

Hello and thank you so much for downloading this PDF. I think it's brilliant that you're interested in understanding more about supporting HSPs. I wonder whether you know about this because you suspect you are also one? I am a Highly Sensitive Person so you're in good company if you are one. It helps to be able to recognise a Highly Sensitive client because they are more prone to being overwhelmed and there's a lot about separation that is overwhelming. This often means they need to be approached with this in mind.



But don't worry because I am here to offer you support and guidance in how to do this. I am Louisa Whitney and I am a family mediator, a PPC and a trainer. As I said above I'm also an HSP. I discovered I was Highly Sensitive in 2005 following a book recommendation someone made to me on a hunch. I've been on a journey ever since to nourish and nurture my special skills but also to take better care of my sensitivities.

I was a solicitor specialising in family law for 12 years but I reached the point where I felt like I was helping people just put out fires. In 2012 I did my mediation training and I began to see that I could teach separating couples how to avoid starting fires. This suited my nature much better and I felt like it meant I could really embrace who I am and use my sensitivities in the work place for the first time. I am also a Reiki II practitioner and I strongly believe in following a holistic approach that looks at clients' legal, financial, emotional and practical needs following a separation - and especially their sensitivities.

It can feel overwhelming when the decision to separate has been made. Clients often feel like they have so many things to think about and it can be a big jumbled up mess. HSPs can feel overwhelmed by even the smallest to do list. You know that feeling when you already have too much to do and someone hands you another task? That is a common problem for HSPs. It doesn't matter how straight forward it is they feel like they might break down or explode.

HSPs can also find stimulations like noise, people and lights can add to the feeling of overwhelm. I love listening to music but if someone tries to talk to me when the music is on I have to turn it off or I feel frazzled.



This awareness of what life is like for HSPs is crucial. So here are my top 5 tips for supporting Highly Sensitive People in a separation.

TIP 1

GO SLOWLY

Try to limit how much you give them to do. Separation can feel like a never ending to do list - especially when it comes to sorting out financial issues. A Form E could well send an HSP into overwhelm - especially if finances aren't their strong point. Talk it through and break it down into distinct tasks. They often still have the usual responsibilities with regard to their children, work and household tasks too, so it's easy to see how they might feel there's too much.

TIP 2

TRY TO LIMIT STIMULATION

This is especially needed when an HSP already feels overwhelmed. If you are meeting with them in person (or online) think about stimuli that is additional to what's happening in the meeting. Additional noises, lights and people can all more easily stimulate the nervous system of a Highly Sensitive Person. Think about their experience for a meeting in your office. HSPs can be particularly sensitive to the effects of caffeine so make sure you have alternatives. Be mindful of how the client looks and seems to be feeling. Try to go slowly in the meeting and adopt a soft tone. This will be even more important in a court setting and harder because you have less control over the environment. Be mindful of this.

TIP 3

ENCOURAGE YOUR CLIENT TO LEARN WHAT NOURISHES THEM

This is absolutely essential. Your client may not be aware that they are Highly Sensitive. They may be aware of certain "quirks" of them but not what this means. I suggest you recommend Elaine N. Aron's book "The Highly Sensitive Person". It might be useful to encourage them to think about what they need to recharge their batteries and what helps them feel nurtured. An overstimulated HSP will not be a client who can evaluate options and make decisions easily. Helping them keep a sense of calm will make your role with them easier to do. Spending time alone and spending time outside in nature can be really beneficial to Highly Sensitive People. This can be a park or a quiet space with a few plants. Particular music or sounds may be calming - as can mindful colouring. I love to hear the sound of waves crashing on a beach. Perhaps these are options that could support them around divorce admin or a meeting, or a court hearing? You could explore these ideas if you feel comfortable doing so.

TIP 4

HSPs AND PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

Highly Sensitive People can find it very difficult to experience sensations in the body. Sometimes they don't feel safe or they can simply feel overwhelming (especially when coupled with other stimuli). This can go back to experiences they may have had in childhood. Their sensitivities may not have been embraced by everyone and may have been discouraged. Feelings like hunger and pain can be difficult. This is something it helps to be aware of as it can lead to a distracted, edgy and overwhelmed client. They themselves may or may not be aware of how these physiological symptoms affect their mood, their ability to concentrate and to process information.

TIP 5

A SOAKING WET SPONGE FULL OF EMOTIONS

Have you ever felt good and then had a conversation with someone and then felt angry, agitated or upset for reasons you can't really put your finger on? This is something HSPs experience regularly - whether they are aware of it or not. They tend to be more in tune with other people's emotions and can sometimes absorb the emotions without realising. This is why HSPs might feel particularly tired or overwrought after being in a large crowd of people. This is important in a large group setting like a court room.

There are a huge range of emotions that come up during a separation. HSPs may find it difficult to understand what are their emotions and what are their ex-partner's or children's (or even yours if you are handing something difficult yourself). After a mediation session, round table meeting, or court hearing they may feel like a soaking wet sponge weighed down by emotional baggage. Be aware of this and the length of time the HSP spends in that environment. The longer they are there the harder they may find it to make decisions.

I'm passionate about this and this is why I have training events dedicated to learning more about HSPs. [I have courses for HSPs working in family law and for those working with HSP clients.](#) You can also find out more via the social media channels:



I hope you have found this useful. My passion in life is helping people - and especially Highly Sensitive People - keep their separation calm, constructive and compassionate. I want to help you to support your HSP clients. I also want to help support you to work in the best way for you, if you too are a Highly Sensitive Person.

Please do reach out to me if you feel you need more help with this.

Thank you.

Louisa



LKW Family Mediation The Atrium, Curtis Road, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1XA

t 01306 646690 **e** louisa@lkwfamilymediation.co.uk **w** lkwfamilymediation.co.uk