

# 8 steps to understand and support your highly sensitive child

Some children experience the world more intensely, noticing subtle details, feeling emotions deeply, and reacting strongly to their surroundings. These children are often referred to as Highly Sensitive Persons (HSPs), a trait found in approximately 30% of children. Recognising and understanding high sensitivity can help parents nurture these children effectively so that the strengths associated with being an HSP can be uncovered, as I outline below.

## 1. Recognise High Sensitivity as a Trait

High sensitivity is a natural variation in temperament, not a condition to diagnose. HSPs tend to process sensory information more deeply, leading to increased awareness of subtleties and heightened emotional responses. These children often develop strong intuition, creativity, and problem-solving skills—qualities that are increasingly valued in the modern workforce.

## 2. Understand Emotional Absorption

Highly sensitive children often absorb the emotions of those around them, which can intensify already charged environments. For example, during school tests, they may not only manage their own anxiety but also sense the stress of classmates, making the experience more overwhelming. Left unchecked, this can cause life-long confusion between their own and others' feelings; but learning to navigate these emotions can help them develop strong interpersonal skills, which are essential for leadership and teamwork in professional settings.

## 3. Provide a Safe Space to Process Feelings

Create a calming environment at home where your child can retreat to decompress after stimulating events. This space can help them process their emotions, and as they get older, distinguish more clearly their emotions from those of others. In the long term, this fosters emotional intelligence and an understanding of how to manage boundaries around this trait.

## 4. Be Mindful of Sensory Overload

Bright lights, loud noises, and crowded spaces can be particularly overwhelming for HSPs. Implementing strategies like using noise-cancelling headphones, adjusting lighting, or scheduling downtime after busy events can help manage this sensory input. Teaching



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children how to advocate for their sensory needs can build self-awareness and resilience—key traits in high-performing professionals.

### **5. Prepare for Transitions and New Experiences**

Sudden changes can be challenging for sensitive children. Discuss upcoming events in detail, role-play potential scenarios, and practice relaxation techniques to help them feel more prepared and secure. This ability to anticipate and adapt to change is a core competency in the ever-evolving workplace.

### **6. Support Self-Regulation**

Teach your child coping mechanisms such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness, or using stress-relief tools like stress balls. These techniques can empower them to manage overwhelming emotions effectively, fostering the emotional resilience that modern employers value in team dynamics and leadership roles.

### **7. Encourage Downtime and Restorative Activities**

Allow your child time to engage in calming activities like reading, drawing, or spending time in nature. This downtime is crucial for them to recharge and maintain emotional balance. In a world where burnout is common, developing self-care habits early on can translate into healthier work-life balance in adulthood.

### **8. Validate Their Feelings**

Acknowledge your child's emotions without judgment. Phrases like "I understand that this is overwhelming for you" can make them feel seen and supported, fostering trust and resilience. The emotional intelligence which is cultivated as a result of this, including the ability to communicate and empathise, is increasingly recognised as a key success factor in leadership and collaborative work environments.

### **Final Thoughts**

Parenting a highly sensitive child presents unique challenges and rewards. By understanding and supporting their sensitivity, you can help them develop confidence, emotional intelligence, and the ability to thrive in various environments. Moreover, these skills—self-awareness, empathy, adaptability, and creativity—are becoming some of the most sought-after qualities in the workforce of the future.

This is why I believe in the power of our highly sensitive children. Join the conversation in changing the narrative: [www.nurtureandthrive.co.uk](http://www.nurtureandthrive.co.uk)

Charlotte 😊