

HIGHLY SENSITIVE PEOPLE

Carlos Alberto Rosas Jimenez ^{1 2}, Orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1529-3785>

PESSOAS ALTAMENTE SENSÍVEIS

PERSONAS ALTAMENTE SENSIBLES

*Personas altamente sensibles (PAS)*³ (Pardo, 2018) is an easily read book with a scientific description of what a High Sensitive Person (HSP) is. This book, based on previous psychological research, seeks to alert the scientific community of how high sensitivity has been confused with introversion, inhibition, and neuroticism. The truth is that previous works, on which this book is based, have allowed HSP to better understand themselves. Some of the main features of these people are deep information processing, high sensitivity, high frequency with which they are overstimulated and great ability to capture details and subtleties.

In six chapters Rafael Pardo gives us the following elements about the HSP: First, he describes 'What is a highly sensitive person?'; second, he states the 'Scientific foundations'; third, he presents a 'Social survival Guide for a HSP'; fourth, he helps to solve when 'I am a HSP and I don't understand it'; fifth, he provides 'Some useful advice'; and sixth, it makes available some 'Spiritual keys'.

As mentioned above, there are four traits that describe HSP very well. The first is that they deeply process information, that is, they are large ruminants, they have an open and flexible mind, they capture a large amount of information and, need to process it more slowly than others. However, rumination is not related to the hyper-reflection of neurotics; it is rather a need to break down what they have perceived at a glance. Second, they are easily overstimulated, that is, they have a highly developed sensory capacity, they receive much more information (between eight and ten times compared to a non-HSP) from the environment around them; and they not only capture the information with greater quantity, but also with higher quality. However, an excess of environmental stimulation depletes them, so if a HSP has captured a lot of information in a day, he/she will need to sleep more than a non-HSP, even a nice day can exhaust them. Third, they are emotional and empathetic, they are good listeners to confidences, they are skillful in dealing with other people's intimate issues or accepting problems, they are highly involved when someone's justice or honor has been questioned and they cannot bear aggressiveness neither lies nor double intentions. Similarly, they are often willing to make simple gifts and be nice to other people. The problem

¹ Facultad de Bioética, Universidad Anáhuac, Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico.

² carlosalbertorosasj@gmail.com

³ From now on, as the author of the book does, we will refer to Highly Sensitive People or Highly Sensitive Person as 'HSP'.



is that their sentimentality means that sometimes they can tend to adopt ways of emotional dependency or overwhelm others with their demands for affection and closeness. Fourth, they are able to perceive nuances through all five senses, but this is not simply due to the physical acuity of their bodily senses, but also to a more developed neurosensing system. For example, they are experts in capturing non-verbal language and know whether or not the other person is happy with the visit of a particular person.

All of the above has a scientific basis. HSP have greater brain activity to recognize the feelings of others. On one hand, it has been demonstrated by means of an fMRI scanner (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) that HSP have a different empathetic circuit. On the other hand, studies show that individuals with high sensitivity showed greater brain activation in the functional areas of the brain that are involved in visual attention and the eye process. Likewise, Chinese and American professionals demonstrated that the release of dopamine in HSP has a different system. In addition to the above, HSP perceive differently, more freely, which allows them to be more focused on the details of the stimulus and less attentive to the cultural meaning associated with it, a characteristic that is very positive because it allows them to be less influenced by stereotypes or prejudices. Since they have a great facility to perceive artistic language, this causes relaxation.

It should be noted that high sensitivity is not identified with the introversion trait, nor is there a direct relationship between the four basic HSP traits with the five neurotic personality traits. The temperament of HSP has historically been very difficult to understand and has been rated with many labels, such as shy, inhibited, neurotic, etc., but the sensory process of HSP has been specifically found to be independent of introversion or neuroticism.

Dr. Pardo gives a brief social survival guide for HSP, indicating that it is not always appropriate to help, that empathy can sometimes harm the common good, that prejudices can also have a positive function depending on the context, that HSP should learn somehow to behave like others, and finally, to strive to fit into some social groups for their own good. Other useful advice that the author gives to the HSP is that they should practice logical thinking and rational analysis of situations, use a fixed way of proceeding before others, reorder the affective hierarchy, open up to the unforeseen, learn to establish limits and to know how to give time to the processes of others.

A particular feature that we want to highlight from the HSP is that working in front of the public generates a great emotional stress and that it will not be easy for them to overcome it. It is not surprising that those who work facing the public are prone to burn (burnout syndrome). AHSP is especially sensitive to the evaluation of others, so it will be easier to stress in this type of work. This is very important to know because a HSP can tend by nature to professions such as nurses, social workers or teachers, the author does not mention it, but we can add people in religious communities, priests or doctors. Therefore, they must take into account the emotional involvement of this type of task, and since there is an emotional reactivity in their way of acting, these types of professions are not always the most appropriate for them in the long term. Rather, HSP tend to fit well into the role of counselors, writers, historians, philosophers, artists, theologians, or therapists, among others. In short, they will not be the warrior kings or rulers who carry out the actions as leaders, but rather as advisers who guide the action and seek creative solutions to problems.

Finally, the author mentions that HSP are specially trained to grasp spiritual language. They have great need to extract deep meanings from the facts, the ability to understand and use symbols, their orientation to the help of people, their empathy for the suffering of others, their hunger for integrity or honesty and the desire of a new order of things because this world seems extremely ugly to them. Of course, the author says, they are unlikely to adapt

to a specific prayer group or charism since they are introverted (70%), intuitive, open, flexible and constantly searching. For them, there is no group, ideology or spiritual practice that exhausts the experience of God, hardly finding themselves comfortable in religious organizations.

To sum up, the book is an important key to reading from within, for those of us who identify with Highly Sensitive People. Therefore, we recommend reading this book for all those who may feel that they are more sensitive than the general population, as Pardo says, they are around 20% of the general population. In any case, it is a book that non-HSP should also read so that they understand a little more about these people, since the HSP existence can sometimes be heavy when they are not understood by the remaining 80% of the population. Dr. Pardo provides an extensive technical and specialized bibliography on the subject, which can be consulted by those who so wish and who can complement with scientific data what is presented in this book. We think that a book like this can be widely disseminated in the scientific community for its detailed and very complete references. Besides, it can be widely disseminated to the general public, given its clarity, precision in language and its short length. Finally, we encourage the publication of books like this that help us make progress in understanding and self-knowledge of society in general.

References

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Carlos Alberto Rosas Jimenez: Biologist, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia, Philosopher and Theologian, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Medellín, Colombia, Master in Global Bioethics (c), Universidad Anáhuac, México, D.F., México, CEO Fioretti - Child Protection.