

# Highly Sensitive Children in School: New Findings and Resources

Wednesday

**March 12<sup>th</sup>**

2-3pm (GMT)

Online (Zoom)



# Programme

- 14:00-14:05: **Welcome and introduction** (Prof Michael Pluess)
- 14:05-14:10: **Introduction to Sensitivity** (Prof Francesca Lionetti)
- 14:10-14:15: **Importance of School** (Prof Luciana Castelli)
- 14:15-14:25: **Summary of Research Findings** (Dr Jenni Kähkönen)
- 14:25-14:45: **Presentation of New Resources** (Cherry Hirst)
- 14:45-14:55: **Q&A** (Prof Michael Pluess)
- 14:55-15:00: **Farewell** (Prof Michael Pluess)



# Introduction to sensitivity

# What is high sensitivity?



High sensitivity is a **natural, genetically based** temperament trait.



Also influenced by our **environment** and **experiences**.



It involves **heightened awareness** and **deeper processing** of experiences, whether they are internal or external.



## What does it mean practically?

- To be more **attuned to details** in the environment
- To **reflect** more deeply
- To be more **emotionally reactive**
- To be **more responsive to physical stimuli**
- To pay **more attention** and be more attuned **with social cues**
- To be more sensitive to **positive experiences**

# Sensitivity, ADHD and Autism



- Sensitivity is a common personality trait, **not a disorder** or neurodevelopmental condition



- They can overlap but are **not the same**



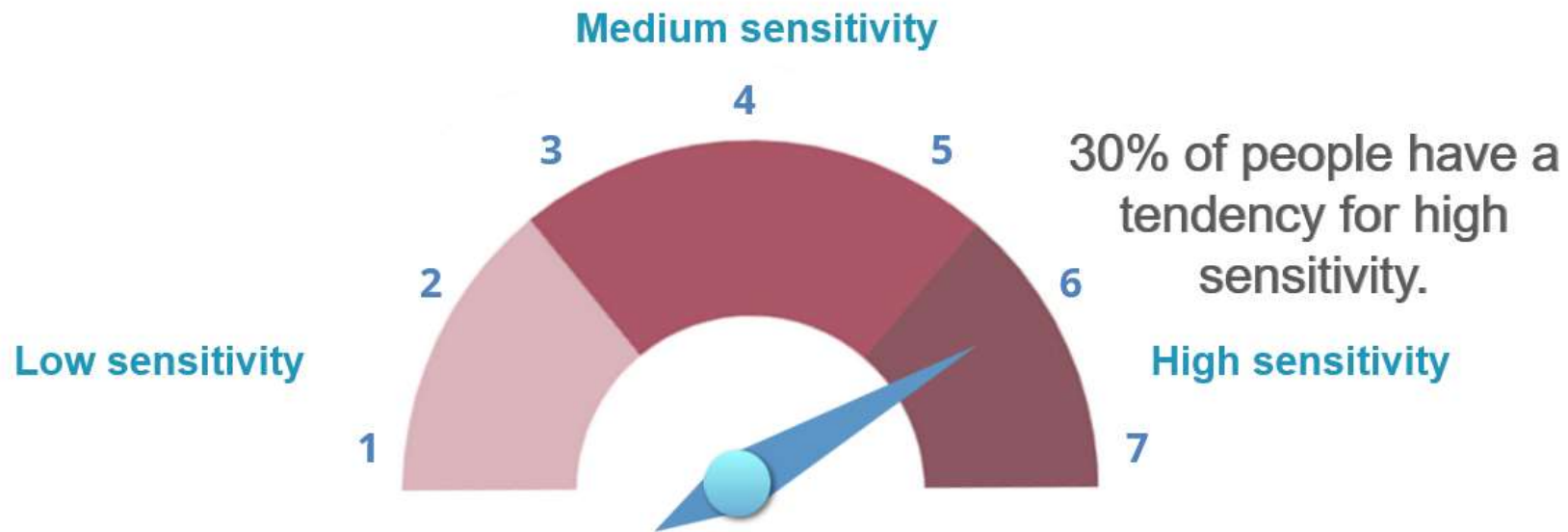
- Sensitivity can be relatively easily **managed** with **self-care**



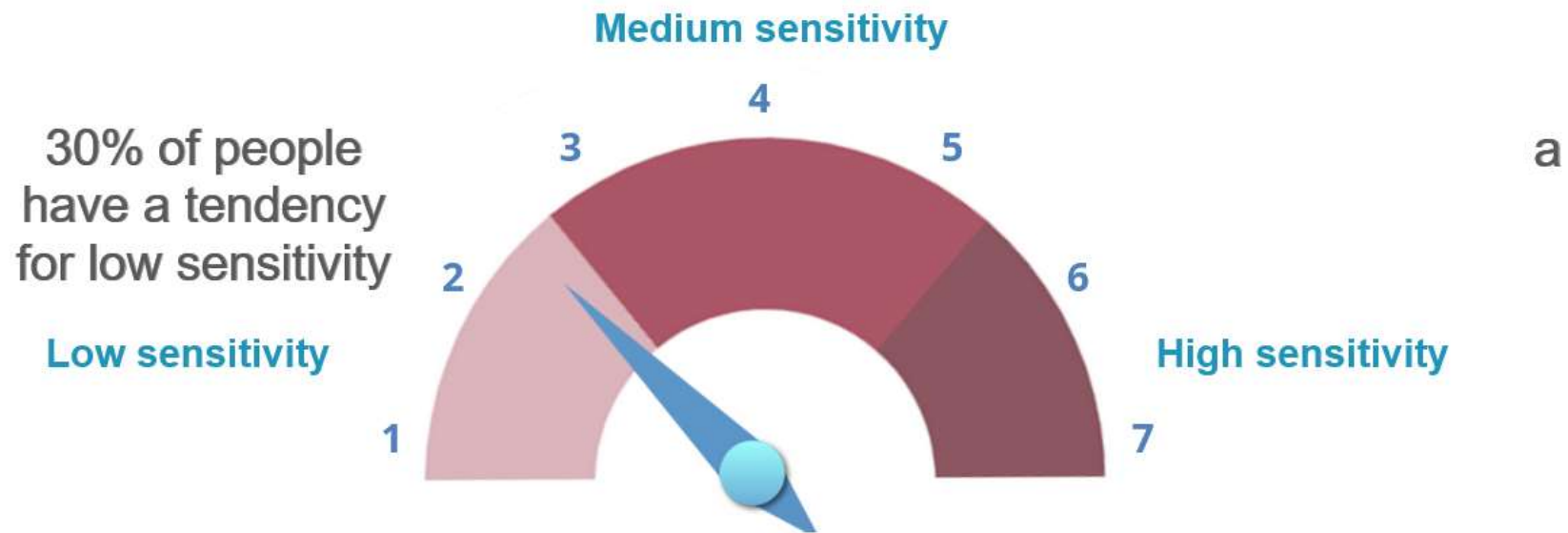
- However, some children could experience **overwhelm** or **overstimulation** in challenging environments.



# Sensitivity is a spectrum



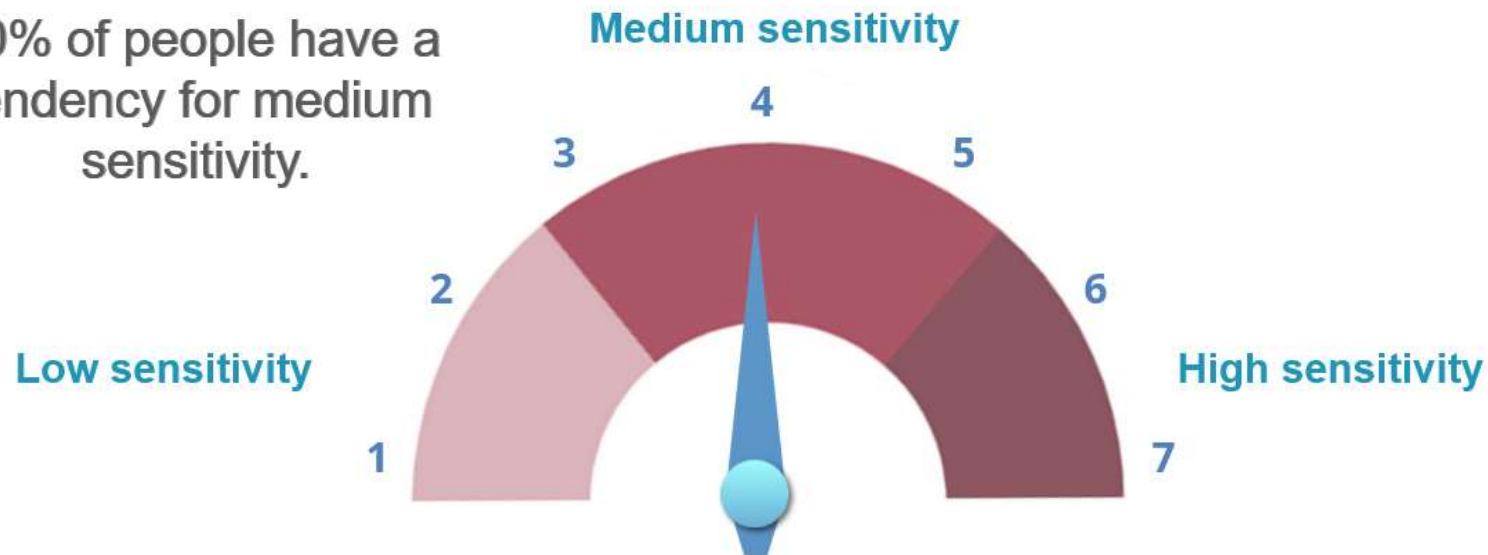
# Sensitivity is a spectrum





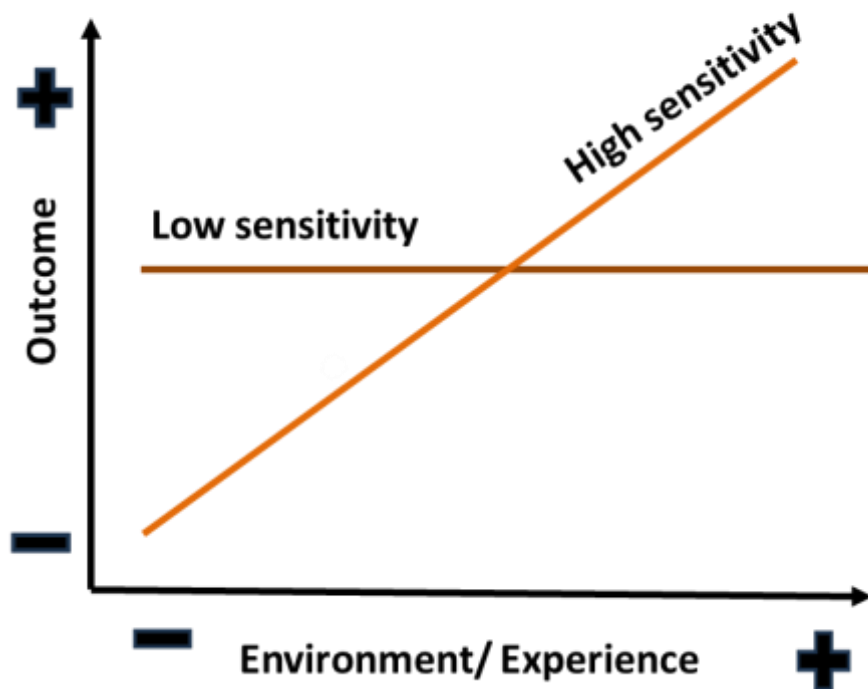
# Sensitivity is a spectrum

40% of people have a tendency for medium sensitivity.



# It all depends on context

Highly sensitive people are more sensitive to their environment, meaning they struggle more in stressful conditions but can also benefit more from positive experiences and environments



# Highly Sensitive Children at School

The importance of creating a positive school environment



# Schools are important developmental contexts for children.



- The **quality of the school environment and teacher-student interactions** play a crucial role in children's socio-emotional development and their social and academic adjustment.
- Students' well-being is strongly influenced by the school setting, particularly by a supportive, inclusive, and welcoming community, the presence of prosocial values, and a physically and emotionally safe environment.



# Negative environmental influences on Highly Sensitive Children

- Schools impose **time constraints** and **performance pressure**, leading to stress.
- Classrooms are often filled with bright colours, noise, and **constant stimuli**, which can overwhelm HSCs.
- Social **judgment** in school settings can heighten anxiety and self-consciousness.
- As a minority, HSCs may experience exclusion, isolation, and a sense of being misunderstood.



# School provides opportunities for Highly Sensitive Children

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School teaches emotional awareness and regulation.

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Empathy and prosocial behaviour can be nurtured through social interactions.

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Analytical thinking and abstract reasoning are actively developed.

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Creativity and problem-solving skills are encouraged and refined.

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Deep thinking and reflection on the consequences of one's actions are recognised and valued.





After implementing strategies to improve the quality of the school environment, teachers observed:



Reduced overstimulation, frustration and feelings of exclusion or misunderstanding



Reduced emotional reactivity



Development of effective emotional self-regulation strategies



Enhanced depth of thought and richer expression of reflection



Increased sense of acceptance and appreciation



Stronger expression of positive social and relational traits



Improved concentration and sustained engagement in activities



## Research on sensitivity in schools

- While there is a large body of research on sensitivity among children in relation to the family environment, **knowledge** of how sensitivity manifests within the **school environment is still limited**.
- There is also a **lack of research** in the field of education exploring the **implications for teachers** and educators of recognizing high sensitivity as an individual trait that significantly influences student development.

# Summary of the findings of the EStoSCHOOL project

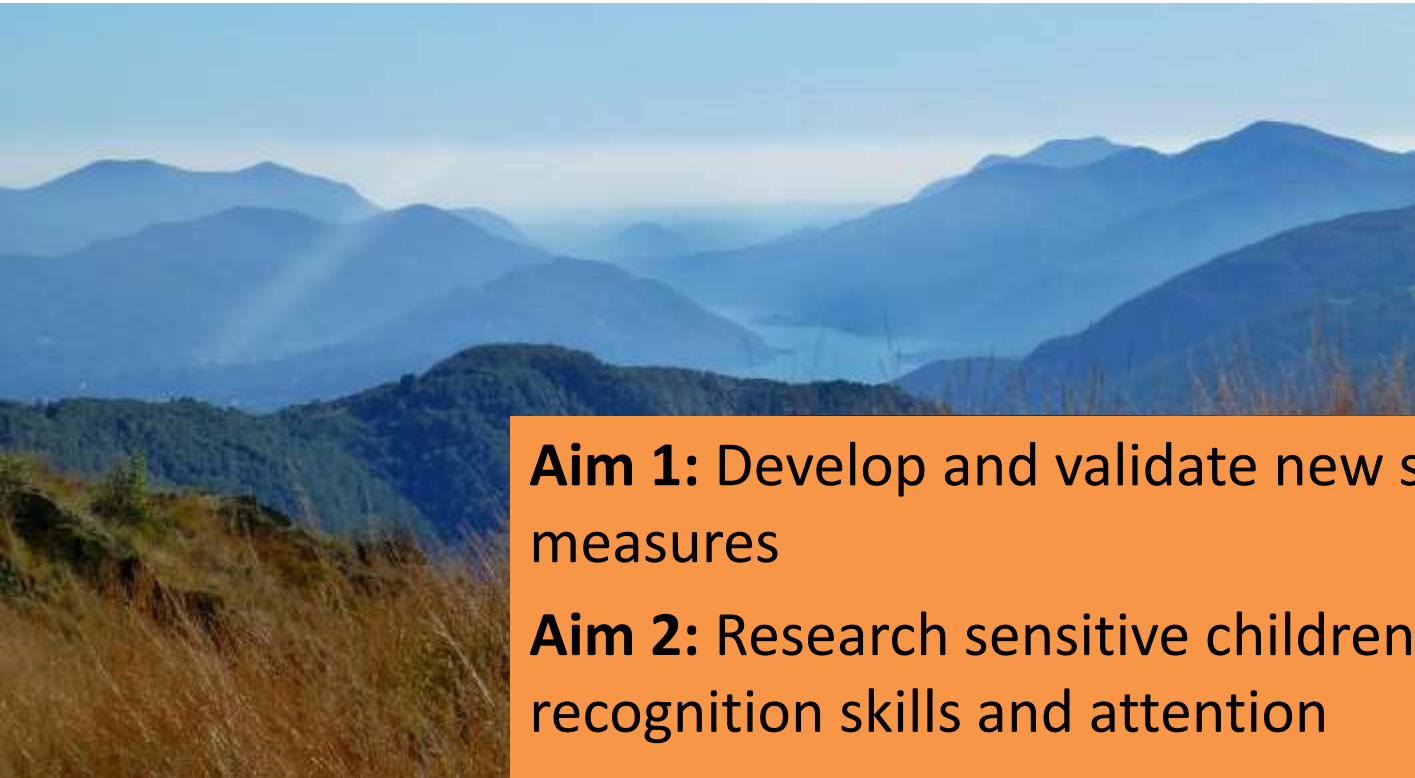
## Research team:

- Prof Michael Pluess (UK)
- Prof Francesca Lionetti (I)
- Prof Luciana Castelli (CH)
- Dr Jenni Kahkonen (UK)



University of Applied Sciences and Arts  
of Southern Switzerland

**SUPSI**



**Aim 1:** Develop and validate new sensitivity measures

**Aim 2:** Research sensitive children's emotion recognition skills and attention

**Aim 3:** Research the relationship between sensitivity and psychosocial and academic outcomes



# Methods

## Two longitudinal samples:

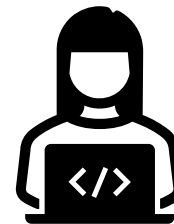
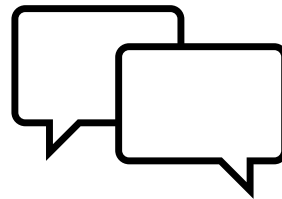
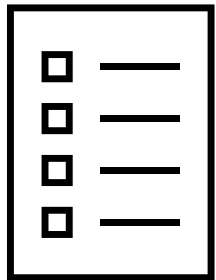
Study 1: Ticino,  
Switzerland (N = 220)

- Autumn 2019 – Spring 2021

Study 2: London, UK  
(N = 102)

- Autumn 2021 – Autumn 2022

## Measures

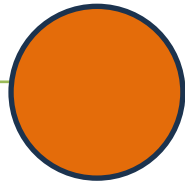


# Key outcomes and findings



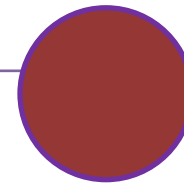
# Key outcome: The Highly Sensitive Child in School scale

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## CORE SENSITIVITY

1. Easily notices how others are feeling
2. Is thinking deeply about things
3. Is very sensitive to injustice
4. Gets easily distressed when other children are fighting
5. Appears to feel things deeply
6. Tries hard to avoid making mistakes or forgetting things



## OVERSTIMULATION

1. Struggles to focus in loud and chaotic situations
2. Needs some quiet time after an exciting activity
3. Feels easily overwhelmed when under pressure

# Example item



## **Is thinking deeply about things**

When discussing big questions or important topics during class, or when listening to instructions for an activity, the child appears to think more deeply about them than other children. This sometimes means the child requires more time to provide an answer, as they are still thinking about the question and considering different angles and aspects.

Another indication of this is that the child tends to ask thoughtful questions about the topic, even when the class discussion has moved on to a new subject.

# Key findings: HSC-School predicts emotion recognition skills

This aligns with previous studies reporting higher empathy and attention to detail in sensitive individuals

hate

unkind



worried

bored

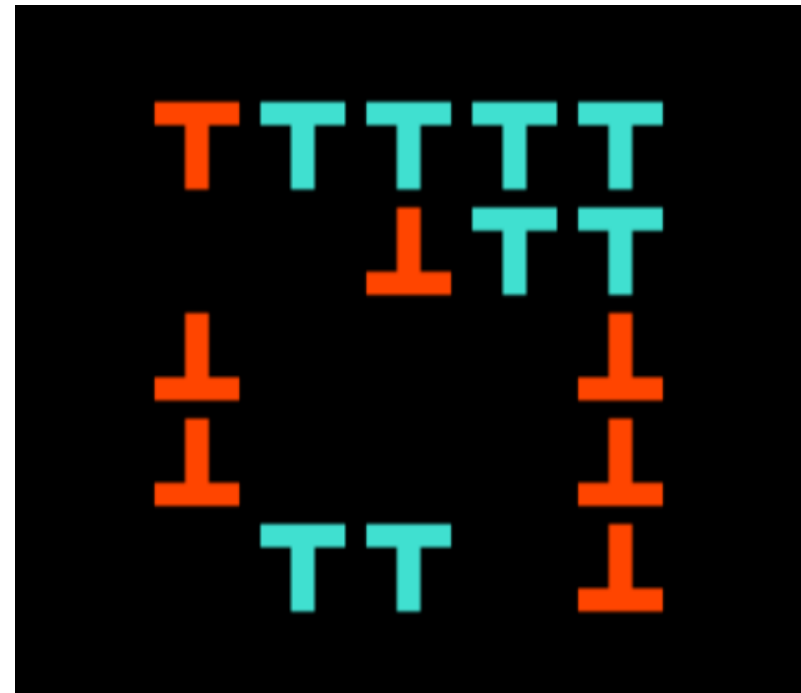
Baron-Cohen et al. (2001).  
Stimuli obtained from the  
website of ARC.

*Sensitivity*  
research.com

# Key findings: HSC-School predicts fewer impulsive mistakes in a visual search task

This aligns with previous studies suggesting that sensitive children:

- Avoid mistakes
- Show less impulsive behaviour



Visual search task. Screenshot of PsyToolkit stimuli (Stoet, 2011).

# Key findings: Highly sensitive children in school

**Switzerland:** Better grades, social competence, and fewer externalising problems (e.g., aggressive behaviour)



**UK:** Fewer externalising symptoms, but also higher internalising symptoms (e.g., worrying) especially in less emotionally supportive classrooms



# Key findings: Highly sensitive children in school

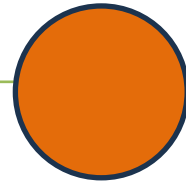
- More sensitive children's academic and socioemotional wellbeing varies between different school contexts





# Key outcome: The Highly Sensitive Child – Interview

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## INTERVIEW MEASURE

1. Assesses children's sensitivity using parent, child, and teacher interviews (NB! Not a clinical diagnosis)
2. Can only be conducted by trained experts
3. Initial findings are published (Kahkonen et al., 2024) but we will conduct further development before we will start offering assessments

# Summary

- We created new sensitivity measures (teacher-report, interview)
- The new teacher-report scale predicted
  - ✓ Higher emotion recognition skills
  - ✓ Fewer impulsive mistakes in an attention task
- Sensitive children's wellbeing is affected by the quality of the school context:
  - ✓ Generally positive associations found in Switzerland
  - ✓ In the UK higher sensitivity had fewer positive associations and linked to internalising symptoms, particularly in less supportive classrooms

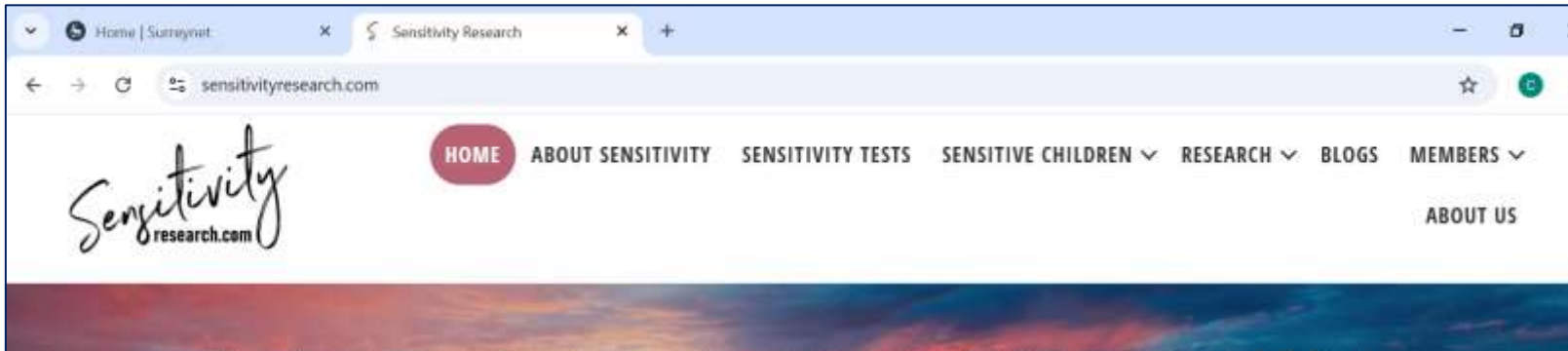
# References

- HSC-School: Kähkönen, J. E., Lionetti, F., Castelli, L., & Pluess, M. (2024, December 9). Assessing Environmental Sensitivity in the Primary School Context: The Development and Validation of the Highly Sensitive Child in School Scale (HSC – School). <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/mhrvz>
- Interview: Kähkönen, J. E., Lionetti, F., Castelli, L., & Pluess, M. (2024). Development and validation of the highly sensitive child interview for the assessment of environmental sensitivity in primary school children. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 222, 112592.
- Emotion recognition findings: Kähkönen, J. E., Lionetti, F., & Pluess, M. (2025, in press). Environmental Sensitivity in Children is Associated with Emotion Recognition, *Emotion*.
- Visual attention findings: Kähkönen, J. E., Lionetti, F., & Pluess, M. (in prep). Short Report: Environmental Sensitivity in Children is Associated with Visual Working Memory and Visual Search Performance.
- Longitudinal findings: Kähkönen, J. E., Lionetti, F., Castelli, L., & Pluess, M. (under review). Environmental Sensitivity in Primary School Children: A Longitudinal Analysis in Switzerland and the UK.

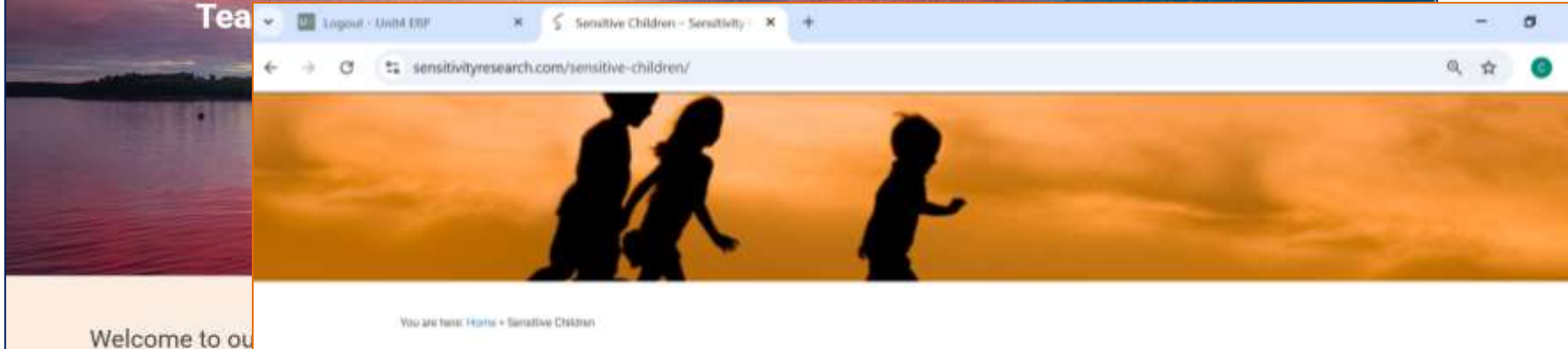


# Teacher resources

*Sensitivity*  
research.com



Website



Welcome to our  
resources

## SENSITIVE CHILDREN

Every child is different in how they are born with a natural ability to notice details of their environment, it also means they are more sensitive to their environment.

For highly sensitive children, they may struggle to flourish. At home, they may stick to their imaginative activities. At school, they may struggle to be confident students.

### Understanding individual children

By understanding their individual sensitivities, children can feel safe and confident. This allows them to flourish.

## Frequently asked questions

How can I provide a supportive environment for my child at home and at school? +

How can I get a professional assessment of a child's sensitivity? +

Why might a sensitive child struggle at school but not at home? +

What are the advantages and challenges of High Sensitivity at School? +

Are highly sensitive children generally introverted? +

Is sensitivity related to autism and other developmental conditions? +

The Sensitivity Research logo, featuring the word 'Sensitivity' in a large, cursive font and 'research.com' in a smaller, sans-serif font below it.

# Online sensitivity tests

## SENSITIVITY TESTS

Sensitivity can be easily and reliably measured using the four short tests provided below.

We have one new revised test for adults, one for children, one that parents can use to rate their own child, and one for teachers to use to rate students. [A previous version of the adult test is also available for researchers.](#)

These questionnaires have been carefully developed by researchers. But please note that the outcome of these self-report tests is not very precise and should only be considered as an estimated indication of one's sensitivity.

Your result will also be influenced by other factors, such as age, gender and nationality, especially if your score is close to another sensitivity group.



### Adult test

Use this test if you are an adult aged over 18 years old.



### Child test

Use this test if you are a child between 8 and 18 years of age.



### Test your child

Use this test to rate your own child if they are between 4 and 18 years of age.



### Test your student

Use this test to rate one of your students if they are between 6 and 10 years of age.

Note: All research data from our tests are anonymised. This means that no personal data about your student or yourself such as email or IP address is saved in our database.



Child code

For data and child protection purposes please use a code to identify your student.  
Do not use or include the child's name in this code.

### Question 1

This student is thinking deeply about things

Not at all

Moderately

Extremely



When discussing big questions or important topics during class, or when listening to instructions for an activity, the child appears to think more deeply about them than other children.

This sometimes means the child requires more time to provide an answer, as they are still thinking about the question and considering different angles and aspects. Another indication of this is that the child tends to ask thoughtful questions about the topic, even when the class discussion has moved on to a new subject.

Previous

Next

Start 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Complete 2 of 12

## STUDENT TEST RESULTS

Thank you for completing the sensitivity test for your student.  
Their score was 6.0

Your student is here on the Sensitivity Continuum



TEST ANOTHER STUDENT



### What does it mean to belong to the highly sensitive group?

Children in the high sensitivity group perceive and process the world around them more deeply than other students. They are more attuned to details in their environment and their internal feelings, making them highly responsive to physical stimuli (bright lights, loud noises, strong smells) and social cues, such as the emotions of others.

Highly sensitive students can experience more difficulties in challenging circumstances, but also tend to respond more strongly to positive experiences. They are often imaginative and diligent students with high attention to detail, who enjoy creative activities.

Not all children experience high sensitivity in the same way. Most do well at school socially and academically, but some may experience difficulties at school.

### Additional questions

The additional questions identify whether your student is experiencing challenges in the school environment that are common among highly sensitive children. A higher-than-average score (5 or above) indicates that the student might benefit from further investigation and support in this area.

Student struggles to focus in loud and chaotic situations

3/7

Student needs some quiet time after an exciting activity

5/7

Student feels easily overwhelmed under pressure

7/7

# Test your Student

- Code for privacy
- Overall sensitivity score
- Individual scores on overwhelm questions



# Paper version of 'test your student' questionnaire

**Highly Sensitive Child in School**

**Instructions:** Please answer each question according to how much the statement applies to the student. If a question is not relevant, please leave it out and move on. The test is based on assessment of a student's typical behaviour in the classroom and does not involve the child's participation. Please maintain confidentiality by using a student code.

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

		Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Is thinking deeply about things</b> When discussing big questions or important topics during class, or when listening to instructions for an activity, the child appears to think more deeply about them than other children. This sometimes means the child requires more time to provide an answer, as they are still thinking about the question and considering different angles and aspects. Another indication of this is that the child tends to ask thoughtful questions about the topic, even when the class discussion has moved on to a new subject.									
<b>Appears to feel things deeply</b> The child generally seems to experience emotions deeply, whether they are emotions of happiness or sadness. In some cases, the child may not express their emotions strongly, but subtle signs, such as their facial expressions, show that they are deeply moved. Regarding behaviour, the child may become quiet or withdraw when upset, or beam with pride and sit up straight when receiving praise. In addition, the child will remember and talk about a specific situation and experience that moved them emotionally even after some time has passed.									
<b>Gets easily distressed when other children are arguing</b> The child strongly dislikes it when other children are fighting, screaming or arguing with each other. In such situations, the child becomes easily upset, usually interrupts their activity in order to alert a teacher or other children or leaves the area where the conflict is taking place. Often, the child will mention the conflict even after it is over, which shows they have been thinking about it.									
<b>Easily notices how others are feeling</b> The child seems to be particularly good at recognizing when other people (e.g. a child or the teacher) are sad, happy or angry, even when they don't display overt emotions. For example, the child notices if another child is disappointed, even when they do not show the disappointment through crying or other obvious behaviours.									
<b>Is very sensitive to injustice</b> The child becomes easily upset when experiencing or witnessing injustice. If an injustice occurs in the classroom (e.g. a child is making fun of another, a child gets wrongly told off by the teacher) or during discussion of ethical issues, the child tends to show deep concern that justice will be restored (e.g. those that mistreated another will be punished, or a teacher apologises for wrongly telling a child off).									
<b>Tries hard to avoid mistakes or forgetting things</b> The child seems to try hard to avoid making errors or forgetting anything (e.g. a book or swimming costume). For example, the child puts a lot of effort into getting things right by re-reading something they have written to make sure there are no spelling mistakes. If the child makes an error or forgets something you can easily tell the child is upset by their emotional response such as disappointment or embarrassment.									
<b>Add up the Total Score</b>									
<b>Now calculate an average score of the questions answered</b> Total Score / ____ = ____									
<b>Results:</b> > 5 the student has a tendency towards high sensitivity. 3.5 to 5 the student has a tendency towards medium sensitivity. < 3.5 the student has a tendency towards low sensitivity.									
Please answer the additional questions over the page.									

**Overwhelm questions**

To identify if a student is experiencing challenges in the classroom.

		Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Struggles to focus in loud and chaotic situations</b> When the environment is chaotic or loud, the child seems to struggle to concentrate on a task, which may result in a performance that is worse than it would otherwise be. Although this is the case for most children, it is especially true for this child.									
<b>Needs some quiet time after an exciting activity</b> The child seems to need some quiet time after engaging in an exciting activity, such as playing with others or participating in group work at school. They may prefer spending time alone reading a book, drawing, or quietly playing with a close friend.									
<b>Feels easily overwhelmed when under pressure</b> The child appears distressed and tense when required to do many things in a short time or when being watched by someone else while performing a task.									

The additional questions identify whether your student is experiencing challenges in the school environment that are common among highly sensitive children. A higher-than-average score (5 or above) on any of the questions indicates that the student might benefit from further investigation and support in this area. Please go to the website [sensitivityresearch.com](https://sensitivityresearch.com) for more guidance.

Notes/Actions:

Reference: Kähkönen, J. E., Lionetti, F., Castelli, L., & Pluess, M. (2024, December 9). Assessing Environmental Sensitivity in the Primary School Context: The Development and Validation of the Highly Sensitive Child in School Scale (HSC – School). <https://doi.org/10.31233/osf.io/zt9t7>  
 NB: This is a preprint, the reference will be updated upon publication.

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Contact: Prof Michael Pluess, Department of Developmental Psychology, University of Surrey, GU2 7XH, United Kingdom.  
 Email: m.pluess@surrey.ac.uk

# Teacher Training

🇬🇧 English ▼  
🇮🇹 Italiano (Italian)  
🇩🇪 Deutsch (German)

HOME ABOUT SENSITIVITY SENSITIVITY TESTS **SENSITIVE CHILDREN** ▼  
Teacher Training

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## HIGHLY SENSITIVE CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

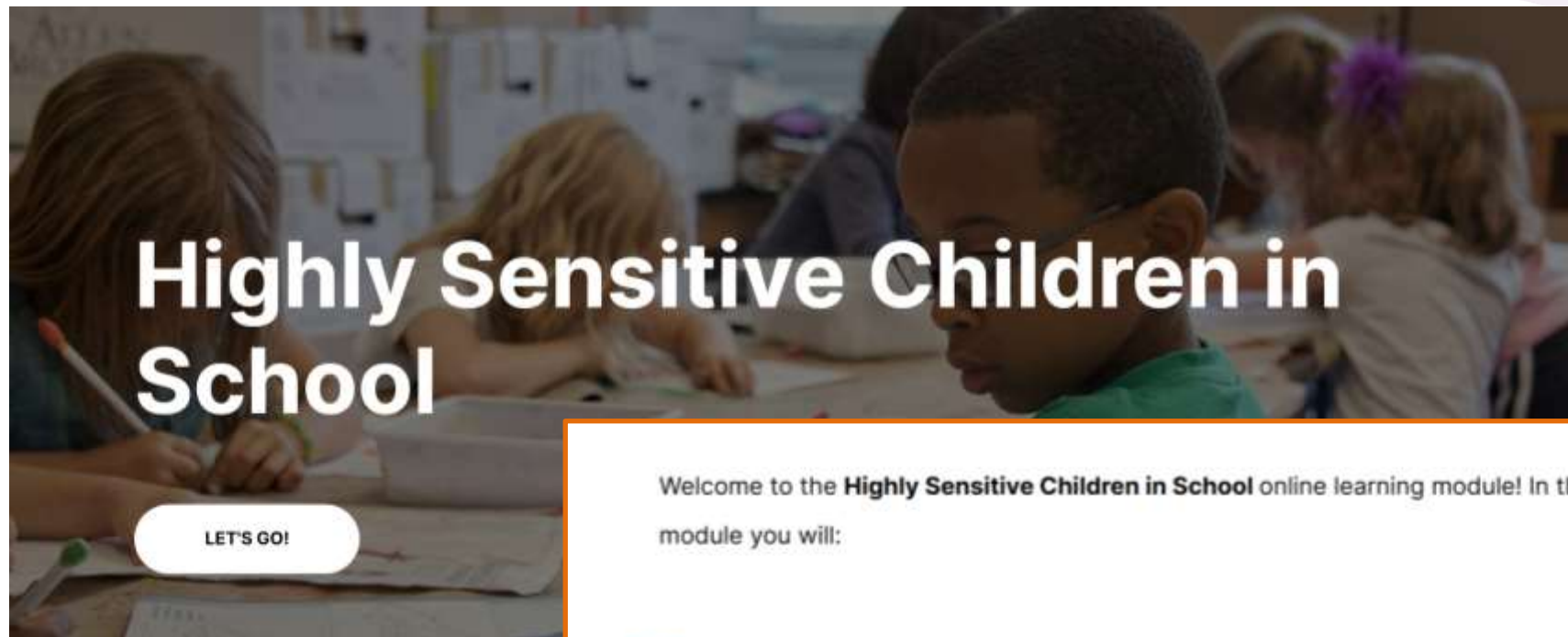
Thank you for your interest in our online training resources on Highly Sensitive Children in School. We're excited to offer a professional development module designed for educators, school counsellors, educational psychologists, and other early education professionals.

What you will learn:

- **Understand the trait of High Sensitivity**, what it means and why it's important in the classroom.
- **Explore the Evidence** and the implications for teachers and children.
- **Learn how to identify highly sensitive children** and those who may face challenges because of it.
- **Discover practical support strategies** to help highly sensitive children thrive in school.

This interactive, online module takes approximately 1 hour and is designed to be completed at your own pace. It features expert insights, evidence-based facts, teacher tips, and addresses common myths about high sensitivity.

**SEND ME A LINK TO THE ONLINE TEACHER TRAINING** ➔



# Online training

1-hour interactive self-directed module



Welcome to the **Highly Sensitive Children in School** online learning module! In this eLearning module you will:

- 1 Discover the trait of sensitivity – what it means and why it's important in the classroom.
- 2 Explore the evidence behind this character trait.
- 3 Learn how to identify highly sensitive children.
- 4 Uncover top tips and insights to support highly sensitive children at school.



00:11



- ≡ Welcome!
- ≡ What does sensitivity mean to you?
- ≡ What is high sensitivity?
- ≡ Who is sensitive?
- ≡ Why is this relevant to schools?
- ≡ Recognising a highly sensitive student
- ≡ Identifying Sensitive Children in School
- ≡ Helping highly sensitive children thrive at school
- 🔍 Quick quiz
- ≡ Summary
- ≡ Congratulations!

TEACHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP      CONFLICT WITH TEACHERS      POSITIVE INTERVENTIONS

Scenario two: You are leading a class reading session where you go around the room taking turns to read a paragraph aloud. Is high sensitivity an advantage or a disadvantage?

Feels emotions deeply

Advantage

Disadvantage

## Certificate of Achievement

*Insert Name*

*School*

has successfully completed the online teacher training  
module

Highly Sensitive Children in School

Prof Michael Pluess  
Founder and Director of Sensitivityresearch

*Sensitivity*  
research.com



"As a teacher, I'm always concerned about the wellbeing of the children in my class, especially those who seem more anxious or overwhelmed. This training has given me a deeper understanding of high sensitivity, which I didn't realise affected so many children."

Teacher



00:17

# Quiz and certificate of completion

"I found it really well done and varied, also nice that there were activities to do. The parts on teachers and what they can actually do were very interesting, certainly very useful for both active teachers and those in training." Teacher, Italy.

# Highly Sensitive Children in School

## Key facts about High Sensitivity

All children are sensitive, but some children are more sensitive than others.



30% Low  
40% Medium  
30% High

High sensitivity is a natural, genetically based trait. It is not a clinical condition or a disorder.

## Characteristics of High Sensitivity

- ✓ Awareness of small changes in their environment
- ✓ Sensitivity to social cues and heightened empathy
- ✓ Emotional intensity and reactivity
- ✓ Deep processing of thoughts, feelings and experiences
- ✓ Easily overwhelmed and overstimulated by the world around them
- ✓ Sensitive to nurturing and supportive experiences

## Highly Sensitive Children

Highly sensitive children experience the world intensely. Large groups, unfamiliar or chaotic situations can overwhelm them. Providing a calm, structured and supportive environment helps them feel safe, confident and enables them to develop healthy coping strategies

Most highly sensitive children excel academically and socially. However, some may feel easily overwhelmed or overly cautious, and may benefit from extra support.



## Top tips to help Highly Sensitive Children Thrive at School

### 1. Build Self-Esteem and Individual Strengths

Highly sensitive children thrive when accepted and valued. These students are often eager to please and may enjoy responsibility for individual tasks. Address concerns about being different and offer discreet ways to share worries.

### 4. Minimise Overstimulation

Create a calm environment and minimise noise, clutter, and bright lights. Let them sit alone, in small groups, or at the edge of a group to reduce sensory input. Tools like headphones, caps or visual screens can help students focus. Offering quiet spaces or reading books during breaks can avoid overstimulation.

### 2. Build Positive Relationships

Highly sensitive children thrive on positive interactions. Use gentle discipline, positive reinforcement and avoid harsh tones as these children take criticism to heart. Encourage their empathy and ability to form strong friendships.

### 3. Allow thinking time

Due to deep information processing, highly sensitive children may need extra time to think or answer questions. Avoid putting these students on the spot, as they may struggle under pressure or when being watched. Allow children time to adjust to new situations at their own pace.

### 5. Create Routines and Prepare for Change

Routines are comforting and helpful for highly sensitive students. Use visual reminders for daily activities and give advance notice of changes to help children adjust to new situations.



For more tips and suggestions complete our teacher training module Q1 link

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# Resources for Educators: A3 Poster

## Hochsensible Kinder in der Schule

### Wichtige Infos zur Hochsensibilität

Alle Kinder sind empfindsam, aber einige Kinder sind sensibler als andere.



30% Niedrig  
40% Mittel  
30% Hoch

Hochsensibilität ist ein natürliches, genetisch bedingtes Temperamentsmerkmal, keine klinische Erkrankung oder Störung.

### Merkmale der Hochsensibilität

- ✓ Bewusstsein für kleine Veränderungen in der Umgebung
- ✓ Sensibilität für soziale Aspekte und erhöhte Empathie
- ✓ Emotionale Intensität und Reaktivität
- ✓ Tiefes Verstehen von Gedanken, Gefühlen und Erfahrungen
- ✓ Tendenz leicht Überwältigt und Überreizt zu werden
- ✓ Sensibilität für Führung und positive Erfahrungen

### Hochsensible Kinder

Hochsensible Kinder erleben die Welt intensiver als andere. Große Gruppen, unübersichtliche oder chaotische Situationen können sie überfordern. Ein ruhiges, strukturiertes und geschütztes Umfeld hilft ihnen, sich selbst zu fühlen, Vertrauen zu gewinnen und gesunde Bewältigungsstrategien zu entwickeln. Die meisten hochsensiblen Kinder glänzen sozial und akademisch, da auch kleine Dinge ihnen viel bedeuten. Überwältigt oder angepisst, können sie auch geringfügige negative Unterstützung.

### Top-Tipps, um hochsensible Kinder in der Schule zu unterstützen

**Danken Sie für Selbstverpflichtung und Ihre individuellen Stärken.**  
Hochsensible Kinder sind großartig, wenn sie akzeptiert und wertschätzt werden. Diese Kinder sind oft bereit, zu helfen, und übernehmen gerne Verantwortung für Einzelarbeiten. Gehen Sie auf Bedenken ein, sondern zu sein, und lassen Sie die eigene Sorge an, um Bedenken zu äußern.

**Stärken Sie positive Beziehungen auf.**  
Hochsensible Kinder gedeihen in positiven Interaktionen. Verwenden Sie sanfte Sprache, positive Verstärkung und vermeiden Sie harte Töne, da diese Kinder Kritik sehr zu Herzen nehmen. Finden Sie ihre Empathie und die Fähigkeit, starke Freundschaften zu bilden.

**Minimieren Sie Überstimulation.**  
Schaffen Sie eine ruhige Umgebung und maximieren Sie Licht, Ordnung und große Luft. Lassen Sie sie allein, in kleinen Gruppen oder am Rand einer Gruppe sitzen, um die sensorische Einwirkung zu reduzieren. Werkzeug wie Kopfhörer, Kappe oder Sichtschutz können den Schülern helfen, sich zu konzentrieren. Bitten Sie ruhige Räume oder Quiet-Zonen für Pausen an, um Überstimulation zu vermeiden.



Erhalten Sie mehr Tipps und Vorschläge, um hochsensible Kinder zu unterstützen.

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## Bambini Altamente Sensibili a Scuola

### I punti salienti sull'Alta sensibilità

Tutti i bambini sono sensibili, ma alcuni lo sono più di altri.



30% Basso  
40% Medio  
30% Alto

L'alta sensibilità è una caratteristica del temperamento, ereditaria e geneticamente determinata. Non è una condizione clinica, né un disturbo.

### Caratteristiche dell'Alta sensibilità:

- ✓ Consapevolezza dei piccoli cambiamenti nell'ambiente circostante
- ✓ Sensibilità ai segnali sociali ed empatia aumentata
- ✓ Intenzione e reattività emotiva
- ✓ Elaborazione profonda di informazioni, emozioni ed esperienze
- ✓ Tendenza a sentirsi sopraffatti o sopraffatto dai rumori esterni
- ✓ Sensibilità alle esperienze positive e di successo

### Bambini altamente sensibili

Hochsensible Kinder erleben die Welt intensiver als andere. Große Gruppen, unübersichtliche oder chaotische Situationen können sie überfordern. Ein ruhiges, strukturiertes und geschütztes Umfeld hilft ihnen, sich selbst zu fühlen, Vertrauen zu gewinnen und gesunde Bewältigungsstrategien zu entwickeln. Die meisten hochsensiblen Kinder glänzen sozial und akademisch, da auch kleine Dinge ihnen viel bedeuten. Überwältigt oder angepisst, können sie auch geringfügige negative Unterstützung.

### Suggerimenti principali per aiutare i bambini altamente sensibili a dare il meglio di sé e crescere felici e fiduciosi a scuola

1. **Concedete loro tempo e spazio per essere individuali.**  
I bambini altamente sensibili danno il meglio di sé in un ambiente calmo e strutturato. Un piccolo spazio di lavoro o un tavolo di lavoro può aiutarli a concentrarsi. Evitare di metterli in situazioni di stress o di metterli in situazioni di stress.
2. **Concedete loro tempo per riflettere.**  
I bambini altamente sensibili danno il meglio di sé in un ambiente calmo e strutturato. Un piccolo spazio di lavoro o un tavolo di lavoro può aiutarli a concentrarsi. Evitare di metterli in situazioni di stress o di metterli in situazioni di stress.

4. **Minimizzare la sovrastimolazione.**  
Creare un ambiente calmo e strutturato. Minimizzare il rumore, il caos e la luce intensa. Permettere loro di sedersi da soli, in piccoli gruppi o al margine di un gruppo per ridurre l'input sensoriale. Strumenti come cuffie, cappelli o schermi visivi possono aiutare a ridurre l'input sensoriale. Chiedere loro di sedersi in un'area tranquilla o di usare un'area di quiete per le pause per evitare l'overstimolazione.
5. **Creare routine e preparare al cambiamento.**  
Le routine sono confortevoli e aiutano i bambini altamente sensibili a dare il meglio di sé in un ambiente calmo e strutturato. Minimizzare il rumore, il caos e la luce intensa. Permettere loro di sedersi da soli, in piccoli gruppi o al margine di un gruppo per ridurre l'input sensoriale. Strumenti come cuffie, cappelli o schermi visivi possono aiutare a ridurre l'input sensoriale. Chiedere loro di sedersi in un'area tranquilla o di usare un'area di quiete per le pause per evitare l'overstimolazione.



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# Guide to using the paper questionnaire

## Teachers guide to Highly Sensitive Children in Early Education

### Key facts about High Sensitivity

All children are sensitive, but some children are more sensitive than others.



30% Low      40% Medium      30% High

High sensitivity is a natural, genetically based trait. It is not a clinical condition or a disorder.

### Characteristics of High Sensitivity

- ✓ Awareness of small changes in their environment
- ✓ Sensitivity to social cues and heightened empathy
- ✓ Emotional intensity and reactivity
- ✓ Deep processing of thoughts, feelings and experiences
- ✓ Easily overwhelmed and overstimulated by the world around them
- ✓ Sensitive to nurturing and supportive experiences

### Highly Sensitive Children

Highly sensitive children experience the world intensely. Large groups, unfamiliar or chaotic situations can overwhelm them. Providing a calm, structured and supportive environment helps them feel safe, confident and enables them to develop healthy coping strategies.

Most highly sensitive children excel academically and socially. However, some may feel easily overwhelmed in overly cautious, and may benefit from extra support.

### The Highly Sensitive Child in School Questionnaire

Use the questionnaire to determine if a student is highly sensitive and at risk of overstimulation in the classroom. It is important to remember that the results give an indication of sensitivity and do not represent a diagnosis.

#### Who completes it?

Teachers, based on classroom observations of a student's typical behaviour. The assessment does not involve the child's participation.

#### What does it assess?

Core behavioural and emotional traits of sensitivity

#### How is it used?

It's a quick, simple, and accurate questionnaire. Complete one questionnaire for each student. You will be given a score of low, medium or high sensitivity for each student, and an indication if they are experiencing challenges in the classroom.

An automated online version of the questionnaire is available at [sensitivityresearch.com](http://sensitivityresearch.com). You can also access a printable version under teacher resources on our website.



If a child is experiencing significant challenges at school or home, they may benefit from a professional interview assessment.

You are not required to inform parents or the child about the test, as it's not a diagnostic tool. However, if it benefits the child, consider engaging parents in alignment with your school's policies.

If you are interested in finding out more, please email [info@sensitivityresearch.com](mailto:info@sensitivityresearch.com)



## The Highly Sensitive Child in School questionnaire

The questionnaire will look like this when downloaded.

### What do I do with the results of the HSC-School questionnaire?

With increased awareness of individual differences, you can enhance a highly sensitive child's well-being, self-regulation, and learning.

If high sensitivity is causing a child to feel overwhelmed or overly cautious, you can tailor teaching methods and support accordingly.

### Teacher Resources and training

To find out more about Highly Sensitive Children in Early Education, please complete our teacher training online module.



Sensitivity  
research.com

### Il questionario "Il Bambino Altamente Sensibile a Scuola"

### Guida per insegnanti sull'alta sensibilità

Le guide per insegnanti sull'alta sensibilità

Come posso fare con i risultati del questionario?

Il questionario "Il Bambino Altamente Sensibile a Scuola"

Le risorse per insegnanti

### Leitfaden für Lehrkräfte: Hochsensibilität

Wichtige Infos zur Hochsensibilität

Leitfaden für Lehrkräfte

Der Fragebogen für Hochsensible Kinder

### Der Fragebogen für hochsensible Kinder in der Schule

Was macht uns ein hochsensibles Kind? Der Fragebogen HSC-School


Lehrerressourcen und Training



# Top Tips from educators and practitioners

## Helping Highly Sensitive Children Thrive at School

- 1. Build their self-esteem and individual strengths**  
Highly sensitive children thrive when accepted and valued. They are diligent, eager to please, and enjoy tasks that suit their attention to detail. Encourage their empathy, which helps them form strong friendships. Address their concerns about being different and offer discreet ways to share stories.
- 2. Build positive relationships**  
Relationships deeply impact sensitive children. Positive reinforcement, like smiles or small rewards, is effective. They may take criticism hard, so approach discipline calmly and avoid raising your voice. Maintain open communication with parents for consistency between home and school.
- 3. Help them identify and express emotions**  
Highly sensitive children feel emotions intensely. Help them identify challenging situations and coping strategies. Tools can assist in naming feelings. Avoid dismissing or comparing their emotions to other children's, as they experience them more deeply.
- 4. Allow thinking time**  
Due to deep information processing, highly sensitive children may need extra time to think or answer questions. Avoid putting them on the spot, as they may struggle under pressure or when being watched. Allow them to adjust to new situations at their own pace.
- 5. Limit overstimulation**  
Calm environments benefit highly sensitive children. Let them sit alone, in small groups, or with their back against a solid object to reduce sensory input. Minimise noise, clutter, and bright lights, and create a quiet classroom space. Tools like headphones or visual screens can help them focus.






## Helping Highly Sensitive Children Thrive at School

- 6. Maintain clear boundaries and instructions**  
Provide structured rules and clear, supportive instructions. Avoid overwhelming highly sensitive students with too many tasks or choices. Be aware of distress from conflicts, which can have lasting effects. Highly sensitive children respond well to resilience and conflict resolution programs.
- 7. Encourage their academic potential**  
Use positive reinforcement to help them recognize when their work is good enough and view mistakes as learning opportunities. They often enjoy creative activities and have vivid imaginations. Be patient when exploring their ideas and answering their questions, which may seem unrelated but are often linked to deeper thinking about the topic.
- 8. Give time and space to rest and recover**  
Processing the world can be tiring. Provide breaks, quiet moments, and spaces to retreat if overwhelmed. Incorporate calming strategies like mindfulness or nature walks into their daily routine. Movement may also be helpful to deal with strong emotions. Monitor the amount of after-school activities and homework to ensure the child has time to rest, especially if the student worked hard to manage their high sensitivity during the school day.
- 9. Teach self-awareness and support-seeking**  
Help children recognize their limits and ask for support. Encourage gradual participation in group settings through observation or working with trusted peers. Watch for signs of overstimulation such as restlessness, anger, frustration or withdrawal, and intervene with calming strategies. Consider a quiet start to the day by coming inside to read a book rather than waiting in a busy playground.
- 10. Create routines and prepare for change**  
Routine is helpful for sensitive children. Use visual reminders for daily activities and notify them of schedule changes in advance. Support them during transitions or special events.






## Aiutare i bambini altamente sensibili a crescere felici e fiduciosi a scuola

- 1. Costruisci la loro autostima e il loro senso di forza individuali**  
Alto livello di sensibilità e di attenzione ai dettagli sono tratti caratteristici di questi bambini. Sono diligenti, desiderosi di piaciuti e si divertono a fare le cose che richiedono attenzione ai dettagli. Incoraggiare la loro empatia, che li aiuta a formare amicizie forti. Affrontare le loro preoccupazioni di essere diversi e offrire modi discreti per condividere le loro storie.
- 2. Costruisci relazioni positive**  
Le relazioni hanno un impatto profondo sui bambini altamente sensibili. Il rinforzo positivo, come sorrisi o piccoli premi, è efficace. Possono prendere male le critiche, quindi approcciarle con calma e evitare di alzare la voce. Mantenere una comunicazione aperta con i genitori per la coerenza tra casa e scuola.
- 3. Aiuta a identificare ed esprimere le emozioni**  
I bambini altamente sensibili sentono le emozioni in modo intenso. Aiutarli a identificare situazioni sfidanti e strategie di coping. Gli strumenti possono aiutare a nominare le emozioni. Evitare di sminuire o confrontare le emozioni dei bambini, poiché le sperimentano in modo più profondo.
- 4. Dai loro tempo per riflettere**  
A causa del loro modo di elaborare le informazioni, i bambini altamente sensibili possono aver bisogno di un po' di tempo in più per pensare o rispondere alle domande. Evitare di metterli sotto pressione o di guardarli quando stanno pensando. Permettili di adattarsi alle nuove situazioni al loro ritmo.
- 5. Riduci la stimolazione eccessiva**  
Gli ambienti calmi beneficiano dei bambini altamente sensibili. Permettili di sedersi da soli, in piccoli gruppi o con la schiena appoggiata a un oggetto solido per ridurre l'input sensoriale. Minimizzare il rumore, il disordine e la luce brillante, e creare uno spazio tranquillo in classe. Strumenti come cuffie o schermi visivi possono aiutarli a concentrarsi.






## Hochsensible Kinder in der Schule unterstützen

- 1. Stärken Sie ihr Selbstwertgefühl und individuelle Stärken**  
Hochsensible Kinder zeichnen sich durch hohe Aufmerksamkeit und einen starken Fokus auf Details aus. Sie sind fleißig, wollen gerne gefallen und übernehmen gerne Verantwortung für Aufgaben, die ihrer Detailgenauigkeit entsprechen. Fördern Sie ihre Empathie, die ihnen hilft, starke Freundschaften zu knüpfen. Adressieren Sie ihre Sorgen über das Aussehen, um ihnen zu helfen, sich selbst zu akzeptieren und sich Unterstützung zu holen.
- 2. Bauen Sie positive Beziehungen auf**  
Beziehungen haben einen tiefen Einfluss auf die emotionalen Bedürfnisse von Hochsensiblen. Positives Feedback, wie Lächeln oder kleine Belohnungen, ist wirksam. Sie mögen es, wenn sie für ihre Ideen und Fragen belohnt werden, die sie oft auf tiefere Gedankenprozesse abzielen.
- 3. Lehren Sie Selbstwahrnehmung und Interaktionsfähigkeiten**  
Hochsensible Kinder sind sehr empfindlich für die Reaktionen anderer. Helfen Sie ihnen, diese Reaktionen zu verstehen und sie zu steuern. Ermutigen Sie sie, sich Unterstützung zu holen, wenn sie sich überfordert fühlen. Ein ruhiger Start am Morgen kann ihnen helfen, sich auf den Tag vorzubereiten.
- 4. Geben Sie Zeit und Raum zum Ausruhen und Erholen**  
Die Verarbeitung der Welt kann für hochsensible Kinder anstrengend sein. Bieten Sie ihnen Ruhepausen, stille Momente und Orte zum Zurückziehen an. Ermutigen Sie sie, sich Unterstützung zu holen, wenn sie sich überfordert fühlen. Ein ruhiger Start am Morgen kann ihnen helfen, sich auf den Tag vorzubereiten.
- 5. Bereiten Sie Routinen und Übergänge vor**  
Routinen sind hilfreich für hochsensible Kinder. Verwenden Sie visuelle Hinweise für tägliche Aktivitäten und informieren Sie sie im Voraus über Änderungen im Zeitplan. Unterstützen Sie sie bei Transitions und besonderen Ereignissen.






# Website resources for teachers

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### MEMBERS CONTENT

### RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

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The appropriate academic reference and a link to the website [sensitivityresearch.com](https://sensitivityresearch.com) must be provided wherever these resources are used.

**Highly Sensitive Children in School Questionnaire**  
[Download Teachers Questionnaire](#)

**Teacher Guide to Questionnaire - Highly Sensitive Children in School**  
[Download PDF Guide](#)

**Helping Highly Sensitive Children Thrive at School**  
[Download our 10 tips teachers leaflet](#)

**Staffroom Poster - Highly Sensitive Children in School**  
[Download A3 PDF poster](#)



# Teacher workshop

“The questionnaire is a useful tool because it has consistent criteria to assess high sensitivity. It gives me the confidence to adapt my teaching for each pupil.”

“This makes sense – high sensitivity is part of who you are, and you can’t change it, but we can help children adapt and adjust to manage difficult situations.”



- Facilitated bespoke workshop for schools.
- Education on High Sensitivity and application in schools.
- Discussion and action planning for the school environment with the resources available.
- Contact [info@sensitivityresearch.com](mailto:info@sensitivityresearch.com) to find out more.

# Professional Interview

- Currently developing a professional interview for use by practitioners to identify individuals whose high sensitivity is causing difficulties in everyday life.
- Conducted by experts who are qualified to identify and discriminate between different sources of difficulties.
- Experts who are able to identify co-occurring conditions and make appropriate diagnosis.
- Contact [info@sensitivityresearch.com](mailto:info@sensitivityresearch.com) to find out more



A child stands in a field of tall grass at sunset, with arms raised in a gesture of joy or triumph. The background is a warm, golden glow from the setting sun, with a soft rainbow arc visible in the upper right corner. The overall mood is positive and hopeful.

**Highly Sensitive Children in School:  
New Findings and Resources**

**Thank you!**  
**See you next time!**