CHRISTIAN DUARTE, PhD



THE HIGHLY SENSITIVE MOM

THE WORKBOOK

Every questionnaire, sheet, and plan from the book, ready to print and fill in by hand. Plus eight tools that exist only in this workbook, four guided audios, and the book chapter by chapter.

ZEN BOOKS
altamentesensible.com/mom-companions

START HERE

How to use this workbook

Read this page, then print only what you need.



Pencil, not pen.
You will correct almost every sheet over time. That is the point: these pages describe a nervous system that changes with sleep, seasons, and practice.

One sheet a week.
Each page names the chapter it belongs to. Fill it in the week you read that chapter, not all at once, or you will pile up resolutions instead of habits.

Print what you need.
You may print and copy these pages freely for your own home. The fridge sheet and the cards print best on thicker paper.

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THREE QUESTIONNAIRES, AND A WARNING

None of the questionnaires diagnoses anything. The reference scale is Elaine and Arthur Aron's Highly Sensitive Person Scale (1997), on hsperson.com; the questions here were written for this book to orient you, not to measure you. Several sentences also score high when a mother is anxious, depressed, or burned out: if that could be you, chapter 17 comes before any test, and page 31 has the numbers.

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IF YOU ONLY HAVE ONE EVENING, DO THESE FOUR, IN THIS ORDER

1 · The ten questions
Ten minutes. If six or more are yes, keep going.

2 · Your four bars
The map tells you which chapters to read first.

3 · The signal sheet
Fill it in and put it on the fridge tonight.

4 · The four-week plan
Start Monday. One action a day, under ten minutes.

TEST · INTRODUCTION

Ten questions before you go on

A mirror, not a diagnosis. Think about your real life over the past few months.



Read each sentence and answer yes or no. No complicated scoring.

The sounds of the house (the crying, the shrieking during play, the toys that play music) affect you more than the other adults you live with.	☐ Yes ☐ No
At the end of a normal parenting day, with no dramas or scares, you end up exhausted in a way that's hard to explain.	☐ Yes ☐ No
You need time alone and in silence to function, and when days go by without it you get irritable.	☐ Yes ☐ No
You notice before anyone else the subtle changes in your kids: in their face, in their tone of voice, in their appetite.	☐ Yes ☐ No
There are moments when continuous physical contact overwhelms you, even though at other times you genuinely enjoy it.	☐ Yes ☐ No
Comments about the way you parent, even small ones, keep going around in your head for days.	☐ Yes ☐ No
When one of your kids is having a hard time, you feel it almost in your body, as if it were happening to you.	☐ Yes ☐ No
Places with a lot of stimulation (birthday parties, indoor playgrounds, the mall) leave you wrecked, even though the kids come out delighted.	☐ Yes ☐ No
You demand far more of yourself as a mother than you would demand of any friend in the same situation.	☐ Yes ☐ No
You have the impression that your lifelong sensitivity multiplied when you became a mother.	☐ Yes ☐ No

My yeses: ..... out of 10 Date: .....

Six or more: this book is about you. **Fewer,** but the ones you marked are precisely the ones that make you suffer: keep reading too. The trait isn't a sharp line but a range, and the tools work just the same.

THE SENTENCE I'D UNDERLINE AND SEND TO SOMEONE

.....

.....

.....

Come back to this page in three months and answer again in a different color. What changed is usually the house, not you.

TEST · APPENDIX 1, PART 1

For you: where your sensitivity runs strongest

Not a label. A map of where the trait concentrates in you.

Score each sentence from 0 to 3 and write down the sum of each block. Each block runs from 0 to 15.

0 never or almost never · **1** sometimes · **2** often · **3** almost always. Think about the past few months, not your best or your worst week.

Block A. Depth: you turn everything over

#	STATEMENT	SCORE
1	Before deciding something, even something small, I mentally go over several options and their consequences.	0 1 2 3
2	After an important conversation, I'm still thinking about it hours later, sentence by sentence.	0 1 2 3
3	I have trouble doing things well when someone is watching me or rushing me.	0 1 2 3
4	Music, a landscape, or a scene in a movie moves me intensely.	0 1 2 3
5	When I make a mistake, I go over it in my head for much longer than the people around me do.	0 1 2 3
	Block A total (0-15)	.....

Block B. Saturation: the tank fills sooner

#	STATEMENT	SCORE
6	After a day with a lot of noise and people, I need time alone to be myself again.	0 1 2 3
7	When I have to do many things at once, I freeze or get irritable sooner than other people.	0 1 2 3
8	There are specific sounds that upset me in a way others find exaggerated.	0 1 2 3
9	Continuous physical contact, even affectionate, reaches a point where it overwhelms me.	0 1 2 3
10	Afternoons with kids leave me more exhausted than what I did would seem to warrant.	0 1 2 3
	Block B total (0-15)	.....

This is not a validated test, and it says so. It was written for this book to help you see where your sensitivity runs strongest. If sensory sentences have been high all your life along with difficulties in attention or relationships, it's worth a conversation with your doctor: other profiles can resemble this one and are approached differently.

TEST · APPENDIX 1, PART 1

For you: blocks C and D, and your map

Finish the questionnaire, then shade your four bars.



Block C. Emotion and empathy: other people's feelings get inside you

#	STATEMENT	SCORE
11	I notice someone's mood before they say anything.	0 1 2 3
12	When someone close to me is struggling, I have trouble getting it out of my head even if I can't do anything.	0 1 2 3
13	I cry easily, from sorrow and also from joy.	0 1 2 3
14	Scenes of violence or cruelty, even in fiction, affect me for days.	0 1 2 3
15	I'm deeply moved by an act of kindness, whether it's mine, someone else's, or one I only witnessed.	0 1 2 3
	Block C total (0-15)	.....

Block D. Subtleties: you notice what others don't see

#	STATEMENT	SCORE
16	I notice small changes: a piece of furniture moved, a different tone of voice, a new smell.	0 1 2 3
17	Itchy clothes, bright light, or heat bother me more than most people.	0 1 2 3
18	Coffee, hunger, or lack of sleep affect me more than they affect most people.	0 1 2 3
19	I sense before anyone else that something isn't right with one of my kids.	0 1 2 3
20	I enjoy details others overlook: a flavor, a texture, the light at a specific hour.	0 1 2 3
	Block D total (0-15)	.....

ONLY IN THIS WORKBOOK

My sensitivity map

Shade one square per point, from 0 to 15. There's no number that declares you highly sensitive: what matters is the picture. A block at 10 or more is a territory where the trait runs strong, and each one points to the chapters to read first. A low block isn't a defect or good news: it's information.

A · Depth	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	chapters 8 and 9
B · Saturation	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	chapters 2, 5, and 16
C · Emotion and empathy	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	chapters 10 and 11
D · Subtleties	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	chapters 4, 5, and 7

TEST · APPENDIX 1, PART 2

For someone close to you

For a partner, a sister, her own mother, or a close friend. You score what you can see from the outside.



Think about the past few months. Score each sentence from 0 to 3, then add them up. This is not a tool for winning an argument.

0 never or almost never · **1** sometimes · **2** often · **3** almost always. Think about the past few months, not your best or your worst week.

#	WHAT YOU CAN SEE	SCORE
1	After a day with a lot of noise, visitors, or activity, she needs a stretch of silence or solitude before she's herself again; without it she turns irritable or shuts down.	0 1 2 3
2	Sounds the rest of the household barely registers (a toy with music, the TV and a conversation at once, a child whining) visibly wear her down.	0 1 2 3
3	She notices changes before anyone else: a child coming down with something, a shift in someone's tone, a friend who isn't okay, a piece of furniture that's been moved.	0 1 2 3
4	A comment about how she parents, even a small one or one meant kindly, stays with her for days.	0 1 2 3
5	At the end of an ordinary day, with no drama, she's more drained than the day seems to justify.	0 1 2 3
6	Crowded, loud places (parties, indoor playgrounds, the mall) leave her wrecked, even when the kids had a great time.	0 1 2 3
7	When someone close to her is struggling, she carries it: she can't stop thinking about it, and sometimes seems to feel it in her body.	0 1 2 3
8	She's deeply moved by small things: a piece of music, a scene in a movie, an act of kindness, the light at a certain hour.	0 1 2 3
9	There are moments when she asks not to be touched, or pulls away from an affectionate gesture, and then feels bad about it.	0 1 2 3
10	She thinks things over longer than other people before deciding, even small things, and goes back over her mistakes long after everyone else has forgotten them.	0 1 2 3
11	Physical discomforts most people shrug off (an itchy label, bright light, heat, hunger, a short night) noticeably affect her mood and her patience.	0 1 2 3
12	She demands far more of herself as a mother than she'd ever demand of a friend in the same situation.	0 1 2 3
	Total (0-36)	.....

20 or more: the trait very probably describes her; the book will help you understand her.

12 to 19: sensitive in some territories, not others. The high sentences tell you where to start helping.

Under 12: there may be another explanation. If she hasn't enjoyed anything for weeks, sleeps badly even when the baby sleeps, or calls herself a failure, read chapter 17 and help her see a professional.

● Don't hand her the score. Hand her the page that reminded you of her and say why. And in every case, the most useful thing is in chapter 12: take a real shift, start to finish, not a hand.

TEST · APPENDIX 1, PART 3

For the two of you

About the house, not her nervous system. Each of you answers alone first, then side by side.



Score each sentence from 0 to 3 for how true it is of your home right now: 0 not at all, 1 a little, 2 mostly, 3 completely. Then write the gap between your two scores.

#	IN OUR HOUSE RIGHT NOW	ME	YOU	GAP
1	Each of us knows which stretch of the day is the other one's hardest, and we've arranged the day so that stretch doesn't always land on the same person.	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	.....
2	When one of us takes the kids, the other is genuinely off duty: no texts about where the socks are, no correcting from the next room, no review afterward.	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	.....
3	We split the invisible work (the appointments, the gifts, the school calendar, the what's-for-dinner), not only the visible chores.	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	.....
4	We have a word or a signal that means I'm at my limit, take over, and the other one honors it without negotiating in that moment.	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	.....
5	Each of us gets at least one fixed stretch a week that is only ours, and it survives the weeks when the house is chaos.	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	.....
6	We can say I don't want to be touched right now, or I need two minutes, without the other one hearing I don't love you.	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	.....
7	When one of us yells or gets it wrong, we repair it with the kids and with each other, in short sentences, the same day.	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	.....
8	We've each said out loud, in plain words, how our own nervous system works and what fills it up, and the other one could repeat it back.	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	.....
	Totals (0-24)	.....	.....	

Where the conversation is: the sentences with a gap of 2 or more. One of you thinks something is handled and the other is still carrying it. Those are the fifteen-minute conversation from chapter 12, already found.

Our two biggest gaps: sentences ..... and .....

What we agreed:

.....

.....

.....

18 or more, both of you: the house runs in your favor; the rest is fine-tuning.
10 to 17: a working home with two or three leaks; the lowest sentences name them.
Under 10: don't start with the tools. Start with the sentence from chapter 1, said by whichever of you is more sensitive: *my nervous system processes stimulation more deeply than average, so I get overloaded sooner.*

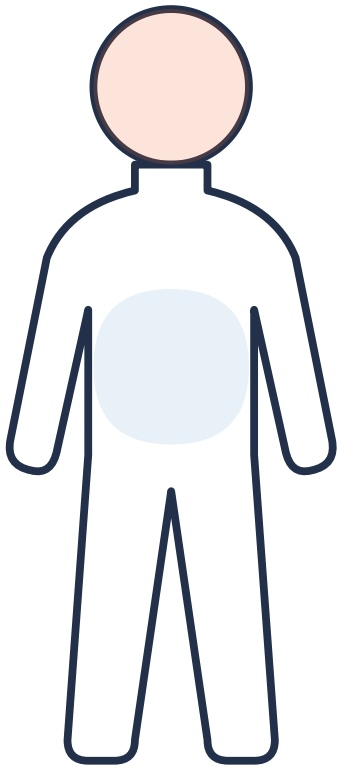
If you're afraid of the other adult in your house, skip this page: it's built for two people acting in good faith; page 31 has a confidential line. Answering alone? Read the sentences as what a village has to supply, and take it to chapter 15.

SHEET · CHAPTER 2

My first signals

Where overstimulation shows up first, and the hours it shows up most.

For three days, every time you hit your limit, ask one question: what did I notice first? Two words. The pattern is your early warning.



Mark where it shows up first: jaw, ears, chest, hands, skin, stomach, head.

AUDIO 1 *The Long Exhale*

THE THREE-DAY HUNT

DAY	WHAT I NOTICED FIRST (TWO WORDS)	WHEN
1		
2		
3		

My official early warning: .....

THE TWO FACES OF A FULL TANK

Activation. Irritable, rushing, the urge to flee, the yell on its way. When I'm here, I notice: .....

Shutdown. Present in body, gone in the head, answering on autopilot. When I'm here, I notice: .....

MY CRITICAL STRETCH

Almost every mom has one, usually between late afternoon and dinner. Mine runs from ..... to ..... . What I'll move out of it this week: .....

MY ARM'S-LENGTH REFUGE

The specific spot I go to when the warning fires (a corner of the bedroom, the porch, the parked car): .....

- Turn down one channel, not all of them: when the warning fires, remove a single input, whichever is easiest right then. Aim for two notches lower, never for a quiet house.

POSTER · APPENDIX 2

The signal sheet for the fridge

Fill it in with pencil and put it where you'll see it: the fridge, the mirror, your lock screen.



My first signals (two words each):

..... .

.....

My critical stretch: from ..... to .....

Green: I'm inside the window

I can listen, think, and respond calmly. The time to prevent, not to hold on:

- A three-minute break from my menu at the next seam of the day.
- Eat something sitting down before the critical stretch.
- Get done now what I'd have to do during the critical stretch.

Amber: the first signal has arrived

There's still time. Just one of these, the easiest:

- Turn down one channel: switch off a source of noise, change the light, loosen the clothes that pinch.
- Warn with words: “Mommy's ears are full. I need a little quiet, then we'll keep going.”
- Three physiological sighs: two breaths in through the nose, one long exhale through the mouth.

Red: I'm about to blow, or I've already shut down

Body first, conversation after:

- “I need two minutes.” Step into the bathroom, the hallway, or out on the porch.
- Lengthen the exhale: in for four, out for six or eight, five or six times.
- If I've shut down instead of blowing up: cool water on my face, a moment outside, a song I genuinely love.
- If there was a yell: repair tomorrow in thirty seconds. Name the fact, own my part, make the gesture.

My list of three (people I can ask for concrete help)

.....

.....

.....

The two questions, if things have been bad for more than two weeks: when I rest for real, do I get better? Can I still enjoy anything? One no: appointment this week. Thoughts of death: call or text 988 today; immediate danger: 911.

3 minutes

.....

.....

.....

10 minutes

.....

.....

.....

30 minutes

.....

.....

.....

My protected hour

..... s, ... to .....

My three habits

Body: .....

Mind: .....

Rest: .....

SHEET · CHAPTER 5

The house, channel by channel

Lowering your home's factory setting, so the day starts lower.



Ten minutes, once, walking through the house with this sheet. In each room: what makes a constant sound, what touches your skin without your choosing it, what your eye lands on, what you smell.

ROOM	SOUND	TOUCH	EYES	SMELL
Kitchen				
Living room				
Kids' room				
My bedroom				
Bathroom				
Hallway and entry				
The car				

THE THREE BIGGEST SOURCES OF LOAD I COULD REMOVE OR TURN DOWN

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....

Our house rules

- ☐ One sound source per room.
- ☐ Battery toys have an off switch, and it gets used.
- ☐ One cleared surface per room, always the same one.
- ☐ Three drawings on the fridge; the rest into the treasure folder.
- ☐ Skin clothes when I get home, tags and waistbands off.

Touch, before it fills up

My no-arms window of the day:

.....

What I say when my skin is full: *"Mommy's skin is full, right now we play without climbing on."*

The chosen contact that repairs it (a long, still hug I start and I end): .....

You're not going to fix everything. You're going to know, for the first time, where the bill comes from. Usually a surprising share of the daily load turns out to be avoidable.

SHEET · CHAPTER 4

My night plan

Sleeping better in pieces: a protected first stretch, a fenced night, and shifts.



THIS WEEK'S PROTECTED FIRST STRETCHES

Mark two or three nights. On those, I go to bed on the first wave of sleep after the kids are down, no negotiating with my phone. The other nights, my stretch is mine.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The fenced night. It doesn't get removed; it gets fenced.
My stretch: from ..... until ....., alarm set.
What I'll actually enjoy in it (a chosen half hour beats two hours of scrolling):
.....
My ten minutes of daytime silence, so the couch steals less: .....

Shifts, not down the middle.
Wake-ups until ..... : .....
From then on: .....
Whoever is off duty sleeps with earplugs, off duty completely.
If I'm nursing: my protected shift starts right after the ..... feeding; everything that isn't feeding is theirs.

MY LAST CAFFEINATED COFFEE

Caffeine takes hours to clear; six hours before bed is the line. Circle the hour.

12 pm	1 pm	2 pm	3 pm	4 pm	5 pm	6 pm	7 pm	8 pm	9 pm	10 pm	11 pm

Rest in the dark. Where a fifteen-minute gap could fit this week, alarm set, even if I don't sleep:
.....

For the 4 a.m. wake-up. Don't check the time. Don't solve my life; give the thought a written appointment for tomorrow. Give the body one task: in for four, out for six or eight. Twenty minutes with no luck: get up, low light, come back when sleep shows up.

- Safety line for the one up at three: feed sitting up in bed, pillows and loose blankets pushed away, never on a couch or armchair. If you feel yourself going under, the baby goes back to the crib first.

CARDS · CHAPTER 6

Two-minute levers, and the off-duty signal



Cut them out. Keep one in the kitchen, one by the bed, one in the car.

None of them solves a life; all of them teach the body the way down. The order is physical, not mental: air, temperature, movement.

AIR

The physiological sigh

Breathe in through your nose, and when you think you're done, add a second short sip of air. Then let it all out through your mouth, long and unhurried. Three to five times. Lightheaded? Stop and breathe normally.

AUDIO 1 *The Long Exhale*

TEMPERATURE

Cold on the face, warmth in the hands

Cold water on the face, the wrists, or the back of the neck cuts the spike in thirty seconds. Warmth undoes background tension: a hot shower on the shoulders, a warm mug between the hands. (Heart condition? Ask your doctor first.)

MOVEMENT

Burn off the engine

Sixty seconds: shake your hands and arms as if drying them, up and down the stairs twice, ten squats, or tense every muscle for five seconds and release at once. Calm comes in on its own afterward.

PAPER

Empty the list

Two minutes before the closing ritual: everything your head is holding, raw, unsorted, onto paper or a note. No solving. What's written down no longer needs guarding.

MY OFF-DUTY SIGNAL · RIGHT AFTER THE KIDS' DOOR CLOSES

1 **Light**
Lights down low in: .....

2 **Air**
Three physiological sighs, leaning on: .....

3 **The sentence,** said for real:
"The shift is over. I'm off duty." or mine: .....

The first nights you won't notice much. After a few weeks, the sequence triggers the descent on its own, the way pajamas trigger your kids' sleep.

- Take care of the sentry: every stretch when someone else is officially in charge, say it out loud (they're with you now, I'm not here) and let the watch switch off completely, not halfway.

POSTER · CHAPTER 7

The short list on the fridge

When you can't do it all, drop things in this order. In the bad weeks, this paper decides for you.



1 **Sleep first.**
A protected first stretch on my chosen nights. Everything else negotiates with this.

2 **Eat sitting down, three times.**
Breakfast with protein before the phone. The parallel plate: their plate, my plate, same motion. My own after-school snack.

3 **Get outside once a day.**
Light in my eyes and my body moving. Hitched to a train that already runs; five minutes on the front steps is the minimum, and it counts.

MY PARALLEL PLATE

Their breakfast is ..... , so mine is ..... .
Their snack is ..... , so mine is ..... .
Same food, adult version, on my plate, even if I eat it fifteen minutes later.

MY WALK, HITCHED TO SOMETHING I ALREADY DO

- ☐ School drop-off on foot
- ☐ The small grocery run with the stroller
- ☐ The call to ..... , around the block
- ☐ Mine: .....

Breakfast, set up the night before: .....
Something with protein (an egg, Greek yogurt, cheese, turkey), not the coffee and the kid's leftover waffle. A morning with fuel means half a witching hour less in the afternoon.

In the good weeks, everything you do beyond these three lines is a gift, not a debt. The four-week plan builds its second week on this same list.

SHEET · CHAPTER 8

From the loop to one concrete sentence



Nighttime guilt measures how much you process, not your quality as a mother.

When "I'm a bad mother" shows up, bring it down to a fact. Then one question: can it be repaired, yes or no. Guilt that offers no action doesn't need more of your time.

THE SENTENCE IN MY HEAD	THE FACT	CAN IT BE REPAIRED?
"I'm a bad mother because..."	What I did, when, with whom. Far less grandiose.	☐ Yes: tomorrow's repair is ..... ☐ No: it's closed.

THE SENTENCE IN MY HEAD	THE FACT	CAN IT BE REPAIRED?
"I'm a bad mother because..."	What I did, when, with whom. Far less grandiose.	☐ Yes: tomorrow's repair is ..... ☐ No: it's closed.

THE SENTENCE IN MY HEAD	THE FACT	CAN IT BE REPAIRED?
"I'm a bad mother because..."	What I did, when, with whom. Far less grandiose.	☐ Yes: tomorrow's repair is ..... ☐ No: it's closed.

The 30-second repair, the next day, in a calm moment, three sentences:

1. Name the fact: *yesterday I didn't pay attention when you were showing me your notebook.*
2. Own my part: *I was tired and I handled it badly.*
3. Make the gesture: *show it to me now, I want to see it.*

Give the loop an appointment, don't ban it. If the replay shows up at night: *tomorrow at ....., ten minutes, with paper.* Keep the appointment. Almost always the matter has shrunk; if not, it deserves a concrete decision, written down. What gets decided by day stops prowling at night.

AUDIO 4 *An Appointment for the Loop*

If the guilt is there all day, yields to no repair, or comes with the feeling your kids would be better off without you, that's no longer the trait at work: chapter 17, and the last page of this workbook.

JOURNAL · CHAPTER 8

The three-line close

Two minutes when you finish cleaning up, before the review takes the night.



Three things, every night: one I did well today, one I'll do differently tomorrow, and one that doesn't depend on me. It isn't optimism. It's a complete accounting, which the brain doesn't do on its own.

DAY	ONE THING I DID WELL	ONE THING I'LL DO DIFFERENTLY	ONE THAT DOESN'T DEPEND ON ME
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

Talk to yourself the way you'd talk to your sister. If she told you exactly what you reproach yourself for, you wouldn't call her a bad mother. You'd tell her she hasn't slept well in weeks and that one *not now* doesn't break anybody. What I'd say to my sister tonight: .....

- Count the whole day, not just the mistakes: the cereal, the ride to school, the story read with your eyes closing, the forty kind things. An accounting with half the data is a false accounting.

LOG · CHAPTER 8

Evidence of the other version

For the nights when the inner judge is especially unfair.



Every time your child says or does something that shows he feels loved, write it down with the date. Something said in the car. That he comes looking for you when he gets hurt. The drawing of the two of you holding hands.

DATE	WHAT HE SAID OR DID

This page isn't for showing off. It's for having something at hand that isn't your opinion or anyone else's: it's his words.

SHEET · CHAPTER 3

The shoulds list, and enough for today



The myth doesn't come down with an insight. It comes down with practice.

Ten minutes, paper and pen. Every sentence that begins “a good mom should” that is running your life right now. Don't censor. Then two questions per line, and cross out one: the one that scares you least. Literally.

A GOOD MOM SHOULD…	WHO SAYS SO?	WHAT WOULD ACTUALLY HAPPEN?

ENOUGH, BEFORE THE DAY STARTS

The infinite bar works because it's never spelled out. Spell it out: the three things that make today count. If they're there at night, the day passed; everything else was extra, not debt.

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....

MY TWO SENTENCES, READY

For the *I raised four* and the *you just stress about everything*. Short, friendly, closed. No paragraph, because a paragraph invites a rebuttal.

“Every family is different.”
“This works for us.”

Mine: .....

Clean out your feed, one rule: how I feel when I close the app. What I'll mute this week:

.....

- Going back to work? Define enough for the work day too: showing up, doing the job, getting home. Ask for break time and a private place to pump before you need it, in one email.

SHEET · CHAPTER 9

Good enough, task by task

Perfectionism thrives in vagueness. Pin it down, with humor if it helps.



What is a bath done well enough? Clean kids, no crying, in pajamas. Done. The water temperature and the order of the towels are not in the definition. For each task, the three-question test: is it safe, is there love in it, does it work.

TASK	GOOD ENOUGH LOOKS LIKE	NOT IN THE DEFINITION
Bath		
Dinner		
Getting out the door		
Birthday party		
Homework		

NO-REDO DAY

For twenty-four hours, what someone else did, if it's safe, stays as it is. The crooked ponytail goes to the park crooked. Count the stings, and what actually happens.

Stings: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

What happened:

.....

ONE VISIBLE IMPERFECTION A WEEK

Store-bought cupcakes, the holiday card with the unedited photo, the pants that don't match. Evidence, gathered the only way your alarm accepts: by seeing that nothing happens.

This week:

.....

Nobody noticed: ☐ yes ☐ someone did, and

.....

Delegate whole jobs, not execution. The job that's entirely theirs from now on, with their methods and their songs: ....., on ..... . No supervising, no going in afterward, no touching up.

- Ask about the cost, not just the result: the A-plus party that cost two nights of sleep was paid for by the very kids it was for. The B-plus often turns out to be the better grade.

SHEET · CHAPTER 11

Find your last straw

The yell is the end of a chain that starts hours earlier. An engineering problem, not a moral verdict.



Blowups cluster in two or three fixed scenes. Go over your last few yells and look for the pattern: a time, a situation, a behavior that's almost always there.

WHEN	THE SCENE	WHAT HAD FILLED THE CUP SINCE MORNING	THE LAST STRAW

My most frequent last straw: .....

DEFUSE THAT SCENE WITH LOGISTICS, NOT WITH CHARACTER

If it's getting out the door: clothes and backpacks ready the night before; leave ten minutes early. Mine: .....

If it's homework: maybe Friday homework shouldn't exist in your house; it moves to Saturday morning. Mine: .....

If it's the shoes moment: shoes go on at the kitchen timer's first beep, not your third call. The referee is a buzzer, not your throat. Mine: .....

The one thing I'll change about that scene today: .....

Irritability of the background kind, the season when everything bothers you from the morning on, isn't an anger problem: it's the tank of chapter 2 living chronically full. It's treated there: emptying more, loading less.

CARDS · CHAPTER 11

The minute before, and after

It exists, it gives warning, and it's enough for one rehearsed action.



EMERGENCY ACTION 1

Lower your voice on purpose

In the middle of the escalation, do the opposite of what the body asks: say the next sentence almost in a whisper, slowly, even if it's "This. Gets. Picked up. Now." It breaks their script and drags your body along. Rehearse it when you're calm, even if it makes you laugh.

EMERGENCY ACTION 2

The announced retreat

If the whisper isn't enough: step away, saying where you're going and that you're coming back. "I'm very angry; I'm going to the kitchen to calm down and I'll be right back." Coming back is half the tool. Always come back.

WITH A BABY WHO WON'T STOP CRYING

Put him down, step out, check, return

On his back in the crib, nothing else in it. Leave the room, check every few minutes, go back when you've come down. If you can, call someone to take over. A baby who cries for a few minutes in a safe crib is fine; a shaken baby is not.

GIVE ANGER A WAY DOWN

Not a drain

Punching a pillow and furious runs rev the body up; what pools 154 studies say lowers anger is what brings the body down: the slow exhale, the sigh, cold water on the wrists, a slow walk, ten minutes of quiet with the door closed.

AFTERWARD: REPAIR, THEN REVIEW THE CHAIN

Repair with the child first, short and without drama, as in chapter 8: name the fact, own my part, make the gesture. Mine, this time:

.....

Then the engineer's review, once I've cooled down:

What filled the cup today: .....

What spilled it: .....

The answers almost never point to your character. They point to a skipped nap, an afternoon with no breaks, a humming child with the tank full.

- A child doesn't learn from the isolated yell but from the pattern: occasional anger, regulation in plain sight, and repair afterward is emotional education, not damage.

SCRIPT · CHAPTER 12

The fifteen-minute conversation

One foundational conversation, in a calm moment, never at eleven at night. A walk without the kids is the best setting.



1 Open without accusation, and with the manual.

"I want to tell you something about me that explains a lot of our arguments. My nervous system processes everything more deeply: noise, touch, clutter. That's why I get saturated before you do in the same situations. It isn't a complaint; it's information I wish I'd had myself sooner."

2 Give an example of my own, and a recent one. ("The Saturday of the towel, I'd been at my limit since the morning. It wasn't the towel.")

.....

.....

.....

3 Close with a concrete, small request: what, when, how far. Not "help more."

What (the whole job) .....

When (day and hours) .....

How far (snack included? I'm not here?) .....

OUR SHORT CODE

A word, a gesture, a "code red" that means *I'm at my limit, take over, we'll talk later.* Used before the blowup, honored without negotiating, sparingly. A fire extinguisher, not a remote control.

Ours: .....

THANK WITHOUT AUDITING

When the relief shift ends: concrete thanks (*"those two hours were exactly what I needed"*) and zero review of what I find. What gets thanked gets repeated; what gets audited dies out. It runs both ways.

If you'd rather start with a sheet of paper than a speech, the questionnaire for the two of you (page 7) finds this conversation faster: the sentences where your scores differ most are it.

SHEET · CHAPTER 12

The chore thermometer

Not how long it takes: how much it wears you down. Twenty minutes that pay for themselves the same week.



Each of you rates the week's chores separately, from 1 (neutral) to 5 (drains me). Then compare: the chores that cost you a four and your partner a one are the ones to swap. Nobody works more; the household's total well-being goes up.

CHORE	ME	YOU	SWAP?
Bath	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
Bedtime	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
Dinner	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
The morning rush	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
Grocery run	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
Laundry	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
Calls and appointments	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
School stuff and forms	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
Birthday parties and playdates	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
Weekend outings	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
Cleaning up after dinner	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
Night wake-ups	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	☐

Three currencies, not one. A fair split counts time, stimulation load, and the watch (who carries the vaccines, the gifts, the calendar in their head). Counting only chores can come out arithmetically fair and sensorially unfair. The invisible job that becomes entirely theirs this month: .....

PLAN · CHAPTER 13

The exit plan for visits and holidays

The most important decision about a gathering is made before you leave home.



Fill it in with your partner the day before. Announce the departure time on arrival, casually; nobody argues with a plan announced at the door.

Where we're going: .....

We leave at: ..... Our discreet signal: .....

Separate cars? ☐ yes ☐ no, so the time agreement is mandatory

My quiet spot there (the bathroom counts): .....

Micro-escapes every forty-five minutes

- ☐ Carry plates to the kitchen
- ☐ Go out for ice
- ☐ Take the little one out "to get some air"
- ☐ Ten-minute walk with the baby "so he'll fall asleep"
- ☐ Two minutes in the bathroom: long exhales, cold water on the wrists

SHORT SENTENCES FOR LONG ADVICE

"Every kid is different, and this works for him."

"We're on it with the pediatrician; he's doing great."

"Could be. I'll think about it." (the crown jewel: concedes nothing, argues nothing)

The rescue at the table. If a comment lands on me and I have no sentence, my partner steers away: *"By the way, how was the drive?"* Ours: .....

Who sets the limit if it repeats: the son or daughter of the person with the opinion, in private, not at the table.

The kids' map, two minutes in the car: how long it lasts, who'll be there, what's expected, when we go home. For my sensitive child, his private "I need air" signal: .....

Budget the hangover. The next day is blocked: minimal schedule, dinner already figured out (.....), zero social plans, and if I can, an hour of real silence at ..... . It isn't laziness. It's maintenance.

- When the visit comes to you, use your sovereignty: invite with the schedule included, TV off during the meal, and the kids' bath as the most socially accepted closing bell there is.

POSTER · CHAPTER 14

Our signal notebook

How our bodies warn us that the cup is filling. Drawn if need be, taped up where it can be seen.



From four or five on, you can play the signals game with your child: his warnings and yours, side by side. You're doing with him at five the work you've had to do as an adult.

MOM'S BODY WARNS HER WITH…

Words: .....

..... 'S BODY WARNS WITH…

Words: .....

GOOD WORDS WE USE AT HOME

"You have a very fine radar, and it worked hard today."
"Your cup filled up. Let's empty it."

Ours: .....

Never: "don't be so dramatic," "you're making a big deal of nothing."

HIS CALM CORNER, AS MATTER-OF-FACTLY AS MINE

Where: .....

What's in it: .....

Transition warning we use: *"in ten minutes we clean up."*

Anchor yourself first. In the middle of the cascade: feet on the floor, long exhale, my sentence (*"This is his; I'm the shore."* or mine: .....), and only then crouch down to his height. A half-regulated mother is more calming than one who has collapsed into the crying alongside him.

- Dose the world, don't spare him it: he goes to the party and can step outside halfway through. Every experience digested teaches him the world is tiring but doable. For school, operating instructions beat hallway diagnoses.

SHEET · CHAPTER 15

My village

Small, deep, and low-friction. It doesn't need founding; it needs activating.



Your favor bookkeeping is badly calibrated: for the people who love you, helping you adds. Three names, one small closed request this week, and let the data get filed: I asked, nothing bad happened, Tuesday was better.

THE LIST OF THREE	ONE CONCRETE, SMALL THING I COULD ASK (WHAT, WHEN, HOW LONG)	ASKED ON	HOW IT WENT

THE STANDING SWAP

Fixed, weekly, no negotiation, with a low-friction mother.

With: .....

I pick up both kids on: ..... She does on: .....

Zero coordination, zero bookkeeping, zero debt. And one free afternoon a week you can count on.

THE HELP TEST

Grandma's TV, the neighbor's sugary snack, the dinner not made my way:

☐ Is it safe? ☐ Is there love in it? ☐ Does it work?

Three yeses: the help counts, as is. Perfect help doesn't exist, and demanding it is the fastest way to end up with none.

Get off the boat that's sinking you. The group that systematically leaves me worse: ..... . The one mom in it I'll suggest coffee to: .....

My social no, without the mile-long justification: *"We can't make it, another time."* Period. This week I'll say it to: .....

- Tend your village in your own language: the text that remembers her kid's interview, the right sentence on the hard day. Two minutes of your kind of attention sustain a friendship more than three afternoons at the crowded playground.

SHEET · CHAPTER 16

My 3-10-30 menu, my hour, my cave

Deciding what to do with a gap costs something too. Decide beforehand, once, in writing.



THREE MINUTES

Bathroom door closed and five sighs; the porch, looking at something far away; the bed in the dark with an alarm.

AUDIO 2 *Three Minutes in the Parked Car*

TEN MINUTES

The slow shower with the lights low; a stretch in my corner without my phone; the floor, eyes closed.

AUDIO 3 *Ten Minutes in the Cave*

THIRTY MINUTES

The walk alone with no errands; the cave with the door closed; a bench in the sun.

All low-stimulation, no screens. When a gap appears, don't decide: run the entry that matches the size.

MY TWO SEAMS, TURNED INTO FIXED BREAKS

The parked car before I walk in, the hallway between one bedtime and the next, the minute after the school door closes.

Seam 1: .....

Seam 2: .....

MY PROTECTED HOUR

Same day, same time, always. What's negotiated every week falls through every week.

..... s from ..... to ....., covered by .....

Not for errands, never lent out. One hour out of 168.

MY CAVE, AND ITS RULES SAID OUT LOUD

Where: .....

In it (low light, something comfortable, no screen):

.....

Portable version (earplugs, mask, headphones, in a box):

.....

For the kids: *"When Mom is in her corner with the door closed, you wait, unless there's blood or fire."*

For my partner: *"If I'm in there, I'm charging; ten minutes and I'm back."*

- The first protected hour almost never feels like glory, and the fourth almost always does. If there's no partner to agree it with, you build it: a swap, a sitter, a grandparent on a video call, or the hour that starts the minute the nap does.

LOG · CHAPTER 17

The two-week log

Every night, a score from zero to ten for your mood and one line. Nothing more.



At the end, two questions: does it improve with real rest? Is there enjoyment left? One no is enough to be seen. This paper is exactly what a professional needs at the first visit.

DAY	DATE	MOOD 0-10	ONE LINE
1		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
2		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
3		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
4		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
5		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
6		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
7		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
8		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
9		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
10		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
11		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
12		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
13		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
14		0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

The two questions

- ☐ When I rest for real, do I get better?
- ☐ Can I still enjoy anything?

One no, for two weeks: the appointment is this week.

What I'll say at the visit, word for word if I like: *"I've been feeling this way for more than two weeks, I've tried to rest, and I'm not coming back up."* Plus two things even if they don't ask: bipolar disorder in me or my immediate family, and a similar episode in another pregnancy or postpartum.

- The door: my OB-GYN or midwife in the first year, my primary care doctor otherwise, or my baby's pediatrician. If the first visit says "that's normal, all mothers are tired," go back with this page and ask for an evaluation.

PLAN · CHAPTER 18

The four-week plan on one page

One action a day, almost always under ten minutes. The protected hour is the one exception.



	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1 See and remove	Hunt my first signal ☐	Audit the house by channel ☐	Turn off one source of noise ☐	The list of shoulds ☐	Define enough before breakfast ☐	Clean up my feed ☐	Review and prep; overwhelm 0-10 ☐
Week 2 Body and sleep	First night of first stretch ☐	Draw a line on coffee ☐	Parallel plate day ☐	Debut the off-duty signal ☐	Second night, with a paper dump ☐	Twenty minutes of light ☐	Split the night ☐
Week 3 Guilt and limits	Bring guilt down to a fact ☐	Repair in thirty seconds ☐	Give the loop an appointment ☐	One request: what, when, how far ☐	No-redo day ☐	Find my last straw ☐	Two sentences and a three-line close ☐
Week 4 Rest and network	Write the 3-10-30 menu ☐	Use a three and a ten ☐	Open the cave ☐	Activate the list of three ☐	Schedule the protected hour ☐	The protected hour, first run ☐	Accounting and packing; overwhelm 0-10 ☐

I start on Monday ..... . Not the ideal Monday: the next one.

Overwhelm, week 1: ..... / 10
Week 4: ..... / 10
Don't expect a miracle; expect a direction.

I told .....
so the plan exists outside my head.

The rules protect you from your own perfectionism: one action a day and that's it; a day that falls through is left to fall, not made up; twenty out of twenty-eight is a resounding success. With a sick child, only the off-duty ritual is kept.

JOURNAL · CHAPTER 18

The four Sundays

Sunday always closes in calm and prepares what's next. The plan also teaches you how to end weeks.



SUNDAY, WEEK 1

The signal that repeated most this week (my official early warning): .....

Overwhelm this week: ..... / 10

What fell through, with no story about my willpower:

.....

Next week's two first-stretch nights: ..... and .....

SUNDAY, WEEK 2

How the first-stretch nights went, and how the night split landed: .....

Overwhelm this week: ..... / 10

What fell through, with no story about my willpower:

.....

Next week's two first-stretch nights: ..... and .....

SUNDAY, WEEK 3

One thing I did well, one I'll do differently, one that doesn't depend on me: .....

Overwhelm this week: ..... / 10

What fell through, with no story about my willpower:

.....

Next week's two first-stretch nights: ..... and .....

SUNDAY, WEEK 4

What stays forever (see next page), and what I'll repeat next month: .....

Overwhelm this week: ..... / 10

What fell through, with no story about my willpower:

.....

Next week's two first-stretch nights: ..... and .....

With life working against me. Sick child: minimum mode, only the off-duty ritual. Travel or visitors: each morning, the one action that fits. No partner, or one who won't cooperate: the plan is still mine six days out of seven; night blocks become rests in the dark, Thursday's request goes to the list of three, and the hour is built with a swap or a sitter.

- The minimum version of the whole plan is four Mondays, and it counts. If not even that lifts your mood, that's chapter 17 calling, and that call is one you don't postpone.

SHEET · CHAPTER 18 AND APPENDIX 2

My three habits to keep

Three, not ten. Chosen with paper on the last Sunday of the plan.



BODY

Almost always the off-duty signal or the first stretch.

MIND

The three-line close or the loop's appointment.

REST OR NETWORK

The protected hour is queen.

The measure of success

Not a perpetual calm that exists in no house with kids. The small signs: the warning that now comes before the blowup, the yell that stayed a whisper, the Tuesday nap that this time actually restored you, the request you made without rehearsing it for an hour. Write the ones you've already seen:

The plan is reusable. After a disastrous vacation, a move, a bad season, when the tank is living full again: repeat it whole, or the week that's needed. It won't cost what it did the first time.
I'll know it's time to repeat it when:

Shrink it, don't abandon it. The minimum version is the Mondays of each week: four actions in a month. My four Mondays, if it comes to that:

- You've spent a long time believing the problem was you. It isn't that you can't handle this. It's that it hits you harder, and now you know why, and what to do about it.

APPENDIX 3

Where to ask for help

United States numbers, current when the book went to press. Numbers change: if one doesn't answer, your doctor's office knows the current resource.



If there's immediate danger: 911.
Postpartum psychosis (confusion, strange ideas, hearing or seeing things, whole nights without sleep without feeling sleepy, in the first weeks after a birth) is an emergency: the ER now or 911, and she isn't left alone, or alone with the baby, until she has been seen.

IF YOU HAVE THOUGHTS OF DEATH OR OF HURTING YOURSELF	HOW
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline	Call or text **988**, or chat at 988lifeline.org. Any hour, free, confidential. Spanish: press 2, or text AYUDA to 988. Also for worried family and friends.
National Maternal Mental Health Hotline	**1-833-TLC-MAMA** (1-833-852-6262). Call or text, 24 hours, free, English and Spanish, interpreters in 60+ languages. For mothers before, during, and after pregnancy, and their partners. Not an emergency service.
IF THERE'S VIOLENCE AT HOME	
National Domestic Violence Hotline	**1-800-799-7233** (1-800-799-SAFE), 24 hours, English and Spanish. Text START to 88788; chat at thehotline.org; videophone 1-855-812-1001. If someone may be checking your phone, reach out from one they can't access. Advocates help with a safety plan, shelters, and legal help.
TO ASK FOR AN EVALUATION AND TREATMENT	
Your OB-GYN or midwife	The front door in pregnancy and the first year; the postpartum visit is made for exactly this.
Your primary care doctor	Outside the postpartum period. Bring the two-week log (page 27).
Your baby's pediatrician	Pediatricians screen mothers for depression at the 1-, 2-, 4-, and 6-month visits. Answer the questionnaire honestly; if nobody hands it to you, raise it yourself.
Postpartum Support International	postpartum.net. HelpLine **1-800-944-4773** (1 Spanish, 2 English); text HELP to that number, or in Spanish text 971-203-7773. A trained volunteer calls back, usually within 24 hours. Provider directory and free online groups, also in Spanish. Not a crisis line.
LactMed	ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK501922. Drug by drug, what's known during breastfeeding. Arrive at the visit informed; the decision is made with your clinician.
Elaine Aron	hsperson.com, with her original questionnaire and the published research.

- If it has ever crossed your mind that your kids would be better off without you, that idea is a symptom, not a truth, and it can be treated: tell someone today and call one of these lines or get a same-day appointment.

THE AUDIOS

Four Audios, in My Voice

Short guided practices taken from the book, for the moments when reading isn't an option.

1 *The Long Exhale* ~5 min

WHEN TO USE IT
Any spike of the day: before you yell, in the hallway, in the bathroom, in the car.

WHAT IT DOES
The long exhale from chapter 2 and the physiological sigh from chapter 6, counted for you.

FROM THE BOOK
Chapters 2 and 6

GOES WITH WORKBOOK PAGE
8, 12

2 *Three Minutes in the Parked Car* ~5 min

WHEN TO USE IT
In the driveway, engine off, before you walk into the house.

WHAT IT DOES
The three minutes between rounds: the seam between the first shift and the second.

FROM THE BOOK
Chapter 16

GOES WITH WORKBOOK PAGE
26

3 *Ten Minutes in the Cave* ~10 min

WHEN TO USE IT
Your ten-minute rest, in your cave, with the door closed.

WHAT IT DOES
Low light, no screen, and the discomfort of the first minutes, with company.

FROM THE BOOK
Chapter 16

GOES WITH WORKBOOK PAGE
26

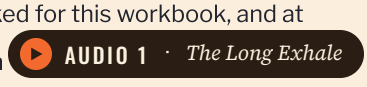
4 *An Appointment for the Loop* ~5 min

WHEN TO USE IT
At night, in bed, when your head starts replaying the day.

WHAT IT DOES
Bring the loop down to one sentence, give it an appointment for tomorrow at six, and count the whole day.

FROM THE BOOK
Chapter 8

GOES WITH WORKBOOK PAGE
14

Where to listen. The links are in the email you received when you asked for this workbook, and at altamentesensible.com/mom-companions. Look for the audio button 

next to the practices that have one.
If you feel lightheaded or tingly during the breathing, stop and breathe normally for a minute. The audios are for education and are not medical advice.

One page per chapter: its opening plate, the chapter in three lines, and its small thing for this week.



01

A Highly Sensitive Mom Is Not a Fragile Mom

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. High sensitivity is a normal temperament trait, studied for three decades: a nervous system that processes everything more deeply. It is not shyness, not fragility, and not a diagnosis.
2. The trait has four faces (depth of processing, ease of overstimulation, intense emotion and empathy, sensitivity to the subtle), and few jobs switch on all four at once, with no breaks, the way parenting does.
3. About 30 percent of people are in the highly sensitive group, the orchids. There are plenty of moms like you in the school pickup line.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

This week, every time you notice you're overwhelmed, swap one question for another. Instead of what's wrong with me, ask what was too much. Just that one switch. The first question judges you; the second one informs you.

YOUR PAGES P. 3–7

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



02

Overstimulation: What Happens in Your Nervous System When Everything Hits at Once

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. Overstimulation is not a shortage of patience: it's a nervous system that has received more input than it can process.
2. Deep processing is the foundation of the trait, and it has an energy cost that parenting sends through the roof.
3. It can show up as activation (irritability, rushing, the urge to flee) or as shutdown (present in body, gone in the head).

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

This week, type into your phone the first signal you notice each time you hit your limit. Just two words. Nothing more.

YOUR PAGES P. 8, 9 ▶ AUDIO 1 · *The Long Exhale*

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



03

The Myth of the Mom Who Can Do It All

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. The mom who can do it all is a cultural model with no defined limit: against an infinite bar, every real mother loses by definition.
2. Social media compares your behind-the-scenes with other women's highlight reels, and that constant comparison is linked to lower mood and less confidence as a mother.
3. A highly sensitive mom gets punished three ways: she processes the message deeply, catches every trace of judgment, and the continuous availability the model demands costs her nervous system what it doesn't cost others.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

This week, cross one single should off your list and break it on purpose. Then watch the real consequences, not the imagined ones. Almost always the answer is the same: nothing happens. That discovery, repeated, is the beginning of parenting your way.

YOUR PAGES P. 17

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



04
Broken Sleep and a Sensitive Brain

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. Short sleep weakens the emotional brakes of any brain: what was a spilled cup on Tuesday looks like a catastrophe on a sleepless Thursday.
2. With sleep cut short you wake up with the tank half full and the threshold lower.
3. The same trait that makes you notice everything also makes your sleep lighter and your switching-off slower: it's not that you sleep badly, it's that you sleep on duty.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

This week, choose two nights and go to bed on the first wave of sleepiness you notice after the kids are down. Just two. The rest of the week, change nothing.

YOUR PAGES P. 11

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



05

Noise, Touch, Light: The Sensory Overload of Parenting

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. Sensory load comes in through channels, and each one is managed differently: the ear has no lids, the skin doesn't choose what it registers, and clutter comes in through the eyes without making a sound.
2. Constant background noise eats into your threshold even when it's low: a TV nobody is watching is a leak you pay for at seven in the evening.
3. Being touched out is the saturation of a channel, not a thermometer of your love: contact you didn't choose loads you far more than contact you start.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

In the next few days, remove one single source of constant background noise: the TV nobody watches, the speaker in the kitchen, or the toy with the siren. One. And watch the evening.

YOUR PAGES P. 10

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



06

Stress and a Body That Won't Stand Down

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. The stress response is designed for spikes that rise and fall; parenting demands a watch with no end, and an engine that never drops to idle doesn't cool down on its own.
2. Being exhausted and revved up at the same time is not a contradiction: tiredness and activation are different systems, and in a sensitive mom the alarm trips on less and takes longer to come down.
3. You don't need to measure your cortisol: you need to give the body the order to come down, and that order is physical, not mental. Air, temperature, and movement.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

This week, every night, do three physiological sighs right after you close the door to the kids' room. Same spot, same time. Nothing more.

YOUR PAGES P. 12

AUDIO 1 · *The Long Exhale*

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



07

Eat, Move, Breathe: The Minimum That Holds You Up

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

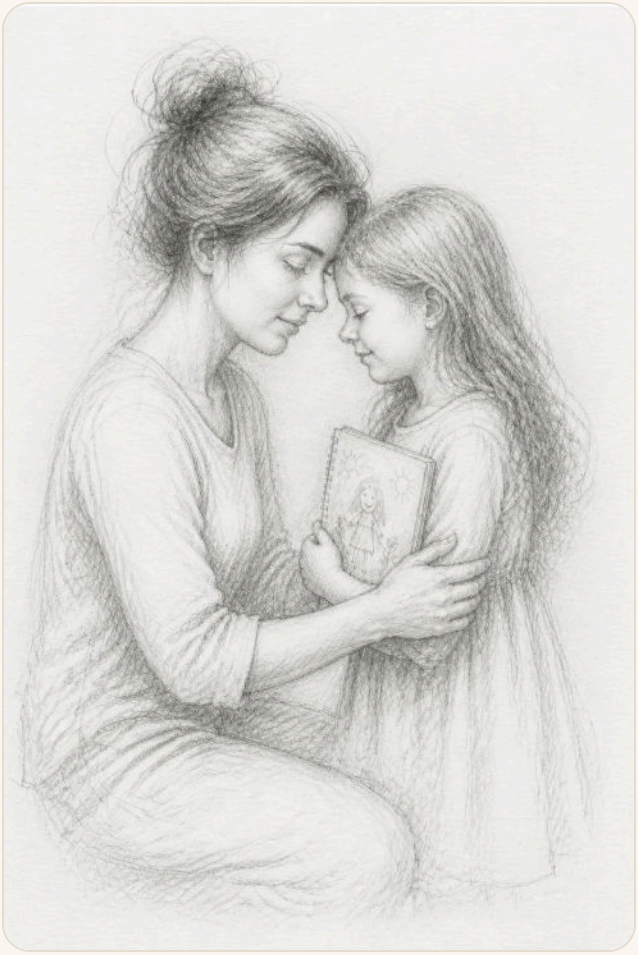
1. Your system rests on three supplies: fuel, movement, and air. The minimum version of all three is worth more than the magazine version of any one of them.
2. A good share of the afternoon's bad mood is hunger: skipping meals lowers the threshold the same way noise does, and your own snack is maintenance, not an indulgence.
3. Eating leftovers standing up is a lack of system, not a moral failing: the parallel plate hitches your meal to the trains that already pass through your kitchen.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

For seven days, apply the parallel plate once a day: when you make your kids' lunch or snack, make yours in the same motion and eat it sitting down.

YOUR PAGES P. 13

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



08

Guilt: Why It Weighs More on You and How to Stop Feeding It

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. Nighttime guilt doesn't measure your quality as a mother; it measures how much you process and how vividly you imagine what others feel.
2. The memory of the mistake weighs more than the memory of the success because the brain stores better what it reads as a failure.
3. Useful guilt is concrete and points to an action; the kind that wears you down is global and repeats without leading anywhere.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

Pick one thing from this week that you feel guilty about and repair it tomorrow in thirty seconds, with three sentences. Then consider it closed.

YOUR PAGES P. 14, 15, 16

AUDIO 4 · *An Appointment for the Loop*

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



09

Perfectionism and the Bar You Set for Yourself

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. Your radar sees every possible flaw, and from there comes a bar set at the height of your perception, not of what's necessary. It grows easily on the trait, but it can be recalibrated.
2. A healthy standard switches off when it reaches its goal; perfectionism raises the bar every time you touch it. If the "there, well done" never comes, it isn't a standard, it's a treadmill.
3. Nobody will do it like you, and nobody needs to: different isn't wrong. Uniformity calms your alarm but is paid for with your rest, and a child gains with every version of care he receives.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

This week, everything anyone else does in your house, if it's safe, stays exactly as they did it. Not one touch-up. Notice how many times it stings and what actually happens: almost always, nothing.

YOUR PAGES P. 18

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



10
When Empathy Turns Against You

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. Your empathy is standard equipment: faced with your kids' emotions, your system registers something very close to feeling them. With babies it's gold; without a border, it's fusion.

2. Feeling with your child while staying beside him is empathy; sinking with him leaves him without a shore. Remember the lifeguard: if she goes down with the person drowning, now there are two to pull out.

3. Their storms are short and yours are long: they discharge and move on, you archive. Check what phase they're in before you keep managing an emergency that may be over.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

Starting today, every time you're about to step in on a cry or a tantrum, do the two-second anchor: feet planted, one long exhale, this is his. Then crouch down.

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



11

Anger, Irritability, and the Yell You Didn't Mean

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. The yell is the end of a chain that starts hours earlier: full tank, brakes loosened by sleep, and a last straw that's only that, the last straw. It's an engineering problem, not a moral verdict.
2. Tell clean anger (it marks a real limit and is expressed firmly and briefly) from displaced anger (it was there already and explodes on whoever is close): disproportion is the clue.
3. The minute before exists and gives warning; it's enough for one rehearsed action: lowering your voice to a whisper or retreating with an announcement, saying where you're going and that you're coming back.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

Before Sunday, identify your most frequent last straw, the specific scene where you blow up most, and defuse it with logistics: prepare it ahead, move it to another time, or eliminate it. Just that one.

YOUR PAGES P. 19, 20

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



12

Your Partner: Asking Without Feeling Like a Burden

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. Not asking so you won't be a burden ends in a blowup, and the blowup convinces you that you were a burden: the cycle breaks by asking earlier, small, and calmly.
2. Most likely your partner doesn't see your saturation because their system doesn't register it: it isn't a problem of love but of translation, and translation can be learned.
3. A fair split counts three currencies: time, stimulation load, and the watch (the mental load). Counting only chores can come out arithmetically fair and sensorially unfair.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

This week, make one single concrete request, with a time and the whole job, asked in a calm moment. One. And when it's done, thank them concretely and audit nothing.

YOUR PAGES P. 7, 21, 22

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



13
Family, Holidays, and Opinions

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. A family gathering combines sustained noise, a social radar at full capacity, multiplied watch duty, and an exam of your parenting: you aren't unsociable, you're running a sensory marathon.
2. Remarks last you days because your system files them deep: tell love with bad aim, lack of filter, and lack of respect apart, because they're handled differently.
3. Plan for the sensory hangover: a big gathering takes a day and a half, and budgeting the next day turns it from failure into maintenance.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

At the next family gathering, agree with your partner on the exit time before you walk in and announce it when you arrive. Just that. Notice how much the whole gathering changes once you know when it ends.

YOUR PAGES P. 23

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



14

Your Child May Be Highly Sensitive Too

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. The trait is often inherited: if your child seems like a mirror, it may be genetics. It's a lens for understanding him, never a label or a diagnosis, and serious doubts go to the pediatrician.
2. In a small size, the trait shows in the child who watches before entering, falls apart at parties, feels like a volcano, and notices the sweater tag.
3. Chain saturation amplifies you both, and it's always cut by the adult link: your regulation is his firewall.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

This week, change one sentence for him: the next time you were going to say "it's not a big deal" or "don't be so dramatic," replace it with "that hit you hard, didn't it?" And watch what happens to his face.

YOUR PAGES P. 24

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



15

Your Village: How to Ask for Help Without Wearing Yourself Out More

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. Being surrounded by a network isn't the same as being held up: a sensitive mom's village is small, deep, and low-friction, not big and loud.
2. Your favor bookkeeping is badly calibrated: for the people who love you, helping you adds. Asking concretely and small says I trust you.
3. Good help is asked for in one sentence and leaves no administrative hangover: when choosing your network, think less about who offers the most and more about who requires the least management.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

This week, one single small, closed request to one of your three people. If you don't have the list of three yet, this week's small thing is writing it.

YOUR PAGES P. 25

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



16

Micro-Breaks and Refuges: Recovering Energy in a Life With No Gaps

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. Resting gets forgotten: after years on watch, the system loses the gesture of stopping and the permission to do it. Rest is a task with a right to its own slot, not the prize for finishing everything.
2. The phone fills but rarely empties: it puts inputs into a tank that's already full. The test of any rest is how it leaves you when you come out.
3. Your highest-yield rest is sensory: silence, dim light, and stillness give back more than leisure, and in a heavy season they come first.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

Today, write your 3-10-30 menu: three entries per size, low-stimulation, no screens. This week, try one of each.

YOUR PAGES P. 26 AUDIO 2 · *Three Minutes in the Parked Car* AUDIO 3 · *Ten Minutes in the Cave*

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



17
When It's More Than Sensitivity

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. The trait's saturation fluctuates with the environment and respects enjoyment; a clinical condition persists even when you rest and colors everything. Two questions: do I get better when I rest for real? Can I still enjoy anything? One "no" for two weeks is enough to be seen.
2. The sadness of the first days after birth goes away on its own within two weeks; depression and anxiety don't, and they can appear years later.
3. Parental burnout is a described and treatable condition: tiredness that rest doesn't repair, being fed up with the role of mother, caring on autopilot, and the painful contrast with the mother you were.

ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

If you've recognized yourself in this chapter: today, tell one person and make the appointment. That's the whole thing, and it's the most important one in the book.

YOUR PAGES P. 27, 31

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER



18

A Four-Week Plan to Get Your Calm Back

THE CHAPTER IN THREE LINES

1. One action a day, almost always under ten minutes, on top of your real life: the day that falls through is left to fall, and twenty out of twenty-eight is a resounding success.
2. Week one prunes (signals, noise, shoulds, highlight reel); week two builds the body (sleep in pieces, parallel plate, off-duty signal); week three orders the mind (guilt to facts, repair, requests, the last straw); week four installs rest and network.
3. Sunday always closes in calm and prepares what's next: the plan also teaches you how to end weeks.

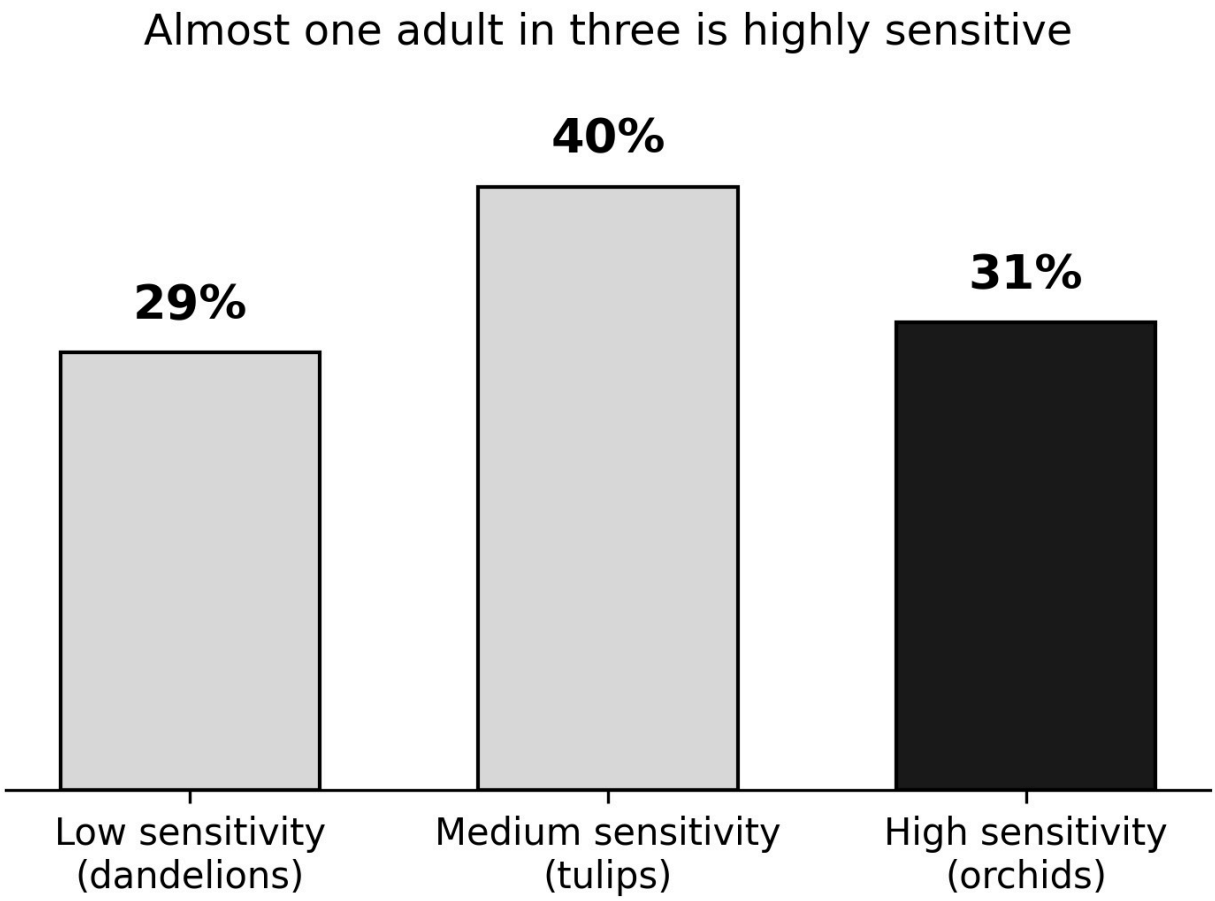
ONE SMALL THING THIS WEEK

Choose now the Monday you start and write it on the calendar. Not the ideal Monday: the next one.

YOUR PAGES P. 28, 29, 30

MY NOTES ON THIS CHAPTER

Three sensitivity groups among adults.



Source: Lionetti et al. (2018), Translational Psychiatry. 906 adults, grouped by their scores on the Highly Sensitive Person Scale.

Figure 1.2 of the book, chapter 1. The source is printed under the figure, as in the book.

More affected, in both directions.

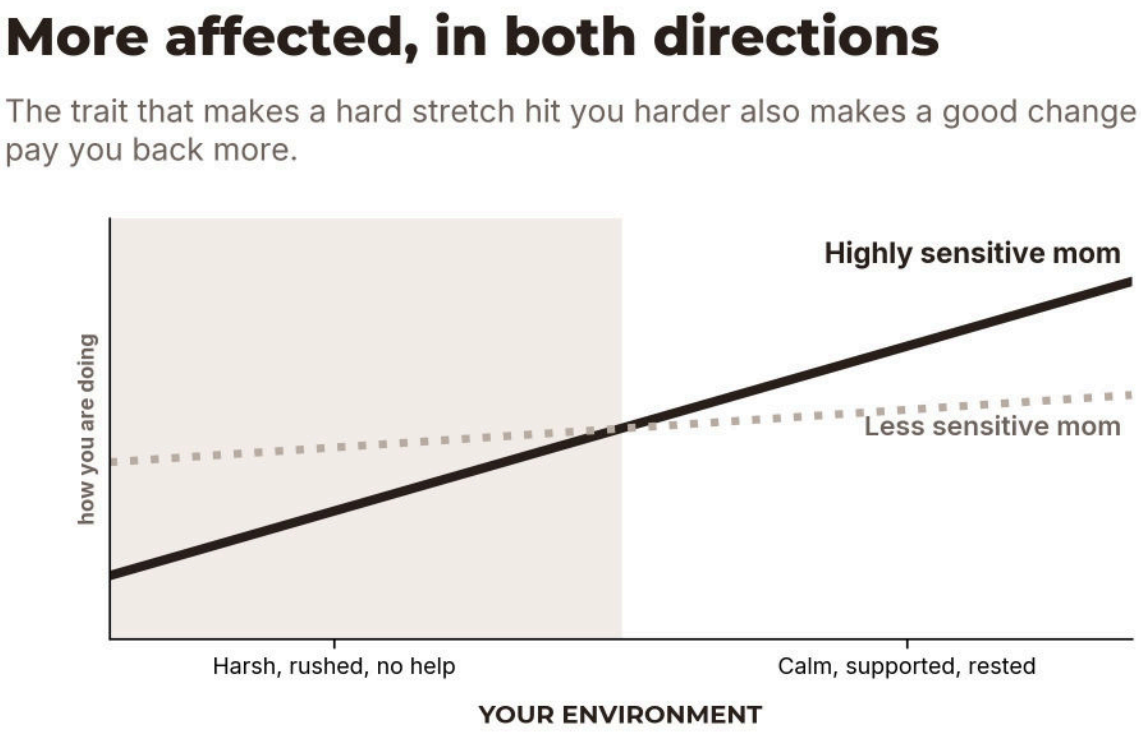
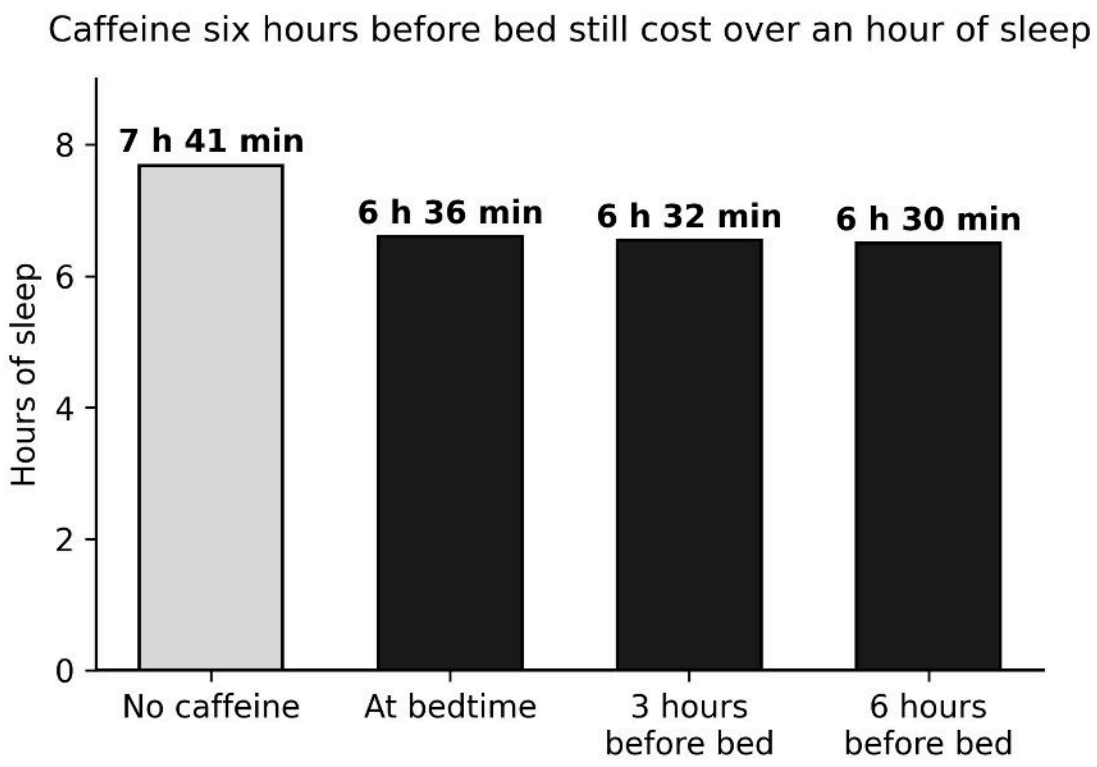


Figure 1.3 of the book, chapter 1. The source is printed under the figure, as in the book.

Caffeine cut more than an hour of sleep at every time point tested.



Source: Drake et al. (2013), Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine. 12 healthy sleepers took 400 mg of caffeine (about three or four cups of coffee) or a placebo; sleep measured with a home monitor.

Figure 4.1 of the book, chapter 4. The source is printed under the figure, as in the book.

Five channels pour into one tank.

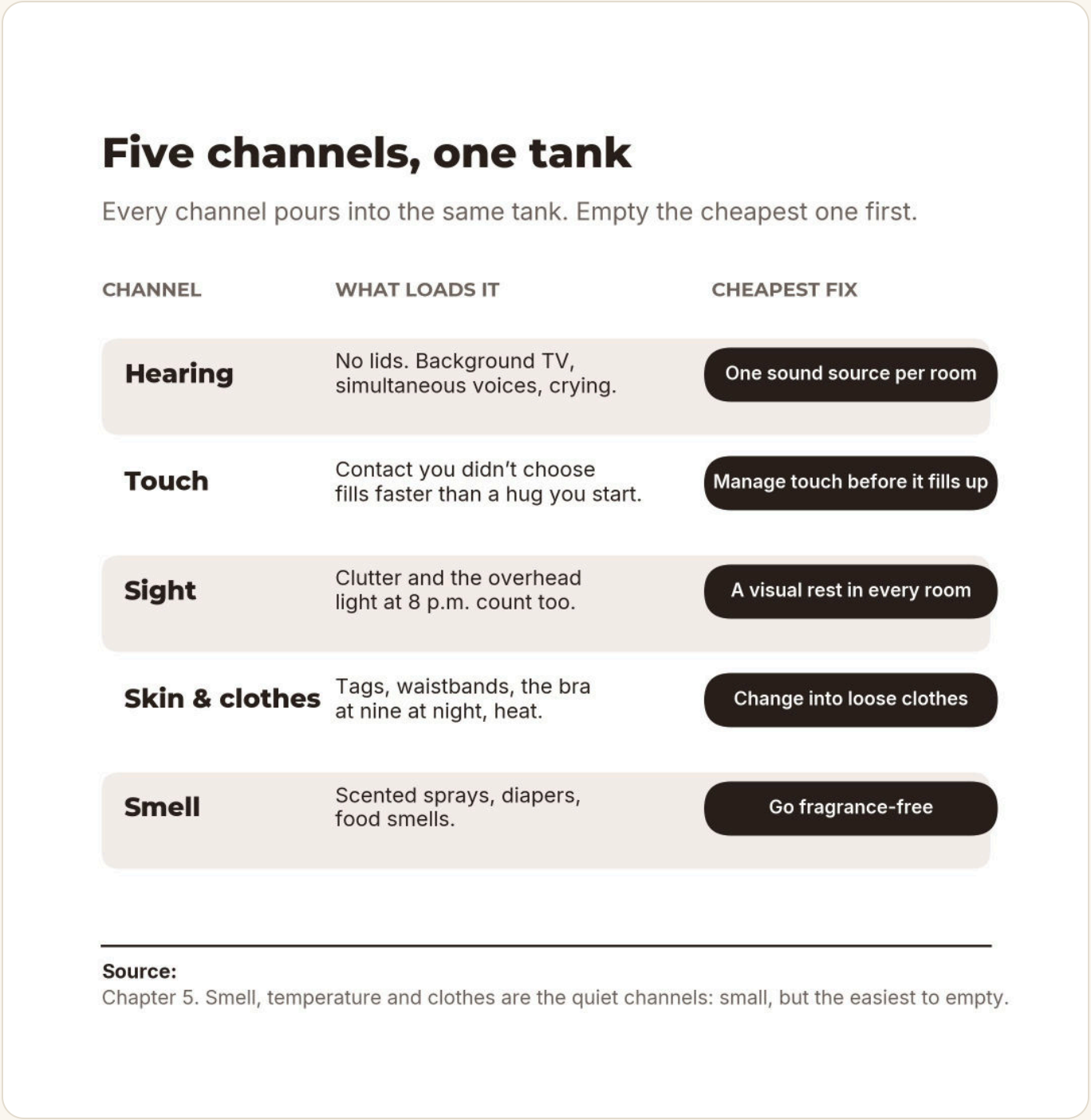
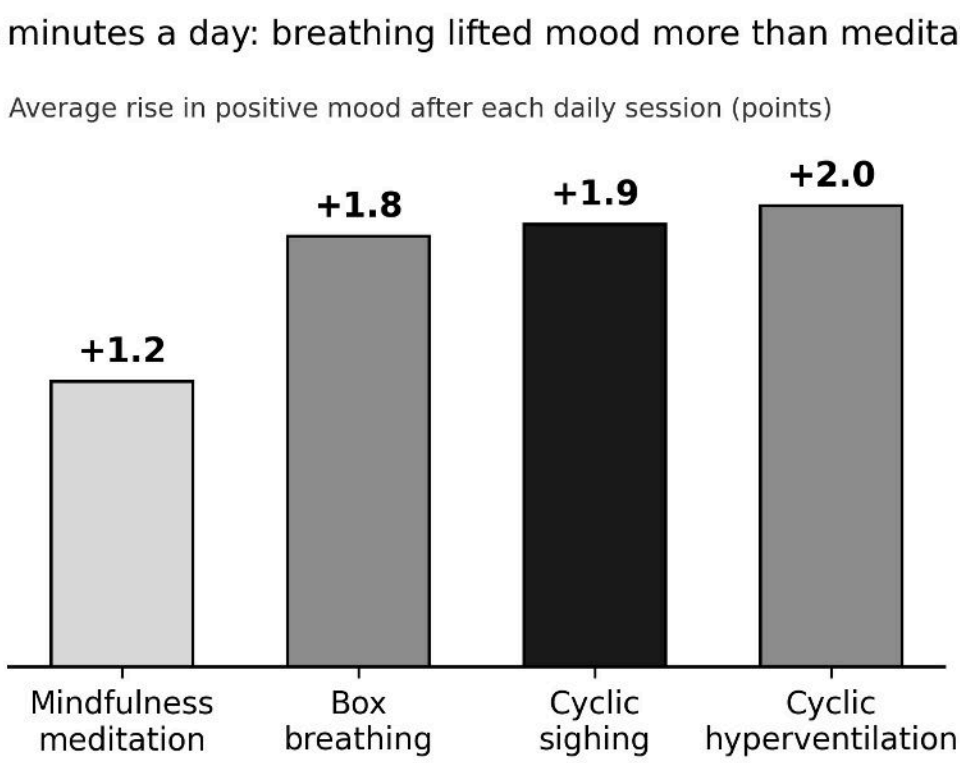


Figure 5.1 of the book, chapter 5. The source is printed under the figure, as in the book.

Controlled breathing versus meditation for daily mood.



Source: Balban et al. (2023), Cell Reports Medicine. 108 adults, one month. Only cyclic sighing was clearly better than meditation; the other two breathing patterns were close but not significant.

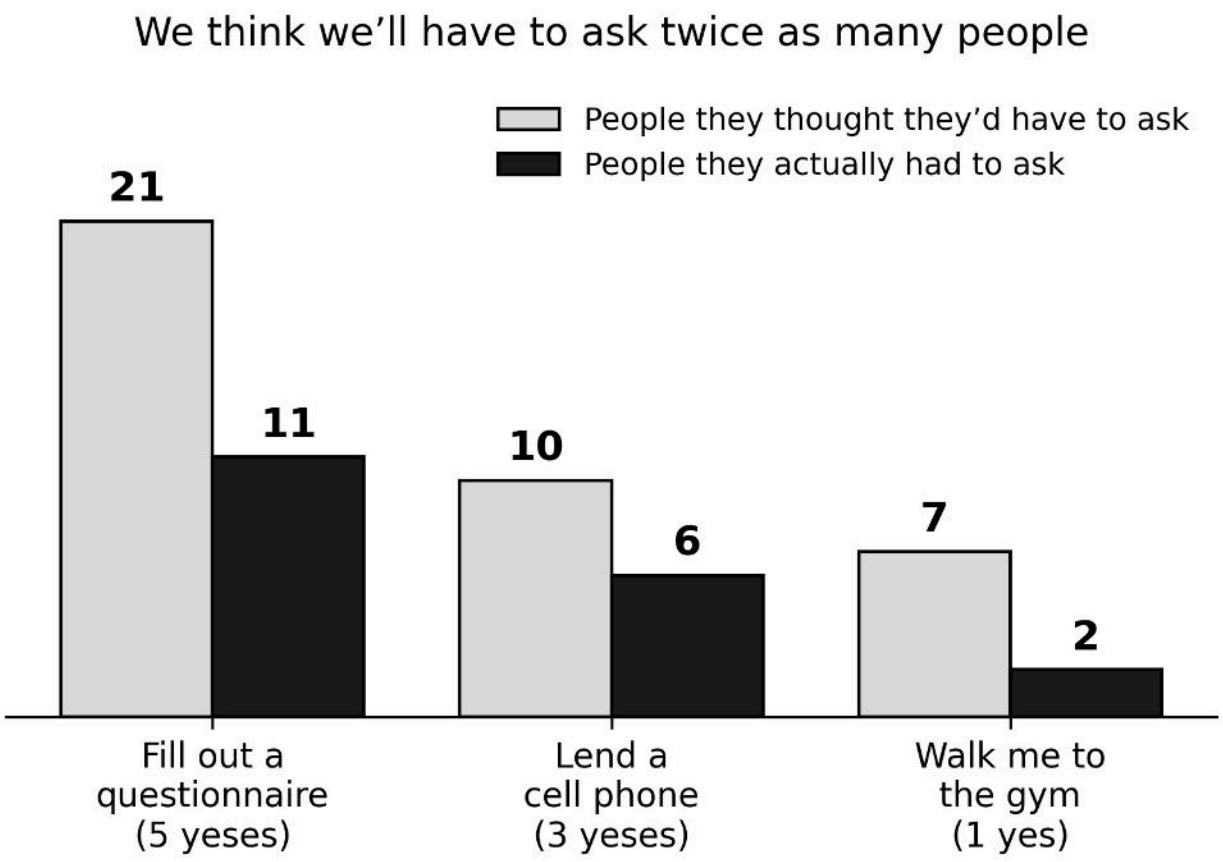
Figure 6.2 of the book, chapter 6. The source is printed under the figure, as in the book.

Two voices after the same mistake.



Figure 8.1 of the book, chapter 8. The source is printed under the figure, as in the book.

We expect twice as many noes as we get.



Source: Flynn & Lake (2008), Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Students asked strangers for small favors until they got the yeses shown under each task.

Figure 15.1 of the book, chapter 15. The source is printed under the figure, as in the book.

What makes a break actually recharge.

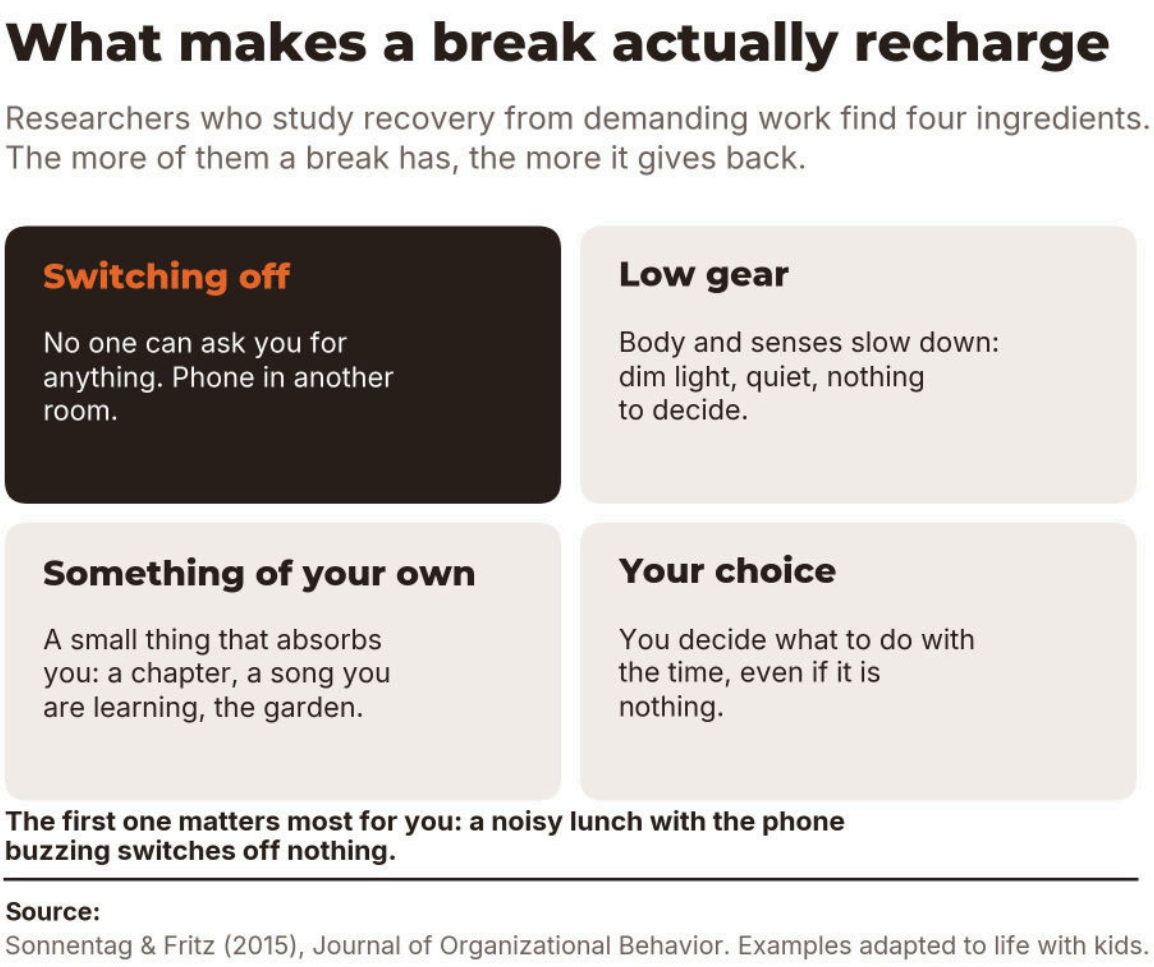


Figure 16.1 of the book, chapter 16. The source is printed under the figure, as in the book.

ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

The Highly Sensitive Mom: The Workbook

A companion to *The Highly Sensitive Mom: How to Stop Feeling Overstimulated, Guilty, and Burned Out When Everything Hits You Harder*, by Christian Duarte, PhD (Zen Books). Every page names the chapter it belongs to; the book holds the explanation, and these pages hold the practice.

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Nothing here is a diagnosis or a substitute for the advice of a qualified health care professional. If you are in danger or in crisis, call or text 988 or call 911.

ONLY IN THIS WORKBOOK

The sensitivity map, the body map of first signals, the house audit, the night plan, the three-line close journal, the good-enough table, the chore thermometer, the exit plan for visits, the signal notebook for mom and child, and the four Sundays.

THE COMPANIONS

Four guided audios in my voice (page 32), the book chapter by chapter with its plates (page 33), and the book's figures in large format (page 51). All of them at altamentesensible.com/mom-companions.

altamentesensible.com/mom-companions
Scan it with your phone to get the audios and the latest version of this workbook.

THANK YOU

You've spent a long time believing the problem was you. It isn't that you can't handle this. It's that it hits you harder, and now you know why, and what to do about it.

Thank you for reading the book and for printing these pages. Use them in pencil, and come back to them in the hard seasons.

Christian



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