

The Happy Highly Sensitive Life Podcast

A Simple Tool to Break Through Analysis Paralysis and Procrastination as a Highly Sensitive Person

Podcast Transcript

Episode 7

Call it analysis paralysis, avoiding, resisting, or procrastinating.

As a highly sensitive person, I've done my fair share of putting off doing things that disrupt my inner serenity. At that moment, overthinking feels like a way to outsmart risk.

HSPs have what researchers call a "pause and check" response. We stop and observe a situation before diving in. It's part of our innate survival response. And since the trait of high sensitivity shows up in over 100 species, you can even see it when you spot a pack of deer wading into a pond for a cool drink. You may notice one or two holding back, taking their time going in to make sure it's safe to grab some water.

I have so many memories of getting stopped from taking action because of this part of the trait.

On a diving board, I would stand forever, peering into the deep end, waiting to feel ready to jump.

At the edge of the ocean, while my sisters went right in, trying to entice me to follow, I lingered on my raft at the edge, and then slowly made my way, watching the wave patterns, judging how big the waves were and where they were breaking, trying to wrap my brain around the idea that the water might actually be more calm just beyond that large swell.

Preparing to share the news with my neighbor that we needed to drop out of the neighborhood dinner club, I practiced the conversation and prepared to deliver the news for weeks, as if I was preparing to negotiate a hostage release. Analyzing every angle and the best way to break the news with kindness and also trying to give myself permission to speak the truth about how it wasn't working for us to go anymore.

My hesitating and holding back happened with so many things. Having a hard conversation, initiating a breakup, setting a boundary, making an important phone call. It even happened with things I wanted to do.

It's easy to find yourself stuck in analysis paralysis, trying to think your way into feeling ready to take action.

What if my trepidation was onto something and I was about to walk into a bees nest, I wondered?

And memories of bad experiences would remind me to proceed with caution. If you've ever rushed in quickly without thinking things through first, say you got called on in class or in a meeting and weren't prepared to speak, you know how unpleasant it is to feel surprised and feel unglued, stumbling to find the words, and going through all the physiological changes that come with it. Your mind going blank, the sound of blood rushing in your ears, blushing and burning cheeks, heart pounding. And after you're through it all, the physical intensity you just went through makes you think, "I never want to do that again, no way."

When it's time to try something new again, past experience and your spinning mind and the anxiety in your gut leads you to withdraw in apprehension that steals your ability to move forward.

If you are listening to this episode, I'm guessing you can relate to these moments. And if you find that you're feeling bored or uninspired in your life, maybe you're protecting yourself and holding back too much.

In this episode, I want to share...

1. One sign that you're in analysis paralysis and trying to think your way into feeling ready.
2. How to discover what's aligned for you to do, since taking aligned action naturally bolsters your desire to move forward.
3. And one simple tool to help you take action when you're stepping out of your comfort zone.

I've stayed stuck many times, trying to think my way into feeling ready. I know how this can become a trap for HSPs. I want you to have another way to proceed so that your life expands into the life you want to have rather than stagnating and contracting. So the next time you try to think your way into feeling ready, you'll know the rightness of acting and be able to.

So how do you know if you're in analysis paralysis and trying to think your way into feeling ready? You'll notice an increase in anxiety when you contemplate doing the thing. And then you feel relief when you let yourself back off of the idea.

But even when you back off, this unfinished business will follow you around like a 4-year-old pestering you. And the only thing that will get you back into alignment with yourself is to take any small action on the thing you're avoiding.

I believe that what's meant for me to do reappears in thoughts and in signs that show up repeatedly in my life. I get a feeling or intuition I can't shake. A thought that won't go away. I'm drawn to something over and over again.

Over 10 years ago, I wanted to be a writer and start a blog. My first blog of about 6, was about dating, back in 2008. That led to a little column in my local newspaper that lasted only 6 months. After I lost the column, I took that as a failure and tried to bury my desire to write.

Did you know that it's very common for HSPs to say "I'm never doing that again" if they go through an experience that was emotionally intense and that they feel was a failure? This was me.

But deep down, I couldn't walk away. The need to write followed me around like my shadow.

I believe the Universe sends us signs, nudges, intuitions and gut feelings we are meant to pay attention to. And that listening and following the signs expands your life.

You may know that I've been studying Human Design, which is a tool for self-understanding. I discovered it because it kept showing up in my Instagram and podcast feed. It was a sign I couldn't ignore.

Human Design, among other things, reveals your unique life purpose based on the position of the planets at the time of your birth. I have been obsessed with the idea of knowing my life purpose for as long as I can remember. Once I saw that connection, I knew I had to learn more about it. I followed the leads and purchased a personalized guide to my Human Design.

I learned my Human Design shows that storytelling is part of my life purpose. And specifically, telling stories to help others expand their concept of what's possible in their lives. For the last 25 years, my mantra has been, "anything is possible" and it's been natural for me to help other people shift their perspective on their situation.

Seeing all of this written on paper, I became even more convinced that we have inner nudges, intuitions, urges, and desires for a reason.

All this time, my desire to be a writer wasn't an accident. Being a storyteller led me to have this podcast, and it's also the reason I share lots of stories here. I knew doing this podcast was aligned. As the person who has spent most of my life sitting in the back of the room observing quietly without speaking, this podcast was not something I ordinarily would have volunteered to do. But taking action feels meaningful and important to me when those actions are tied to fulfilling a larger purpose. I feel universally supported when I'm acting in alignment with what I'm meant to do in this lifetime. Connecting to this Inner Knowing is something that gives me a bigger reason to act.

How do you discover if something is aligned for you to act on? You can learn more about your Human Design, but if your intuition isn't resonating with that idea, don't force that. There are other things you can do to start looking for signs in your life today.

1. Calm your nervous system when it's spinning. You won't discover creative solutions if you're flooded with intense negative emotion. That closes the door on inspired insight. Listen to [Episode 3. How to Cope with Intense Situations](#), for ideas about how to do this. I'll link it in the show notes.

2. Once you're feeling centered, open yourself up to discovering a creative way to move forward. Stay open and present in the moment to your environment to see the signs and solutions that emerge. It may be an email you receive, a book or article or podcast that pops up that gives you an idea and shows you the next step.

3. Engage your body. Creative solutions always pop into my mind when I'm exercising or moving my body. Plus, research on the benefits of exercise shows it boosts your mood, increases courage and reduces anxiety. I have found this to be true. If you're not into exercise, I have even found that just cleaning the dishes, the house, showering or cooking can lead to inspired insight.

When you've been getting repeated signs to act as a thought or idea you can't shake, you may be being nudged to do something that pushes you out of your comfort zone and is hard and stressful. Perhaps setting a boundary or initiating a breakup. I knew I needed to end my first marriage. And the push that made me have that hard conversation came as a dream. Studying my Human Design, I now know that I'm an intuitive dreamer. One morning, I had a dream that God was talking to me and said I wasn't fulfilling my life purpose in that relationship. This sounds totally far-out, but as a spiritual person who has always longed to fulfill my life purpose, this was a dream that shook me awake, physically and spiritually. I knew, without a doubt, that I needed to have that conversation and did it that very moment, while still laying in bed.

In the absence of intuitive dreams, if you're looking to spark your own forward progress, and get started with something that feels hard, identify a small action step you can take and use a tool called the 5-Second Rule. Based on the [book by Mel Robbins](#), I'll link it in the show notes.

It works like this, when you get a gut instinct to act, count backwards, 5-4-3-2-1 and GO. Rip the band-aid off and do the thing. Don't stop to analyze the options. If you wait to feel like doing it, you never will. You will enter mental jail and talk yourself out of it. When you get a gut instinct to act, there's a moment of pause where the instinct to act is clear and unmarred by doubts. At that moment, don't pause to analyze the options. Count 5-4-3-2-1 and GO and do the thing.

She says "there is a window for everyone between the moment you have an instinct to change and your mind killing that instinct. While your mind starts working against you in nanoseconds, the barrage of thoughts and excuses don't seem to kick into full force and stop you for a few seconds." This is why counting for 5 seconds seems to universally work.

Here's what Mel Robbins says about why the act of counting works. Counting and then moving are actions. Counting backwards does a few important things simultaneously, she writes. "It

distracts you from your worries, it focuses your attention on what you need to do, it prompts you to act, and it interrupts the habits of hesitating, overthinking, and holding yourself back.”

It's important to count backwards, since we have a built-in association with a countdown leading to a launch. And moving into action when you get to 1 is crucial. When you move, your physiology changes, and so does your mind.

Counting becomes a starting ritual. You're beginning to take action, which revs up your prefrontal cortex, the problem-solving part of the brain that makes you feel more in control of your life.

Robbins says you can use the rule to create new habits or change self-defeating habits, to change your thinking and focus on the positive, to be more intentional, and to do new things that are out of your comfort zone.

When I first started writing *Happy Highly Sensitive Life* 3 years ago, I credit the 5-Second Rule with getting me started and getting me going. As Mel Robbins says, the 5-Second Rule taps into activation energy, the energy of forward momentum. You probably have noticed that on mornings that you wake up and exercise first thing, you are more productive than on days that you don't. That's because by getting up and taking decisive action of working out, you've tapped into activation energy.

By taking action and counting, you engage the prefrontal cortex, the planning and problem-solving part of the brain that helps you find a way around obstacles. Keep mindfully taking action and you'll feel more in control of your life.

It sounds simple, but for an overthinker like me, it was the spark I needed.

When I started writing *Happy Highly Sensitive Life*, it was easy to think that the fear I felt after publishing a new post meant I needed to stop. But it was really just the sensation that came from walking down a new path and from opening up and sharing myself in a new way.

Writing, I felt myself expand. I knew I'd always regret it if I didn't write. It was the thing I needed to do. I could feel it even though the act of doing this new thing also felt vulnerable and a bit exposing. Once I took that first step, my forward momentum was easier to tap into.

As a sensitive person who is a classic overthinker, analysis paralysis feels like an insurance policy. A way to outsmart risk.

But the longer you stay immobilized, the harder it is to get moving. The 5-Second Rule is a way to break the pattern.

And after you've taken action, if you're feeling vulnerable or overexposed, or you can't stop thinking about what happened, I know how this is. You've stepped out of your comfort zone and

worries about what you said and did, and feelings of vulnerability wake you up in the middle of the night. I use the strategies from [Episode 3, How to Cope with Intense Situations](#), to cope with the feelings that come up. I like to walk the stress out of my nervous system and then journal. Journaling and writing activates your prefrontal cortex, engaging your brain in creative problem solving, calming your nervous system. Your stress response is quieted when your brain is engaged in creative problem solving. Plus, it shifts your perspective so you can keep moving forward. I'll link [Episode 3](#) in the show notes for you.

OK, now you're ready. Tap into your Inner Knowing. If you've been thinking about doing something, you've been getting signs and having intuitions, when your gut says GO, Countdown 5-4-3-2-1 and GO. I promise you, you were made for this moment. Your life is ready to expand. Accept the invitation.

There you have it, friends, another episode.

If your intuition is nudging you to learn what Human Design has to say about your life purpose, you can learn about your Human Design with me. Use the link in the show notes to [put your name on my waiting list to receive a 50-page written guide to your Human Design](#). Among other things, learn about your Life Purpose and also how to tune into your unique inner voice using what Human Design calls your inner authority.

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.