

The best people possess a feeling for beauty, the courage to take risks, the discipline to tell the truth, the capacity for sacrifice. Ironically, their virtues make them vulnerable; they are often wounded, sometimes destroyed.

The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.

30 Reminders for Sensitive People Who Feel Drained, Ashamed, or Judged

By [Lori Deschene](#)



“Highly sensitive people are too often perceived as weaklings or damaged goods. To feel intensely is not a symptom of weakness, it is the trademark of the truly alive and compassionate.”~Anthon St. Maarten

There are some words that get painfully etched into our memories as if with a red-hot poker. For me, growing up, those words were “you’re too sensitive.”

I often caught this phrase in the fumbling hands of my shame after someone chucked it at me with callousness and superiority as a means to justify their cruelty.

They may have said something vicious or condescending in private, or told embarrassing stories or outright lies about me in public.

Either way, the results were the same: I’d take it personally, get emotionally overwhelmed, then either explode in anger or sob.

But it wasn’t just cruelty that evoked my sensitivity, and I didn’t cry only when obviously provoked.

Well-meaning people, who generally treated me with kindness, would gently remind me I’m too sensitive when I overanalyzed the smallest things other people did—like taking a while to call me back or “making a face” after I said something I thought sounded stupid.

Or they might pull out this sage observation of my character when I [took criticism to heart](#), struggled to let go of something painful, or experienced someone else’s pain deeply and intensely, as if it were my own.

It was as if the whole world could see that there was something glaringly wrong with me. But I couldn’t seem to change the way I perceived, experienced, and reacted to life.

Little did they know how deep this sensitivity ran, far below the surface.

They had no idea that my mind was a web of constant reflection, pertaining to not only my own experiences, but also the suffering of everyone around me.

They had no idea how frequently I felt drained and over-stimulated, and that just showing up to a crowded or loud environment took monumental strength (which I had to muster often growing up in a big Italian family).

They had no idea how often I [felt stressed](#), anxious, and jumpy because my nervous system was so dialed up.

And I had no idea there was a biological explanation for all of this. It wasn't until years later—decades, actually—that I found the term “highly sensitive person” and finally understood that my brain actually processes information and reflects on it more deeply than non-HSP brains.

Over the years, I've learned to accept that some of my traits and behaviors are just part of being a highly sensitive person.

I've learned that HSPs:

- Are highly perceptive and empathetic
- Feel everything deeply
- Absorb other people's emotions and can tell when something's wrong
- Pick up on subtleties other people might miss
- Have heightened intuition
- Easily feel drained or overwhelmed in loud, chaotic, or otherwise over-stimulating environments

I've also learned that some of my former behaviors were responses to my sensitivity, for example:

- Overanalyzing things other people said or did
- Internalizing judgments as truth
- [Judging myself](#) for my needs instead of honoring them
- Drinking to numb myself in over-stimulating environments instead of simply avoiding them or making efforts to ground myself
- Ignoring my intuition about people or situations that weren't good for me
- Taking on everyone else's pain instead of setting boundaries

Though I am by no means an expert on navigating life as a highly sensitive person, I know I've come a long way over the years. I still experience the world and my emotions intensely. But I feel less like a rag doll in a roaring tornado and more like a deeply rooted tree that may lose some of its leaves but can ultimately endure one hell of a storm.

I've learned to take good care of myself, honor my needs, and [worry less about what other people think of me](#). And I generally don't judge myself as harshly as I once did.

It helps that I not only have a toolbox for self-care—including meditation, walks in nature, and long baths—but also an arsenal of lessons to remember whenever my sensitivity gets the better of me.

If you can relate to any of what I've shared, and if you frequently feel drained, ashamed, or judged, perhaps these reminders may be helpful to you, now or some time in the future.

When You Feel Drained

1. You are only responsible for your own emotions. You can't take away everyone else's pain, and if you could, you'd be robbing them of the chance to grow.
2. You don't need to fix anyone else's problems. Just [listening](#) is enough—but you can only listen for so long before it gets to be too much.
3. You don't need to put yourself in environments that over-stimulate you, and choosing to do something different doesn't make you weird or any less fun.
4. It's not worth forcing yourself to do something if you know you won't enjoy it and you'll end up feeling drained.
5. You can choose to listen to your instincts instead of your anxiety. If you feel you need to leave but you're worried about how you'll be perceived, focus on the voice that knows what's best for you.
6. Other people and external situations can only drain you if you let them. You have the ability and right to set boundaries at any time.
7. It's not selfish to [take care of yourself](#). As the saying goes, you can't pour from an empty cup.
8. Sleep isn't a luxury; you need to get sufficient rest to handle the many parts of life that are emotionally exhausting.
9. The most important question you can ask yourself, at any time, but particularly when you feel overwhelmed, is "What do I need right now?"
10. It doesn't have to be all-or-nothing. Even five minutes of a calming practice, like deep breathing or yoga, can make a huge difference.

When You Feel Ashamed

11. You can't control or change that you have a highly sensitive nervous system, and you can't help that you process everything deeply and experience emotions intensely. You wouldn't feel ashamed of your hair or eye color, so why feel ashamed of something else you were born with?

12. Sensitivity isn't a weakness; it's the source of your understanding, compassion, depth, and [creativity](#)—which means it's actually a strength.

13. There is nothing “wrong” with you, and you're worthy of love and respect just as you are.

14. You are not alone. According to psychologist Elaine Aron, who [wrote the book on HSPs](#), highly sensitive people make up fifteen to twenty percent of the population.

15. If someone else shamed you for your sensitivity, or for coping with it ineffectively because you didn't know any better, you didn't deserve it.

16. Your shame comes from the story you're telling yourself about yourself—and you can [change that story](#) to be more compassionate at any time.

17. You don't have to “fix” your emotional intensity. You simply need to observe your emotions so you're less likely to get caught up in them.

18. You are not what you do. If you act in a way you regret when you're feeling emotionally overwhelmed or over-stimulated, you can simply apologize, forgive yourself, learn from the experience, and move on.

19. Crying isn't something to be ashamed of. It actually helps release stress and pent up emotions, and it's a sign of immense courage if you let yourself cry instead of resisting vulnerability.

20. If you sit with your shame instead of trying to numb it, it will eventually move through you. No emotion lasts forever.

When You Feel Judged

21. For every person who might judge you, there's someone else who'd love, value, and accept you just as you are.

22. You don't need everyone to understand or like you; you just need to understand and have compassion for yourself.

23. What other people think of you is their business, and their opinions and judgments can only hurt you if you let them.
24. Just because someone else says you're "too sensitive," that doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong or you need to change.
25. If other people don't value you, they're missing out on the chance for a deep, meaningful relationship with someone who'd always be there and would never hurt or judge them.
26. If someone judges you, it's a reflection of where they are in their life and development, not who you are as a person.
27. Just because someone minimizes your feelings, that doesn't mean your feelings aren't valid.
28. You have the right to end a conversation at any time if someone dismisses your feelings or violates your boundaries.
29. It's okay to walk away from a relationship if someone consistently devalues, disrespects, or hurts you.
30. Just because you *think* someone is judging you, that doesn't mean they are. Their silence, distance, or mood may have nothing to do with you.

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Of course, it's far easier to jot down a list of lessons than it is to remember the most useful one in the moment when it can be most helpful. I've struggled to recall these insights many times, both in the distant and recent past. But it's not about perfection; it's about awareness and practice, as is everything in life.

Read this, print it, put it somewhere you'll see it often, and perhaps you can etch these ideas into your memory, as deeply but not as painfully as the criticisms you've likely heard over the years.

And if you only take one idea into your day, let it be this:

We are not defective. We don't need to get harder or grow a thicker skin. We don't have to "man up" or "suck it up" or stop caring so deeply.

The world doesn't need more guarded people, weaponized by apathy and bitterness. The world needs more people who aren't afraid to reflect, to feel, and to love with hearts so open they overflow with empathy and kindness.

The world needs us sensitive souls to see beauty others might not see and create beauty where it might never exist if we hadn't filtered life through the kaleidoscope of our own unique perspective.

But we can only give the best of ourselves if we take good care of ourselves, even if other people have different needs; if we value ourselves, whether others do or not; and we remember that judgment is inevitable, but it doesn't have to control or define us.