

18

The Highly Sensitive Person Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

1 · Are You Highly Sensitive?

2 · HSP Test

3 · Getting to Know Yourself

4 · Identifying Your Triggers

5 · Transition Time

6 · Establishing a Routine

7 · Removing and Reducing Distractions

8 · Social Situations

9 · Social Bill of Rights

10 · Checking In With Yourself

11 · Setting Boundaries

12 · Saying No

13 · Challenging Limiting Beliefs

14 · Identify Your Values

15 · List of Values

16 · Body Awareness

17 · Basics of Self-Care

18 · Self-Compassion

How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

Contents

Are You Highly Sensitive?	4
HSP Test	5
Getting to Know Yourself	7
Identifying Your Triggers	9
Transition Time	10
Establishing a Routine	11
Removing and Reducing Distractions	13
Social Situations	14
Social Bill of Rights	17
Checking In With Yourself	18
Setting Boundaries	20
Saying No	22
Challenging Limiting Beliefs	23
Identify Your Values	26
List of Values	28
Body Awareness	31
Basics of Self-Care	34
Self-Compassion	35

Are You Highly Sensitive?

The trait of high sensitivity encompasses four key principles: heightened **processing depth**, a tendency to be more **easily overstimulated**, a higher level of **emotional intensity**, and enhanced **awareness of environmental subtleties** compared to non-HSP groups (Aron, 2010).

1. Heightened Processing Depth: HSPs tend to process information more deeply than others. They have a natural inclination to reflect on experiences and situations, analyzing them from different angles.

2. Tendency to be More Easily Overstimulated: HSPs may become overwhelmed or overstimulated by sensory input such as loud noises, bright lights, or crowded environments. Their nervous systems tend to be more responsive, causing them to feel an overload of stimuli more quickly than others.

3. Higher Level of Emotional Intensity: HSPs typically experience emotions with greater amplitude and intensity. This emotional intensity can manifest in both positive and negative ways, leading to more profound experiences of joy, love, empathy, but also vulnerable to feelings of overwhelm, anxiety, and sadness. HSPs may also be more attuned to the emotions of others, displaying heightened empathy and compassion.

4. Enhanced Awareness of Environmental Subtleties: HSPs often have a remarkable ability to notice and process subtle cues in their environment that others might overlook. This sensitivity to nuances extends not only to the physical environment but also to social dynamics, non-verbal communication, and subtle shifts in mood or energy.

HSP Test

Dr. Aron's "Are You Highly Sensitive?" test (1996) is the standard measurement for the HSP trait. You can take the interactive test at hsperson.com. Below is a checklist of the four principles of the HSP trait:

Depth of Processing

- ☐ Do you think deeply about decisions, taking considerable time to weigh the pros and cons before making a choice?
- ☐ Do you genuinely enjoy reflecting on complex subjects or ideas?
- ☐ Do you often dedicate significant effort to tasks in order to avoid making any mistakes?
- ☐ Do you strive to align your actions and choices with your personal beliefs and values?

Ease of Overstimulation

- ☐ Do intense sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or textures often trigger feelings of being overwhelmed, annoyed, or exhausted?
- ☐ Do you find solitude or being in quiet and dark environments helpful in calming yourself down when you feel overstimulated or overwhelmed?
- ☐ Are situations with multiple deadlines, being observed, or chaotic environments particularly distressing for you?

Emotional Intensity

- ☐ Do you notice and get influenced by the moods of other people around you?
- ☐ Do you feel deeply moved by pleasing sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or textures?
- ☐ Does having a predictable and consistent routine, with an even pace, contribute to a sense of calmness in your life?
- ☐ Are you often mindful of how to help others feel more at ease in a situation?

Sensory Sensitivity

- ☐ Are you easily affected by substances such as caffeine or internal sensations like feeling hungry or tired?
- ☐ Do you often notice subtle changes in your surroundings or environment?
- ☐ Have others mentioned that you seem highly observant or attentive to details?

The expression of the HSP trait can vary significantly from one person to another. Perhaps you checked more of the boxes in the Depth of Processing category than the Ease of Overstimulation category.

As you move through the worksheets, take what you resonate with and works for you and let go of the rest.

Getting to Know Yourself

1. Reflect on a recent situation that made you feel overwhelmed. Describe the specific details and how it affected you emotionally.

2. Write about a positive experience where your sensitivity served as a strength.

3. Describe a time when you felt misunderstood or judged due to your sensitivity. How did it make you feel, and how did you cope with those emotions?

4. Write about activities or environments that energize and recharge you as an HSP.

Identifying Your Triggers

The following are some examples that can be challenging for HSPs. Check off the ones you relate to and add more to the list:

- ☐ Loud or sudden noises (e.g., concerts, parties, nightclubs)
- ☐ Bright or flickering lights
- ☐ Crowded or overwhelming social situations
- ☐ Aggressive or confrontational behavior
- ☐ Strong smells or scents
- ☐ High-density cities (e.g., New York City, Mumbai, Beijing)
- ☐ Violent or intense movies/TV shows
- ☐ Negative or critical feedback
- ☐ Being rushed or pressured to make decisions/decision fatigue
- ☐ Unpredictable or sudden changes in plans
- ☐ Excessive multitasking or high workload
- ☐ Feeling misunderstood or not being heard
- ☐ Being in close proximity to others for long periods of time
- ☐ Injustice or witnessing unfair treatment
- ☐ Experiencing rejection or feeling left out
- ☐ Harsh or aggressive communication styles
- ☐ Seeing or hearing about others suffering
- ☐ Feeling responsible for others' emotions or well-being

☐ _____

☐ _____

☐ _____

Transition Time

Transition time provides an opportunity for you to mentally and emotionally shift from one activity to another (e.g. before jumping out of bed, between meetings, etc.)

The following are some examples of transitions you can use:

- ☐ Take a bathroom break between meetings.
- ☐ Take a quick break to enjoy a healthy snack or hydrate yourself with a glass of water.
- ☐ Take a few minutes to close your eyes and practice deep breathing exercises.
- ☐ Write a to-do list for the upcoming activity to help organize your thoughts and create a clear plan.
- ☐ Engage in a brief physical exercise, such as stretching or a short walk, to refresh your body and mind.
- ☐ Practice mindfulness by focusing on your breath and bringing your attention to the present moment.
- ☐ Visualize yourself successfully transitioning and performing well in the upcoming task.
- ☐ Listen to calming music or nature sounds to relax and create a peaceful ambiance.
- ☐ Declutter your physical workspace to create a clean and organized environment.
- ☐ Take a few minutes to engage in a simple relaxation exercise like progressive muscle relaxation or guided imagery.

☐ _____

☐ _____

Establishing a Routine

Routines provide a sense of predictability and allow you to rely on muscle memory, which helps regulate stimulation level.

Identify your priorities and start with these:

	Personal	Professional
Priorities	e.g. sleep, food, exercise, self care, etc.	e.g. deadlines, classes
Wants	e.g. projects	e.g. tasks with no deadline

2. How do you envision your ideal routine? Consider factors such as timing, structure, and activities. (you can use the planner at the end of these worksheets)

3. What challenges or barriers do you anticipate in sticking to a routine?
How might you overcome them?

4. Are there any specific goals or intentions you have in mind while
establishing this routine?

5. How can you incorporate self-care and relaxation into your routine?

6. At the end of the day, reflect on what worked well, where did you need
more time, and what can you improve:

Removing and Reducing Distractions

Removing or reducing distractions can reduce stimulation level. Consider that even small adjustments like organizing a stack of paper can make a difference.

Take a moment to assess how you respond to different colors, shapes, textures, spacing, lighting, sound, and scents in your space. Make a list of disturbing things you want to change along with ideas about how you can change them:

	Disturbing	How can you change it?
Sounds	e.g.: ticking clock	e.g.: replace it with a digital one.
Colors/Scenery		
Textures		
Scents		
Lighting		

Social Situations

In social settings, HSPs may experience overwhelming emotions or become easily overstimulated. For instance, a crowded and noisy event like a party can quickly drain their energy and trigger anxiety or stress.

The pressure to conform to societal expectations, engage in small talk, or participate in group activities can also be challenging for HSPs, as they often prefer deep conversations and meaningful connections.

If you're contemplating whether or not you should go to a social event, the following questions may help you decide:

Social event: _____

1. Is this social event important or necessary for me personally or professionally?

2. How am I feeling physically and emotionally right now? Am I well-rested and in a balanced state?

3. What are my expectations for this event? Am I seeking connection, enjoyment, or some other specific outcome?

4. Have I considered the potential sensory stimulation and environmental factors that may impact me at the event (e.g., noise levels, crowd size, lighting)?

5. Am I in a position to set and maintain boundaries during the event, such as taking breaks, stepping away, or leaving if needed?

6. Do I have the energy and capacity to handle potential social interactions, small talk, or emotional intensity that may arise?

7. Will attending this event add to or alleviate my stress?

8. Will attending this event align with my personal values and contribute to my long-term well-being?

9. Have I considered any previous experiences in similar social situations and how they have affected me positively or negatively?

10. Am I willing and able to engage in self-care measures before, during, and after the event to support my own well-being?

Social Bill of Rights

In social situations, I have the right to:

- ☐ Take time to think before responding to invitations or requests.
- ☐ Decline invitations or activities that don't align with my values or interests.
- ☐ Change my mind.
- ☐ Say no without feeling guilty.
- ☐ Arrive late or leave early.
- ☐ Choose who I spend my time with.
- ☐ Take breaks or step away from overwhelming situations.
- ☐ Maintain personal privacy and keep certain aspects of my life private.
- ☐ Participate or withdraw from social activities according to my comfort level.
- ☐ Shift into an observer role in groups.
- ☐ Regularly check in with myself.
- ☐ Express boundaries regarding physical touch or personal space.

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Checking In With Yourself

Use the following questions to check in with yourself before, during and after the event:

1. How is my body reacting? Am I experiencing any physical tension or discomfort?

2. How am I feeling in this moment? Am I comfortable, anxious, energized, or drained?

3. Is there a need for me to take a break or step away from the crowd to recharge?

4. Am I overwhelmed by sensory stimulation, such as noise, lights, or crowds?

5. Are my boundaries being respected? Am I able to assert myself if necessary?

6. Am I engaging in authentic and meaningful conversations, or am I just going through the motions?

7. Are the social interactions draining or energizing me? Am I enjoying the company of others?

8. What do I need to make the experience more positive/recover?

Setting Boundaries

1. Reflect on past experiences:

Think about situations where you felt your boundaries were crossed or disregarded. What were the specific instances? How did they make you feel? What consequences did it have for your well-being?

2. Identify your personal boundaries:

Take some time to define your own boundaries. What makes you feel uncomfortable in different areas of your life (e.g., physical, emotional, social)? Consider your energy levels, need for alone time, and what drains or energizes you.

3. Recognize warning signs:

Pay attention to the warning signs that indicate your boundaries are being crossed. What physical sensations or emotions arise when your boundaries are violated? How can you become more aware of these signs in real-time to take proactive action?

Setting boundaries is an ongoing process. Each time you notice yourself feeling uncomfortable, consider if a boundary needs to be set.

Saying No

Saying is one simple way to set boundaries.

Think of someone who asked something from you recently and try answering the following questions.

If you can't think of one, use the following questions next time someone makes a request:

- If I tell them no, what am I afraid might happen?

- What might they do?

- What would that mean about me?

- How could I cope with that?

Challenging Limiting Beliefs

The following is a list of limiting beliefs HSPs may have. Check off the ones you relate to and add more to the list:

- ☐ "I'm too sensitive to handle criticism or conflict."
- ☐ "I'm responsible for everyone's emotions and well-being."
- ☐ "I need to avoid all potentially overwhelming situations."
- ☐ "My sensitivity is a weakness, and I'm inferior to others."
- ☐ "I can't handle change or new experiences."
- ☐ "I'm too emotional and need to suppress my feelings."
- ☐ "I'm too sensitive to be in a relationship."
- ☐ "I have to say yes to every request or demand."
- ☐ "I'm not capable of handling stressful situations."
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Choose one limiting belief and challenge it using the following prompts:

Limiting belief: _____

- Where did this belief come from? Is there a specific event or experience that influenced it?

- What evidence do I have for this belief being true? Are there any instances where it may not be accurate?

- How does holding onto this belief impact my life? Are there any negative consequences?

- What are some alternative perspectives or beliefs that contradict my limiting belief? Can I find evidence to support these alternative perspectives?

- How would my life look if I didn't hold onto this limiting belief?
What possibilities and opportunities could open up for me?

- What would I say to a dear friend who is struggling with the same belief?

Identify Your Values

Having strong values helps in maintaining a sense of grounding and purpose. These values will shape your behavior and decisions.

Use the following prompts and the list of values below to reflect on your values:

1. Take some time to think about meaningful moments or experiences in your life. Consider times when you felt fulfilled, proud, or aligned with your true self. What values were present during those moments?

2. Think about activities, hobbies, or causes that ignite a sense of enthusiasm or purpose within you. Consider what underlying values are at play in those pursuits. For example, if you are passionate about environmental conservation, the value of sustainability may be important to you.

3. Pay attention to situations or events that trigger strong emotional reactions in you. Feelings of anger, sadness, or joy can provide insights into the values that are being challenged or upheld. Reflect on why certain situations evoke such strong emotions and consider what values are connected to those feelings.

4. Think about the people you admire or look up to. What qualities or values do they embody? Identifying the values that resonate with you in others can often indicate what you value in yourself.

List of Values

****Relationships****

Trust
Honesty
Respect
Communication
Empathy
Compassion
Loyalty
Equality
Support
Intimacy
Forgiveness
Authenticity
Kindness
Patience
Independence
Quality time

****Career/Work****

Integrity
Professionalism
Purpose
Growth
Collaboration
Innovation
Autonomy
Leadership

Meaningful contribution
Work-life balance
Adaptability
Continuous learning
Creativity
Resilience
Ethical conduct
Goal-oriented
Recognition

****Health/ Wellness****

Balance
Physical fitness
Mental well-being
Nutrition
Self-care
Mindfulness
Stress management
Emotional intelligence
Hygiene
Energy
Holistic health
Self-compassion
Body positivity

****Personal Growth****

Learning

Curiosity
Self-reflection
Self-discipline
Goal-setting
Open-mindedness
Self-awareness
Self-confidence
Resilience
Decision-making
Communication skills
Time management
Problem-solving
Self-motivation
Critical thinking

****Finances:****

Financial stability
Independence
Planning
Frugality
Generosity
Long-term security
Philanthropy
Investing
Abundance mindset
Budgeting

Spirituality/Religion	**Recreation and Leisure**	Advocacy
Faith	Leisure**	Empowerment
Love	Fun	Solidarity
Compassion	Joy	Human rights
Gratitude	Adventure	Service to others
Forgiveness	Relaxation	Mentorship
Worship	Playfulness	**Environment**
Meditation	Socializing	Respect for nature
Connection	Hobbies	Sustainability
Peace	Intellectual stimulation	Eco-friendliness
Mindfulness	Artistic expression	Renewable energy
Hope		Wildlife protection
Service	**Community **	Climate change awareness
Morality	Social justice	Environmental education
Wisdom	Equality	
Inner peace	Volunteerism	

5. Once you have a list of potential values, prioritize them based on their importance to you. Consider which values are non-negotiable and which can be flexible depending on the context.

6. Think of ways you can incorporate those values in different areas of your life:

For example: if you value environmental sustainability, you may think of ways to adopt eco-friendly habits like reducing waste, conserving energy and water, and supporting sustainable initiatives.

	Things you can do live more in line with your values
Relationships	
Career/Work	
Health and Wellness	
Personal Development	
Finances	
Spirituality/Religion	
Recreation and Leisure	
Community Engagement	
Environment	

Body Awareness

Body awareness helps you tune in to your physical sensations, and emotions, and promotes self-regulation.

Here is a simple body awareness exercise you can try:

1. Find a comfortable and quiet space where you can sit or lie down without distractions. Close your eyes and take a few slow, deep breaths to relax your body and mind.
2. Begin by focusing your attention on your breath. Notice the sensation of the breath as you inhale and exhale.
3. Now, slowly shift your attention to different parts of your body, starting from your toes and moving upward.
4. As you focus on each body part, pay attention to any sensations, tension, or discomfort that may be present. Without judgment or trying to change anything, simply observe the sensations in each area.
5. Take note of any emotions or thoughts that arise during this process, and gently bring your attention back to the physical sensations.
6. Continue moving your attention up through your feet, calves, knees, thighs, hips, abdomen, chest, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, and finally, your head. Spend a few moments exploring each body part and allowing yourself to fully experience the sensations present.
7. When you are ready, gently open your eyes and slowly bring your awareness back to the present moment.

Take a moment to reflect on what your body communicated to you:

1. What physical sensations did you notice during the body awareness exercise? (e.g. *Tension or tightness, aches or pains, tingling or numbness, warmth or coolness, itching or tickling, lightness or heaviness, bloating or fullness, fatigue or exhaustion, fluttering or pulsating, soreness or stiffness, dizziness or lightheadedness, shortness of breath or tightness in the chest, clamminess or sweating, hunger or thirst, restlessness or fidgeting, shaking or trembling, calmness or relaxation, etc.*)

2. Were there any areas of tension or discomfort in your body? If so, what do you think might have contributed to them?

3. Did any emotions arise as you focused on different body parts? If yes, what were those emotions, and what do you think may have triggered them?

4. Were there any thoughts or mental chatter that arose during the exercise? If so, what were they, and how did they influence your experience?

5. How did you respond to the sensations, emotions, and thoughts that surfaced during the exercise? Were you able to approach them with curiosity and non-judgment?

6. Did you learn anything new about your body or yourself through this practice? If yes, what insights did you gain?

Basics of Self-Care

Self-care involves taking deliberate actions to prioritize and maintain your physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Here are some basics of self-care. Rate each item and think of ways you can improve it:

	Quality rate (0-5)	Things you can do to improve
Sleep		e.g. Creating a calming bedtime routine, like reading a book
Exercise		e.g. Choosing activities that fit your preferences and lifestyle, such as walking,
Diet		e.g. drinking more water throughout the day
Relaxing Activities		e.g. Finding activities that help you unwind and reduce stress, such as taking baths
Spirituality		e.g. Engaging in mindfulness or meditation practices
Social connections		e.g. Engaging in hobbies that allow for connection

Self-Compassion

1. Reflect on a recent situation where you felt self-critical or hard on yourself. Write about how that self-criticism made you feel and explore what kind and compassionate words you would say to a close friend experiencing the same situation.

2. List three things you appreciate about yourself, whether they are personal qualities, skills, or accomplishments. Reflect on why these aspects of yourself are worthy of self-compassion and kindness.

3. Recall a mistake or failure that still bothers you. Write about how you can reframe and learn from this experience with self-compassion. How can you treat yourself with kindness and understanding rather than harsh judgment?

4. Write about a moment in your life when you showed compassion towards someone else. Reflect on how that experience made you feel and explore ways you can extend that same level of compassion to yourself.

5. Describe a self-care practice or activity that brings you joy and nurtures your well-being. Write about how engaging in self-care activities supports your self-compassion and mental health.

[illegible]

Daily Planner

DAY :

5 AM

6 AM

7 AM

8 AM

9 AM

10 AM

11 AM

12 AM

1 PM

2 PM

3 PM

4 PM

5 PM

6 PM

7 PM

8 PM

9 PM

10 PM

today's focus

to-do list

notes

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No diagnosis under this title · not a DSM-5-TR diagnosis
- ICD-11 CDDR: · not an ICD-11 mental disorder diagnosis
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Differentiate temperament from autism, ADHD, anxiety, trauma-related hyperarousal, migraine, sensory or medical conditions, and ordinary variation; impairment is not inherent.

Document-specific corrections

- State that highly sensitive person/sensory-processing sensitivity is a temperament/research construct, not a DSM-5-TR or ICD-11 diagnosis.
- Do not score the HSP test as diagnostic; identify its source, psychometric limits, permission, and intended use before publication.
- Differentiate sensory sensitivity from autism, ADHD, trauma hyperarousal, anxiety, migraine, hearing/vision conditions, medication effects, and ordinary variation.
- Frame routines, transition time, boundaries, and reduced stimulation as optional accommodations-not evidence of pathology or cure.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Pages [1, 3, 5, 34]: identify each measure and rights holder; verify intended population, reliability/validity, scoring and cutoffs, reproduction permission, and current license. If these are author-created items, label them informal, remove diagnostic cutoffs, and do not claim validation.

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Pages [2, 9]: require topic-qualified clinical review for consent, readiness, contraindications, escalation thresholds, and whether clinician-guided use is necessary.

Crisis and current resources

- Use condition-specific neurodevelopmental, trauma, anxiety, or medical assessment resources when indicated.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- <https://988lifeline.org/>