

The Happy Highly Sensitive Life Podcast

How to Live in Alignment with Your True Self as a Highly Sensitive Person

Podcast Transcript Episode 9

I used to lose myself in my relationships.

When I was in my 20s. I'd become quiet and censor myself around other people. I held back from saying what I thought. I tried to blend in and became a matching replica of the people around me because I felt different and like an old soul.

One time I went on a date with a guy who loved the Daily Show and political humor. I felt I needed to like the Daily Show and political humor too. I bought books about politics that I thought would make me into the right kind of person for him. But they would just stay unopened and unread on my bookshelf. Meanwhile I poured over my spiritual self help books. And books about voluntary simplicity. Those were my true interests. But I had no roadmap for how to be a twentysomething who was very curious about the purpose of life and spirituality.

On Friday nights I'd go out with my friends from grad school to hear free live music, drink beer and eat nachos. Inevitably I'd end up in the corner booth talking about my two favorite subjects. It was a conversation that never went very far being that I was in a bar.

At some point, I started to notice I was shrinking down. And holding back from being my authentic self about subjects that were important to me.

I said to my mom, I need congruence. A group of like-minded people who I can be myself around. I need an aligned community. Friends who also had Rumi passages framed on their walls, and who loved the same Mary Oliver poems.

I wanted it so much that I responded to an ad in the local newspaper to join a spirituality book group. Through this ad, I met a few women and every few weeks we gathered to talk about books like Gary Zukav's, Seat of the Soul, and Ken Wilber's, A Brief History of Everything.

I needed deep conversation about things that mattered. I needed to be around people who I could be more of myself with, not less of myself.

I set out to live with greater congruence and authenticity. And since then, year after year, there's one word that captures my intention for how I want to live, and that's the word "alignment".

Alignment to me, means...

- Living a life that matches the essence of who I am.
- Intentionally being around people I can be myself with.
- Doing work that makes me the best version of myself rather than a shadow of my former self.
- And making decisions from day to day, that make me more of who I am, not less.

In my early 30s, a co-worker gave me a framed Ralph Waldo Emerson quote. It said, "To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else, is the greatest accomplishment". She saw me so clearly with this quote. This became an idea I wrapped my life around.

We each are distinct and separate people for a reason. We're here, by design, to be different, not to live as replicas of one another. We're here To live our own lives, with different perspectives, to be unique expressions of ourselves, with unique wants and needs.

As HSPs, we are energy readers. We absorb and feel influenced or pressured by the energy around us. By the fast decision makers, the fast movers, the seemingly fearless ones. We see how other people operate and think we're supposed to operate in the world like them. We feel the pressure to feel less, to act quickly, to be extroverted, or super social, and to adopt a live hard, play hard lifestyle. We feel pressure to live the way we see other people living. Maybe we've even been told we need to toughen up and be less sensitive.

I used to think I wasn't assertive enough and that I was too much of a people pleaser. I just needed to stand my ground more and be stronger.

But since then, I've come across a tool that completely shifted my understanding of this dynamic and explains why I became a mirror of the people around me. And gives insight into what to do about it.

So in this episode, I will cover:

- What it means to live in alignment.
- How it causes daily distress to live out of alignment.
- Two qualities to embody that can help you live in alignment.
- One tool that can help you understand why and how you take in the energy of other people so you can begin to notice when it happens and stay centered in yourself.

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If you're an empath or think of yourself as a people pleaser, this episode will give you a new and different perspective about how you absorb the energy of others, and what you can do to stay centered in yourself. My hope is that it will help you to view yourself with compassion and release self-judgment and feel good being yourself.

Let's start by talking about how it causes distress to live going against your essential nature.

As an HSP, being forced to move too fast through your day, hustling from thing to thing, activity to activity, meeting to meeting, client to client, and absorbing the energy from people around you disconnects you from:

- Your natural HSP pause and check response that wants you to look before taking action.
- Your thorough and deep thinking and decision making process
- Your full emotional responses
- And Your intuition and inner knowing

This leads to what I call Daily Disconnection Distress. Moving too quickly through your day, disconnects you from yourself. As a result, at the end of the day, you have a bottleneck of unprocessed experiences and unmet emotions that show up as...

- Second guessing, overthinking or beating yourself up
- Repeatedly thinking about what occurred earlier in the day
- Feeling overexposed, vulnerable or ashamed about something that went on that day
- Trouble falling asleep or trouble staying asleep
- Self-soothing with sugar, food or alcohol
- Low energy or a loss of vitality
- Feeling uninspired about life

Anxiety, melancholy, fatigue and overwhelm are all signs that the life you've designed isn't a match for your essential nature.

These signs and symptoms are here to get your attention.

You may know that I'm a Human Design Practitioner. Human Design is a personality assessment tool that looks at your personal energy makeup. My instructor, Karen Curry Parker says, the more distress you're in, the more out of alignment you are with your authentic self. This distress is an attempt to get your attention. To get you to pause and reassess how you're living. A call to reconnect and realign. To find congruence.

In order to be able to live in alignment with your authentic self and feel more ease in your day, at work, in your relationships, you have to accept yourself and what you need.

There's a mind skill that can help you with accepting your sensitivity. It's called radical acceptance. It's rooted in mindfulness and Buddhist philosophy and teaches about accepting life as it is and not resisting what's occurring.

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This is easiest to understand using the Buddhist story of the 2nd arrow. It goes like this. You're out walking in the woods, and you get hit by an arrow. The arrow strike brings the pain of being hit. You feel the pain of the spear that's pierced your skin. The 2nd arrow comes from your emotional response or your reaction to the first arrow hitting you. Perhaps you beat yourself up for getting hit in the first place or for experiencing pain when the arrow strikes. Beating yourself up or fighting what's occurring is called resistance. And resisting brings its own pain.

The 1st arrow strike represents any bad event that occurs in your life that creates pain. The second arrow is your reaction to the bad event.

As I've noticed for myself, the 2nd arrow often sounds like this "What's wrong with me?" "What's my problem?". "Why can't I just get over this?" "Why is this happening to me?" Then I'm wrestling with feeling I'm not good enough, or that my true feelings are a problem on top of experiencing the pain that comes from the bad event.

Let's look at an example of this. As HSPs, the first arrow comes, perhaps you have a conversation that leads you to feel misjudged. Say you share an idea with someone about something you want to do and they say, "you can't do that, you're all wrong for that." That statement is the first arrow and brings up the pain of feeling misunderstood, judged and unsupported. The second arrow comes if you start to judge yourself for feeling misunderstood. You think "if only I weren't so sensitive; if only I felt less, or didn't feel upset about what they said. You Create additional pain by labeling yourself as inadequate or wrong for having feelings about what was said.

Radical acceptance asks you to allow the pain of without making yourself wrong for feeling it. Just Notice the first arrow. Comfort and care for yourself with unconditional, non-judgmental compassion and acceptance. Give yourself the support and care that you need.

So often, I've created a second arrow because I felt my pain from the 1st arrow wasn't justified. Or I wanted to avoid confronting the person who misjudged me because to confront them felt hard. So I tried to talk myself out of my true feelings.

Accepting yourself begins with knowing yourself. This is the second prerequisite for being able to live in alignment.

A few minutes ago I talked about how I used to think I lost myself around other people. For so long, I thought I lost myself around other people because I wasn't being strong and assertive.

When I learned about a tool called Human Design, I discovered why I experienced myself in a way that mirrored the people I was around.

Human Design is a personality assessment that's here to promote self-understanding and self-awareness that's here to connect you back to the you that you were born to be, before you started hearing messages about being too much, or not enough.

Human Design gives you very specific insights into who you are, your personal psychology, your talents, your strengths, your purpose, and your vulnerabilities. As well as your Relationships, and How you are meant to work and make aligned decisions.

When you first run your human design chart, you'll have no idea what you're looking at. You see 9 geometric shapes in the Chart that are overlaid over an outline of the human body. The shapes are called Centers. These are energy Centers that have names that resemble the names of the Hindu Chakras. You will notice some of the centers are white and some are colored in.

White Centers are called Open (or Undefined) Centers. These are the areas where you take in the energy of others. You are empathic and deeply intuitive as you experience the amplified energy of other people. You are flexible and can experience the aspects of this Center in a variety of ways, depending on who you are with. You may feel influenced by others through your Open Centers.

Colored Centers are called Closed (or Defined) Centers. You have consistent access to your own energy in these Centers.

When I first learned about my Human Design, I discovered that I have an Open Identity Center. The Identity Center connects you to a sense of yourself, your life purpose, and establishes a sense of personal mission. Having an Open Identity Center makes you highly empathic and intuitive, because you strongly feel the identities, purpose and mission of other people. This is a trait that gives you the ability to deeply understand others and makes you ideal for being a counselor, coach or therapist. With an Open Identity Center, when you're unaware of what's occurring, you may feel like you get lost in relationships. And adopt the personality, values, and wants and goals of people around you.

If your intuition is nudging you to learn about your Human Design, pause this and run your free chart. Go to GeneticMatrix.com/free-foundation-chart/. You'll need your birth information; your birth date and time, and birth location. Your birth certificate may provide this information. If you have a baby book, it's possible your birth time is recorded there.

When you receive your chart, looking at your Chart, the Identity Center is the diamond at the center of the chart, the 4th shape from the top. Look to see if it's white or colored.

When I would get lost in relationships I'd worry about what other people thought of me. I'd talk to my mom and being the wise woman she is, she'd say to me, Marya, "The most important

relationship you'll ever have is the one you have with yourself'. Guiding me to reconnect with and stay true to myself.

Now remember that Ralph Waldo Emerson quote; "To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else, is the greatest accomplishment".

On a whim, I looked up Ralph Waldo Emerson's Human Design Chart. Turns out he also had an open identity center, like me.

I also noticed that Emerson had another open center, called the Solar Plexus. The Solar Plexus also called the Emotional Solar Plexus, is the Center that deals with emotions. It's the triangle on the far, lower right hand side. With an open Solar Plexus you strongly feel the emotions of other people. Your Open Solar Plexus allows you to become wise about feelings. You take in and amplify or magnify the emotional energy from other people. As a result, it is taxing for you to be in emotionally charged situations. Strongly feeling the emotional energy of others may lead you to cope by avoiding speaking your truth to keep the peace. If you don't understand how other people's emotional energy penetrates you, you will think the emotions you feel are your own and feel responsible for other people's emotions. Approximately 50% of the population has an Open Emotional Solar Plexus.

Human Design helped me to understand this dynamic of getting lost in other people. I always thought it meant I wasn't assertive and just needed to toughen up and not care what other people thought of me so much. Now I know that my open energy center absorbs the energy of others. I can view this trait without judging it as bad. It just is. And when I notice it happening, I can observe it and be curious about it. And make sure to separate myself and remove my open energy center from other people's energy so I can reconnect with myself. You can learn to observe rather than absorb the emotional energy of others, armed with the self-knowledge that this is occurring. And be a screen not a sponge.

We get to choose the story we create about who we are and why we are the way we are, and to view that as good or bad.

We've been conditioned by other peoples's words and by watching how other people manage their energy. This conditioning makes us believe we're too much or not enough. Part of what Human Design teaches is that we are here to learn to release the conditioning that disconnects us from our authentic self.

We get to create our own perspective about what it means to be a sensitive person.

I choose to see the trait of sensitivity as a gift. I didn't always feel that way. I fought my feelings for a long time, thinking I was too much and that I just needed to be more logical.

But we lift ourselves up when we choose to see the good in the trait of being an HSP.

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Now I see how my deep processing makes me a deep thinker. Someone who is willing to grapple with big and meaningful questions about life and love and purpose and why we're here in this lifetime and what we're meant to do.

I think of overstimulation as the universe's gift to me, supporting me to take quiet time away to consciously reconnect with myself. When you see overstimulation as a gift, you realize that in quiet spaces, you develop mindful self-attunement to what you need, self-awareness, and an opportunity to live more consciously of what's occurring around you, in your environment, and within you. When I'm more conscious about how I care for and manage my energy, I can contribute to a collective upleveling of consciousness in the world.

My empathy and emotional reactivity allow me to be fully moved by life. Little moments become big sources of pleasure. I embrace the full spectrum of the human experience. Living by the mountains as a storm rolls in, half the sky is cloud covered and half is lit up by the sun. The sunlit side feels so much brighter next to the dark sky. Whenever I've gone through a breakup or a loss and have been tossed back into what I call "a healing phase of life", I allow myself to be there and feel what's in the hardness knowing that the lightness will return. Life is cycles and contrasts of light and dark. Warm and cold. The dark cold days make the brighter days that much brighter.

My ability to sense subtleties is something that I view as a gift from my pen energy centers. Your Open Centers in Human Design are one of the ways you read the energy around you. This allows you to see potential. You're intuitive in your relationships, and communities. You know things. You may not know how you know what you know, you just do.

Another thing I've learned from my study of Human Design is that, if you want to change something about yourself, the energy of change comes from being creative, open, receptive, aware and nonjudgmental of yourself. Our instinct is to hate a thing about ourselves and to try to push it away. Deny it. Tamp it down. Block it. But you're just getting bogged down by second arrows.

You need the creative open energy of curiosity to begin to view yourself and this trait in a new light. To notice it and think, "hmmm, that's interesting". What if there's something good about this trait? What if myself and 15 to 20% of the population have this trait for a reason? Because it gives us a special role? What if we're different for a reason and have a role to play in transforming society into a more authentic, compassionate and aligned place? If you can stay curious with yourself, noticing and staying open to accepting and even appreciating this part of yourself, that's the kind of energy that leads you to be able to adopt new perspectives and create new ways of seeing yourself.

The world needs you to be your wise and soulful self. For you to be more of yourself and not less. For you to live non fractured in your wholeness. To be rooted in the words “I am”. The world needs your conscious and aware energy.

You are completely whole, healthy and worthy of full love and compassion exactly as you are. There’s no part of you that needs fixing. Our task in this lifetime is to release the messages we’ve received from others about being too much or not enough, and to live in full self-acceptance and awareness of who we are and to honor and live in alignment with that. To become the best version of ourselves.

If your intuition is nudging you to learn about your unique Human Design, I’ve created a free guide to getting started with Human Design for HSPs. Grab it now by visiting humandesignforhsp.com. I’ll link it in the show notes.

I’m so so grateful we’ve spent this time together.

If you have a question for me about something you heard on this podcast or want to suggest a topic for a future episode, email me at questions@happyhighlysensitivelife.com.

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Bye now.