

Is Your Child Highly Sensitive?

Instructions: Please answer each question as best as you can. Check answer if it is true or at least moderately true of your child, or was for a substantial time in the past. Leave unchecked if it has not been very true of your child, or was never at all true.

My child:

- ☐ startles easily.
- ☐ complains about scratchy clothing, seams in socks, or labels against his/her skin.
- ☐ doesn't usually enjoy big surprises.
- ☐ learns better from a gentle correction than strong punishment.
- ☐ seems to read my mind.
- ☐ uses big words for his/her age.
- ☐ notices the slightest unusual odor.
- ☐ has a clever sense of humor.
- ☐ seems very intuitive.
- ☐ is hard to get to sleep after an exciting day.
- ☐ doesn't do well with big changes.
- ☐ wants to change clothes if wet or sandy.
- ☐ asks lots of questions.
- ☐ is a perfectionist.
- ☐ notices the distress of others.
- ☐ prefers quiet play.
- ☐ asks deep, thought-provoking questions.
- ☐ is very sensitive to pain.
- ☐ is bothered by noisy places.
- ☐ notices subtleties (something that's been moved, a change in a person's appearance, etc.)
- ☐ considers if it is safe before climbing high.
- ☐ performs best when strangers aren't present.
- ☐ feels things deeply.

Scoring:

If you answered true to 13 or more of the questions, your child is probably highly sensitive. But no psychological test is so accurate that you should base how you treat your child on it.

If only one or two questions are true of your child, but they are extremely true, you might also be justified in calling your child highly sensitive.

The contents of this website and the self-tests it contains are not meant to diagnose or exclude the diagnosis of any condition. See more information on this subject in our FAQs.

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If you wish to use this questionnaire for psychological research, this questionnaire for parents is only published in *The Highly Sensitive Child*. It was developed following a similar process that we used in the initial stages of developing the original HSP Scale: interviews, initial questions, trying them out on a larger sample, and then systematically selecting a subset based on those data.

In this case, we conducted interviews with 40 parents, from which we wrote about 60 questions. These 60 were given to about 100 parents contacted on playgrounds or door. Based on their results, we reduced it to what is here.

Unlike the adult scale, however, we tried to balance the more positive and negative items (to avoid the problems explained in *Tips for SPS Researchers*). The alpha was .73. We did not do further checks of validity and reliability, and hence did not publish an article about it. There are researchers currently using it, and we will hopefully learn from them more about its qualities.

In the meantime, feel free to use it (with a 1-7 scale) and let us know the results. For now, you could reference the book and this note on this website. Do read the *Tips for SPS Researchers*. Also, read there about a version of the adult scale written for school-age children.