

Week 1 Explorations



Are you Too Out or Too In?

If you have a copy of the book, *The Highly Sensitive Person* by Elaine Aron, refer to pages 47–54. If you don't have the book, no worries. I'll summarize the salient points from these pages on next week's call. In the meantime, take this self-assessment, adapted from page 50–51.

Rate each statement according to this scale:

3 = **Very True**

2 = **Somewhat True**, or **Equally True and Not True**, depending on the situation

1 = **Hardly Ever True**

1. I often experience the brief effects of being over-aroused, overstimulated, or stressed—things like blushing, heart pounding, or my breath becoming more rapid or shallow, my stomach tensing, my hands sweating or trembling, or suddenly feeling on the verge of tears, or a sensation of panic, mild or otherwise.
2. I am bothered by the long-term effects of arousal—the sense of distress or anxiety, upset digestion, or loss of appetite, or not being able to fall asleep or stay asleep.
3. I try to face situations that make me overaroused.
4. In a given week, I stay home more than I go out. (Add up the hours. Do not include sleeping and time spent dressing, undressing, bathing.)
5. In a given week, I spend more time alone than with others. (Figure as above.)
6. I push myself to do things I fear.
7. I go out even when I don't feel like it
8. People tell me I work too much.
9. When I notice I have overdone it physically, mentally, or emotionally, I immediately stop and rest and do whatever else I need to do for myself.
10. I add things to my body—coffee, alcohol, medications, and the like—to keep myself at the right level of arousal.
11. I get sleepy in a dark theater and/or during a lecture unless I'm quite interested.
12. I wake in the middle of the night or very early in the morning and can't go back to sleep.
13. I don't take time to eat well or exercise regularly.

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Add up your answers, EXCLUDING 4,5 and 9. Then add up 4, 5 and 9. Subtract these from the total of the others.

The most “out” score possible would be a 27. Most “in” would be a 1. A moderate score would be 14.

We’ll be exploring this spectrum and tools to assist you no matter where you are on next week’s call.

Essence Pace Walk

Definition of Essence Pace

Your Essence Pace is the pace at which you are most aware of you, and simultaneously aware of what’s going on around you. It’s the pace where you are naturally able to be your happiest, most effective and most creative. While moving at your Essence Pace, you are naturally present to--and best able to choose your responses to--life.

Purpose of this Exploration:

To explore, re-discover and ground yourself in your Essence Pace.

Try this!

Take yourself on a short walk. Gradually accelerate, then decelerate, going back and forth, playing with different speeds and qualities of moving. Notice, as you are moving, which pace gives you the felt experience of “choosing”, versus “having to”.

Further Exploration:

As you move through your days this week, use an alarm clock (or the alert function on your smartphone or computer) to remind yourself to periodically ask:

- “Am I moving at my ‘Essence Pace’ or in ‘Victim Time’, or some other way?”
- “Hmm... I wonder how I can invite myself to make friends with and easefully embody my own Essence Pace in a way that serves myself and others.”

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Loop of Awareness

Definition of Loop of Awareness

A completely present state of being in which our natural pulsation of awareness incorporates all internal and external information.

Purpose:

- To avail yourself of your inner knowing which will tell you how to attend to and care for yourself in a given moment
- To ground and center oneself
- To deepen your experience of being fully present
- To open up a feeling of flow

Try this!

Periodically, as you move through your day...

- Place your generous attention on what's happening **inside** you for 1 cycle of inbreath/outbreath
- Place your generous attention on what's happening **outside** you for 1 cycle of inbreath/outbreath

Practice this for 6 full cycles, toggling or “looping” back and forth. Allow your breath to lengthen to support your exploration. Feel free to adjust your pacing as it suits you.

Good places to try this:

- with your pet
- with your partner as they're speaking
- in the middle of a conflict
- when you're feeling frazzled or overwhelmed
- at a red light
- while on hold, (or waiting for a page to load on your computer!)

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Gathering Your 'Time-Out Basket'

Definition of Time-Out Basket

A concrete and centralized collection of your favorite, most reliable activities and tools for bringing you back to center.

Purpose:

The convenient accessibility of having all of your "Time-Out Friends" in one user-friendly location will support you in creating regular time-outs so you can recharge your batteries.

What to Include:

Everyone will have a different, perfect-for-you collection. For example, here are the items on/in/near my nightstand:

- Decorating magazines
- Fiction book(s) -- self-help books don't quite cut it for me when I need a time-out
- Crossword puzzle book
- Sudoku book
- 2 tennis balls in a sock (more on this later!)
- Rescue Remedy
- Water bottle
- Eye pillow
- My favorite Japanese incense
- Coaster for my tea mug
- Morning Pages journal and pencil case full of colored pens
- Lumbar pillow
- Down throw
- Heated mattress pad
- Lap desk (you know, like a beanbag for your lap, with a firm surface on top)

Choose a favorite spot in your house to keep your Time-Out Basket. Rename it if you like, too! Maybe for you, it's near your favorite chair in the living room, or a window seat, or next to the fire. Me, I like my bedroom because I can close the door. Also, my bedroom is pretty Zen compared to the color and pattern that characterizes the rest of my house. Sometimes I'm recharged by color and pattern; other times, I prefer walls with nothing on them. I invite you to tune in to what calls you, and to make any adjustments or changes in order to gift yourself with the pitch-perfect supports.