others are. These are the highly sensitive people.

Like other traits, sensitivity is a continuum, and everyone falls somewhere along it, from low to average to high sensitivity. All three categories are considered normal, healthy traits. And sensitive people are not alone: Recent research suggests that highly sensitive individuals make up approximately 30 percent of the population. (Another 30 percent are low sensitive while the remaining 40 percent fall somewhere in between.) Being sensitive, in other words, isn't some rare fluke, reserved only for artists and geniuses. It's about one out of every three people in every city, workplace, and school. Sensitivity is also equally common among men and women. Men may be *told* not to be sensitive, but that doesn't change the fact that they are.

In Their Own Words: What Does Being Sensitive Mean to You?

"I am sensitive, and I spent most of my life believing I was flawed because no one else I knew was quite like me. Now I see my sensitivity as a blessing. I have a very rich and imaginative inner life. I've never been bored. I feel sorry for some of my friends who live their lives on the surface, never experiencing the deep, inner attunement to nature, the arts, and the universe in all its magnificent splendor. They do not ask the big questions about life and death. They talk about what they watched on TV or where they're going next Sunday." –Sally

"To some people, the word *sensitive* has the connotation of being touchy or weak. But it can be a great asset to be emotionally in touch

with what others are feeling as well as what you are feeling. I view being sensitive as a way of being respectful and kind to yourself and others. It's a special and important awareness that not everyone has." –Todd

"As a guy, toxic masculinity meant that being labeled sensitive was akin to being labeled effeminate, moody, or touchy. In reality, I was none of those things. I was hyper-aware of my own self and feelings, and I knew those other labels were not true—but I had no idea what it was until I happened upon some literature about HSPs [highly sensitive people]." –Dave

"I used to view the word *sensitive* as a negative thing because my dad would tell me, 'You are too sensitive.' Now I see the word in a different light. I feel good about being sensitive, and I now know that it is a positive thing in this world that can be so cold. Overall, I would not trade my sensitivity if I could. I love how deeply I can appreciate all that is around me." –Renee

"I used to think of sensitivity as a weakness because my family of origin and my ex-husband constantly told me that I needed to grow up or grow a thicker skin and that I was overreacting. I was constantly put down for it. But now that they're out of my life, I'm focusing on it as a strength, and I'm actually back in grad school getting a second master's degree to change careers and become a therapist. Now I'm going to use my sensitivity to help others." –Jeannie

Are You a Sensitive Person?

Maybe you can taste the oak in a chardonnay before anyone else at a dinner party. Maybe you become pleasantly overwhelmed by Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, or you tear up while watching pet rescue videos. Or maybe the constant click-clack of someone typing nearby makes it impossible to concentrate. These can all be signs of heightened sensitivity—and many of us are more sensitive than we realize.

So, here is a checklist of the most common characteristics of sensitive people. The more boxes you check, the more sensitive you are. You don't need to check every box—or relate to every point in this book—to be considered a sensitive person. Remember, sensitivity is a continuum, and everyone will fall somewhere along it.

Also, keep in mind that your life experiences will influence how your sensitivity is expressed. For example, if you were taught to set healthy

boundaries from a young age, you may have never struggled with people pleasing or conflict avoidance as some sensitive people do. Other aspects of your personality will also make a difference in how closely you relate to the following statements. For example, if you consider yourself more of an extrovert than an introvert, you may need less downtime than an introverted sensitive person needs.

Which of the following statements are true for you?

- ☐ In general, you tend to pause before acting, giving your brain time to do its work.
- ☐ You notice subtle details, like the slight difference in shade between brushstrokes on a painting or a microexpression that quickly vanishes from your coworker's face.
- ☐ You feel strong emotions. You have a hard time shaking intense emotions like anger or worry.
- ☐ You have a lot of empathy, even toward strangers or people you only hear about in the news. You easily put yourself in other people's shoes.
- ☐ Other people's moods really affect you. You easily absorb emotions from others, taking on their feelings as if they were your own.
- ☐ You feel stressed and fatigued in loud, busy environments, like a crowded shopping mall, concert, or restaurant.
- ☐ You need plenty of downtime to maintain your energy levels. You often find yourself withdrawing from other people so you can calm your senses and process your thoughts.
- ☐ You read people well and can infer, with surprising accuracy, what they are thinking or feeling.
- ☐ You have a hard time watching violent or scary movies or witnessing any kind of cruelty toward animals or humans.
- ☐ You hate feeling rushed and prefer to do things carefully.
- ☐ You're a perfectionist.
- ☐ You struggle to perform at your best under pressure, such as when your boss is evaluating your work or you are participating in a competition.