

## My Weekend With Dr. Elaine Aron

I had been doing extensive research on HSPs that included checking various Websites. I found out through Dr. Aron's Website that she was going to be giving a three-day seminar at Kripalu, a yoga and spiritual retreat located in Lenox, Massachusetts.

*Elation and apprehension* were the emotions that I was feeling when I found out about this event. I expressed my feelings to my success team via e-mail and telephone conversations about my angst. They were very supportive and one member of my success team very astutely put my situation in the proper perspective. Her comments are as follows:

*"Can you identify what has you feeling resistant? What are you actually feeling about it?"*

*Bottom line, no one says you have to do it...just thought it would be enlightening and could only help you in your project.*

*So just in case you have some fear or resistance that can be worked through, it's worth stepping out of the box. But if you have good reasons not to go, then that's okay too!"*

What great advice! This is a great lesson for all HSPs who have resistance. I decided to go through the exercise of identifying my feelings. I was apprehensive about going for various reasons. I was trying to give myself as many reasons as possible for not going. These reasons included:

- \* I couldn't get away for three days.
- \* It was too expensive.
- \* There would probably be a major snowstorm that weekend. (Ironically, there was a major snowstorm the following weekend. I guess it was my HSP intuition kicking in).
- \* I was having anxiety about meeting new people and being in an environment that was new to me.
- \* Kripalu was originally built as a Jesuit Seminary. The accommodations had dormitory type rooms that housed between six and twenty- two people per room. As a HSP, this caused great panic. I need time alone to decompress! I knew that I wouldn't be able to sleep in that situation.
- \* I was intimidated by meeting Dr. Aron, the founder of the HSP movement.

At the last possible moment, I decide to *swallow* my apprehension and fear and signed up for the seminar. I knew that I needed a *strategy* to cope with this situation. My strategy included:

- \* Having exact directions to Kripalu. As a HSP, this is crucial! Being lost, puts us in a terrible frame of mind.

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- \* Having the mindset that I was going to have a good time and learn as much as I could.
- \* To not get nervous and act naturally.
- \* To not stay at Kripalu. I decided to stay at a motel that was within a five mile radius. I knew that I'd be too stressed and wouldn't be able to sleep in a dormitory style room.

As the weekend approached, I made sure that I was well rested. I left for my journey with plenty of time to spare if I got lost and also enough time for me to relax before the Friday night introductory class. I got to Kripalu early to adjust to my new surroundings.

The staff was very gracious and helpful. I was taken on a tour of the facilities and was told about the various activities for the weekend. My guide told me that I could do as much or as little as I wanted. This put me at ease.

The seminar room had a relaxed atmosphere. You had to take your shoes off before entering. We had the option to sit on a regular chair or on an abbreviated type of chair on the wooden floor. Pillows and blankets were also provided. There was no set pattern for seating arrangements. You simply took your chair and sat wherever you wanted.

There were thirty women and seven men at the seminar. I was not surprised that there were many more women. I have found that women go to these types of events more often than men. The ages ranged from college students in their twenties to my age.

The people were very nice and I felt comfortable. Dr. Aron introduced herself and her work. I felt at ease in her presence and knew that I made the right choice to come. She encouraged the group to take this unique opportunity to meet each other. She emphasized that it's very important for HSPs to socialize with each other.

The next order of business was to go around the room and introduce ourselves. Dr. Aron emphasized that her intention was not to embarrass us in any way and it was not mandatory to participate in this exercise. I started to get a *lump* in my throat as we went around the room. I summoned up the courage to participate.

I told the group that I discovered I was a HSP about ten months ago. I said that I had writing aspirations and was writing about issues and challenges that HSPs face. There was a positive response from Dr. Aron and the members of the group. People came up to me after our Friday evening session and expressed interest in my project.

After a good night's sleep (I'm glad that I listened to my instincts about the sleeping arrangements), I came into Saturday's session refreshed and eager to learn. I felt comfortable with my fellow HSPs and had conversations with many of them. I was among my "tribe." We

had many things in common and had many similar issues and challenges.

Dr. Aron talked about many subjects that included... How to cope with overarousal, workplace issues, sleep problems. We also broke up into small groups to discuss subjects such as troubled childhoods, health issues, meeting people, long term relationships and dealing with change.

Throughout the day, the group was asking Dr. Aron questions about their issues. We all could relate in one way or another to the questions being asked. A question that I posed to her was about my experience with blushing and feeling flushed without notice. I wanted to know if this was a characteristic of HSPs. She said that it was definitely a sign of overarousal, but had no scientific proof that this was exclusively a HSP trait. A few people shared with me their experiences with the same problem.

During one of our breaks, I personally spoke to Elaine Aron. She expressed interest in my writing. I told her that I was in the process of finishing the information about my life as a HSP. She gave me her business card and told me that she was interested in my work. This was a great boost to my self-confidence to finish this book!

The Sunday session took an unexpected turn. There were two conflicting times for the session to begin, 9:00 and 9:30 am. Being the HSP that I am, I arrived early to be on the safe side. Ironically, the whole group felt the same way and arrived at the same time- everyone, except Dr. Aron.

We waited a few moments and I announced to the group that she probably thought that the session would begin at 9:30. In typical HSP fashion, the group came together to get the room prepared for Dr. Aron. Her chair and presentation board were brought to the front of the room and we started our own meeting.

Everyone was very cooperative and a suggestion was made to make a list of positive traits of HSPs. One circumstance lead to another... all of a sudden here I was in Dr. Aron's chair with a very helpful volunteer writing down the positive characteristics of HSPs on the board. I also posed questions to the group. These positive characteristics included: compassionate, creative problem solvers, thoughtful, nurturing, observant, common sense, responsible, understanding, self reliant, kind, and deep thinking.

I felt nervous being in front of the group. I could feel the heat in my face. It seemed to go well and I didn't collapse in a heap of mortification! I had thoughts about doing presentations to highly sensitive people, but didn't think I would have the nerve to do it. This experience taught me that maybe I could actually do it.

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When Dr. Aron arrived, she apologized for her tardiness and was pleased how the group came together. Our session continued and there was a question and answer period.

The closing of our time together was emotional. Dr. Aron mentioned that it was particularly hard for HSPs to say goodbye. She encouraged us to keep in touch with each other through an optional e-mail and address list.

She had the group form a circle and asked us to share our thoughts about why we were thankful for being here on this weekend. I chimed in that I was thankful to meet other HSPs and this experience encouraged me to move forward with my writing project.

All of a sudden, Dr. Aron thanked me and the group for starting the meeting the way we did. She also said that I was a new voice in the HSP movement. I got chills. What a great ending to a perfect weekend!!



## Potential Issues For HSPs In This Section

SHYNESS	Shyness is not an inherited HSP trait. Sensitivity is. Your experiences in childhood might have caused you to have shy tendencies. Anxiety hit me when I first thought of attending Dr. Aron's seminar. Do you feel this way in a similar situation?
SENSITIVITY TO ENVIRONMENT	I knew that I needed to have an alternative plan for my sleeping arrangements at Kripalu. Do you strategize to make allowances for your HSP characteristics?
NEED FOR SOLITUDE	My need to be alone to decompress was the main reason why I had to make alternative sleeping arrangements. Do you make the time and have the right place for solitude when needed?
BEING WATCHED MAKES YOU NERVOUS	I felt nervous in front of the group when I filled in for Dr. Aron. Have you had a similar experience when you were suddenly thrust into a situation that was uncomfortable for you?
CONSCIENTIOUSNESS	Conscientiousness and creative problem solving is a HSP strength. The entire group came up with ways to start the seminar before Dr. Aron arrived. Do you utilize this strength in your life?
TURNING "RED" OR BLUSHING	This is not a proven HSP trait. I had this symptom of overarousal when I stood in front of the group. I knew it was happening and was a little embarrassed. Everything turned out fine, despite it. Have you had this experience? What did you learn from it?
FEELING DISTRESSED WHEN MAKING CHANGES	Emotions ran high when the seminar came to a close. It signified an end to a special weekend. Do you have issues with beginnings and endings?

## Thought Provoking Questions

1. Has there been a time when you were apprehensive about doing something and decided to do it anyway? If so, how did it turn out? Was there a lesson learned from this experience?
2. Do you have some fear or resistance of doing something that you'd really like to do? If so, list the reasons why you have this resistance.
3. After you've analyzed your feelings, write down the specific strategies you can use to get past the fear that is holding you back.