



# Self- Boundaries

FOR HIGHLY SENSITIVE PEOPLE

This handout is from the online course  
"Highly Sensitive Person Certified Training for Mental Health Professionals"  
from the Nickerson Institute of Integrative Health Training

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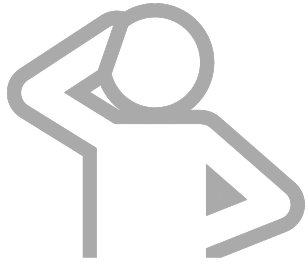
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# Physical

Some HSPs have a tendency to cross other people's physical boundaries. This can lead to all kinds of unpleasant and even serious consequences. Recognizing the pattern of behavior is an important first step.



## WHO, ME?

- Hugging or making physical contact with people you do not know (very well)
- Taking opportunities to touch someone when they didn't ask (neck rub)
- Instigating inappropriate (or high-risk) sexual behavior



## BUT WHY?

- Everyone needs physical contact, but those who didn't get what they needed as an infant may crave it more as an adult.
- Our highly sensitive systems pick up on the energy ('chemistry') of people and can sense the need in others for a hug or touch; or sometimes we are simply reflecting back what we sense in them.
- When our system starts running on overload (for any reason), the energy looks for a way out and is often expressed physically as well as emotionally.



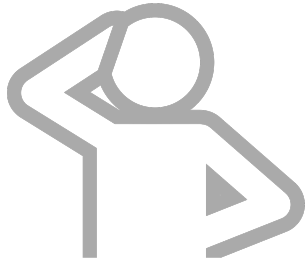
## NOW WHAT?

- Activities such as self-hugs, petting animals, and getting massages can help fill the need for physical contact.
- Ask permission to do what you have the urge to do. If you can't say it out loud or get the person's consent, then it wasn't appropriate to begin with.
- Run. Jump. Dance. Move. Channel the pent up energy into some other instant physical activity.



# Savior

HSPs have a desire to help others – whether that be emotionally, physically or practically. Sometimes we butt into other people's lives and start fixing things that we have no business doing.



## WHO, ME?

- It bothers you to see someone struggling with a problem of any kind.
- As soon as someone presents a problem, you offer advice or take steps to solve the problem yourself.
- You sometimes predict a problem will happen before it does and take steps so to help someone avoid it.



## BUT WHY?

- HSPs are born fixers. The trait was designed to keep the herd safe and well.
- If you sense someone is frustrated about a problem, you want to fix it to make them feel better - and then you will feel better, too.
- It's empowering to help others with their problems. It gives you a sense of control.

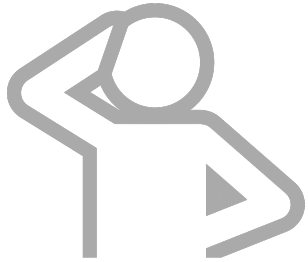


## NOW WHAT?

- Just listen. Most of the time, people don't want help and offering them help can make them feel incompetent.
- Let the person know you are there if they need. Make it clear you don't want to intrude unless asked.
- Sending positive thoughts/prayers will help both you and the person with the problem. Repeat daily.

# Yeser

Because HSPs want to be helpful, we often say "yes" to anyone and anything that is asked of us. This can often lead to being taken advantage of and also resentment, fatigue, burnout and broken relationships.



## WHO, ME?

- You become involved in someone else's projects or dreams that you would not have pursued on your own.
- People ask you to do things because you are good at doing things, so how can you refuse?
- You sense when there is a need and know you can help, so you step up (see the Savior page).



## BUT WHY?

- HSPs long to feel a connection with others which is why we sometimes invest our time and energy into helping others fulfill their dreams.
- We can't stand the feeling of rejection or hurt so we don't want to reject or hurt others.
- We don't want anyone to not like us. Ever. So we go along to avoid not being liked.

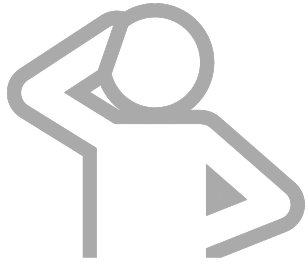


## NOW WHAT?

- Before saying 'yes', think about WHY you are considering saying 'yes'.
- If it's too hard to say "no", try saying "some other time, not this time, maybe next time".
- Invite a trusted friend to practice saying 'no' to. This will help you develop confidence.
- Make a commitment to yourself to the number of times you will say 'yes' in any given week. When the next person asks you to say 'yes', you can honestly reply "I've already made another commitment."

# Bluffer

HSPs often "bluff" their way through self-boundaries, drawing lines in the sand they know they will cross anyway. The intention is there, but the self-discipline is not. This can perpetuate a lack of self-care and disrespect from others.



## WHO, ME?

- You break your own rules (indulging in food/drink, time you get up or go to sleep, spending money).
- You play games or bargain with yourself to get what you want even if it's not good for you.
- You think about how you will respond if someone doesn't respect your boundaries, but you never follow through with it.



## BUT WHY?

- We often set up boundaries based on what we were taught growing up.
- HSPs tend to cross other's boundaries and repeat that (lack of) respect for our own boundaries.
- That desire we have to be liked and avoid conflict keeps us from following through with the promises we make to ourselves about maintaining our boundaries.



## NOW WHAT?

- Set up some self-boundaries that are easier to achieve (no junk food on Tuesdays) and increase the difficulty after you've maintained your goal.
- Set up a "test" boundary with someone and practice maintaining it (do not reply to any calls/text from that person for 30 minutes).
- Find healthy "instead of" activities (call a friend instead of replying to your ex's text message; give away something from your closet instead of splurging on something out of your budget).