



Stages of Cultural Awareness and Acceptance©

What Does it Mean to Acknowledge, Affirm & Promote our Sensitivities?

The following definitions are from Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, 1996. The examples following the definitions may help us to rethink what we have been taught, what we have internalized and what we can do differently when it comes to being a Highly Sensitive Person.

Disparage:

To belittle, demean, ridicule, discredit

Believing: "HSPs' are weak, irritable, inferior, fearful, too emotional, too nervous, too intense."

Beliefs often associated with this stage:

- There is something wrong with me
- I am a disappointment
- I am powerless

Feelings often associated with this stage:

- Dejected, Hopeless, Depressed, Ashamed, Overwhelmed, Fragile, Vulnerable

Deny:

To refuse to recognize or acknowledge

Believing: "You're too sensitive, you need to toughen up, bite the bullet, suck it up."

Beliefs often associated with this stage:

- My needs are not important
- I cannot trust my judgement
- I am weak - I am a failure
- I have to be perfect

Feelings often associated with this stage:

- Stressed out, irritable, angry, resentful, guilty, heavy hearted

Acknowledge:

To admit to be real or true; to recognize the existence of

Believing: "Yes...your needs and mine are different ... help me to understand you, so I can help you to understand me."

Beliefs often associated with this stage:

- I can be myself
- I can get what I want and need
- I have choices

Feelings often associated with this stage:

- Relief, intrigued, inspired, absorbed

Affirm:

To state or assert positively

Believing: “HSPs have a unique way of being in the world, we have a more finely tuned central nervous system, and we process things deeply and purposefully.”

Beliefs often associated with this stage:

- I can trust myself
- I can be myself and make mistakes
- I can learn to take care of my sensitive self

Feelings often associated with this stage:

- Proud, Relaxed, passionate, hopeful, optimistic

Promote:

To further, advance, or exalt; put in a higher position

Believing: “HSPs are not “better” than non-HSPs, nor are we superior...yet, knowing that HSPs have unique gifts, talents, and skills and much to contribute to the world around us, our families, our workplaces, relationships, etc.”

Beliefs often associated with this stage:

- I deserve love and respect
- I am fine just as I am
- I can trust my judgement
- I can choose whom to trust

Feelings often associated with this stage:

- Appreciative, Grateful, Inspired, Empowered, Excited

From: Dr. Evonne Hedgepeth, Ph.D.,

“What Does It Really Mean to “Affirm” Versus “Promote”

A handout used in cultural diversity training.

Modified for HSPs by Jacquelyn Strickland, LPC. Use only with permission.



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