

# The Plight of the Empath or Highly Sensitive Person

*Guest article by Kathy Moore*

I see many clients in my practice that are overwhelmed by or stuck in some intensely negative, recurring emotion-- especially guilt. Some exhibit such intense and unexplained sorrow they say things like, "I've been crying all week for no reason!"

I would characterize most, if not all, of these clients as: highly spiritually evolved, accepting responsibility for their own lives, serious about working through their issues and open-minded.

So why can't they seem to get past these problems? When I began to intently study this phenomenon, I started seeing similarities and making connections.

Most of these clients would spend as much time (in the pre-talk portion of their sessions) relating other people's problems and how they were affected by them as they did "their own stuff." They frequently made comments regarding seemingly unexplained anger, grief or guilt in themselves, that they simultaneously recognized, yet could easily explain in friends and relatives.

What I began to realize was that these clients were not only extremely empathic, but had no idea what to do about it.

In fact, I now believe at least 60 percent of my current clients are highly empathic and, of these, a large portion of the emotional problems they suffer from are not their own.

As synchronicity would have it, shortly after I made this connection, my copy of Issue #29 of Intuition Magazine arrived. There, on page 8, begins an article by Maggie Oman Shannon, titled 'The Sensitivity Trait.' Maggie Oman Shannon's article chronicles the work of research psychologist and psychotherapist Elaine Aron.

## The Plight of the Empath or Highly Sensitive Person (HSP)

### Research Findings and Recommendations

Elaine Aron claims, "high sensitivity can be an asset if you arrange your life to accommodate this gift." Her book, [The Highly Sensitive Person: How to Thrive when the World Overwhelms You](#), details her research findings, which include:

- The brains of highly sensitive people have more activity and blood flow in the right hemisphere, indicating an internal rather than an external focus.
- What is moderately arousing to most people is overwhelming to HSPs.
- HSPs often have decreased serotonin levels resulting from the repeated stress of over arousal.
- Likewise, they have more reactive immune systems (allergies) and more sensitive nervous systems.
- The sensitivity trait is just as likely among men as among women; both represent about 20 percent of the population.

### Some recommendations of Aron's for HSPs

- Spend at least eight to ten hours per day in bed, whether sleeping or not, plus an extra two hours spent in meditation or other forms of solitude and one hour of outdoor exercise.
- Make sure to have plenty of "down time", including: one full day per week completely off, one month of vacation per year (split up, preferably), time with animals and plants in nature as often as possible.

- Keep the following items on hand: earplugs (for loud noise), silk wrap or blanket of natural materials (to cuddle up in with favorite herbal tea), flowers, candles, incense (to please all the senses), protein snacks (as sensory over arousal depletes blood sugar).

I've uncovered my own recommendations from working with HSPs.

First, use some form of releasing therapy, such as Yoga therapy; hypnotherapy; energy work of any kind, such as Reiki; Dance; MAP or ACCESS, to "let go" of stuck emotions, whether yours or someone else's. Then practice either a shielding or a channeling /transmuting program.

In a shielding program, HSPs would typically visualize surrounding themselves with white light and placing a reflective shield outside the light, so negative energies from others get sent back. This, I believe is the most commonly used type of protection. In a similar concept, Native Americans brought us "smudging" using sage sticks. A healer friend of mine has a prayer she uses in the shower, "Please let all negative emotions that are not mine be washed away in this shower."

However, I agree with Judith Orloff, MD, who spoke recently during a Mind Science Foundation lecture. She said she made a conscious decision, even though highly empathic herself, not to shield herself, but to open 100 percent to her vulnerability.

If this idea fits better with your belief system, you can still strengthen yourself by seeing yourself as a channel for a higher energy source, instead of someone who needs protection. Something that worked very well for me during a big shift in my own consciousness was to sing "The Prayer of St. Francis" over and over again as a mantra. (This prayer, set to music, begins "Make me a channel of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love...") And, actually visualize yourself as some form of pipe or other conduit, allowing Universal energy to flow through you to heal people and situations around you. I have a friend who allows the negative energy of others to flow through him and sends it into Mother Earth to be transmuted into positive again. Just sitting in the same room with him is extremely refreshing and empowering. You don't have to be born with this talent; you can develop it, and, in the process, heal your own life. Through the use of these and other techniques, being born highly sensitive can truly become a blessing. If you'd like more information on this subject, I highly recommend either of Judith Orloff's books or the one highlighted in this article, by Elaine Aron. Or, as always, feel free to contact me.

**About this contributor:** *Kathy Moore, MBA, CH, is in full-time practice as a hypnotist and motivational consultant. She is also co-producer of a holistic health show in the San Antonio area ([www.welltv.freesevers.com](http://www.welltv.freesevers.com)) called Wellness Connection. For more information, visit her Web site at [www.mooreinspire](http://www.mooreinspire)*