

# DO YOU HAVE A SENSITIVE CHILD?

## ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY

- Environmental Sensitivity refers to the ability to register and process external stimuli. This capacity enables children (and adults) to respond and adapt to different surroundings.
- Some children are naturally more attuned to their surroundings, making them highly responsive to environmental influences, while others are less sensitive.



## IS SENSITIVITY A BAD THING?

Sensitivity influences how children respond to both negative and positive exposures.



### TYPES OF HIGH SENSITIVITY

#### EASE OF EXCITATION

Easily overwhelmed by external and internal demands

Your child may get upset when asked to do several things at once [like changing, doing homework, and getting ready to go out] because even small tasks can feel overwhelming when they're already tired or stressed.



#### LOW SENSORY THRESHOLD

Experience unpleasant sensory arousal to external stimuli

They might react strongly to things like loud noises, bright lights, or itchy clothes — their senses pick up more, and it can quickly feel like too much.



#### AESTHETIC SENSITIVITY

Highly aware of the beauty in music, art, or nature

They may be especially touched by music, art, or nature — pausing to admire a sunset or become deeply moved by a piece of music or a painting.

## HIGHLY SENSITIVE CHILDREN TEND TO:



- Show greater empathy and understanding of others' feelings, which are necessary for developing prosocial skills.
- Display strong moral reasoning and a clear sense of right and wrong.
- Benefit more from supportive parenting and enriching educational environments.



- React strongly to harsh discipline or criticism, increasing risks of anxiety and depression
- Be more vulnerable to negative parenting, internalizing parental emotional challenges or emotional detachment.

# WHAT DID WE FIND FROM OUR DREAMS CHILDREN?\*

\* These findings were based on a subsample from DREAMS

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## Children show different patterns of sensitivity Not all are highly or mildly sensitive in the same way.

From their responses, we identified **three main groups**:

### MODERATELY SENSITIVE



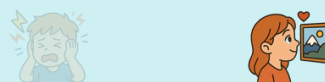
**Slight** tendencies to all 3 aspects

### HIGHLY SENSITIVE



**Stronger** tendencies to all 3 aspects

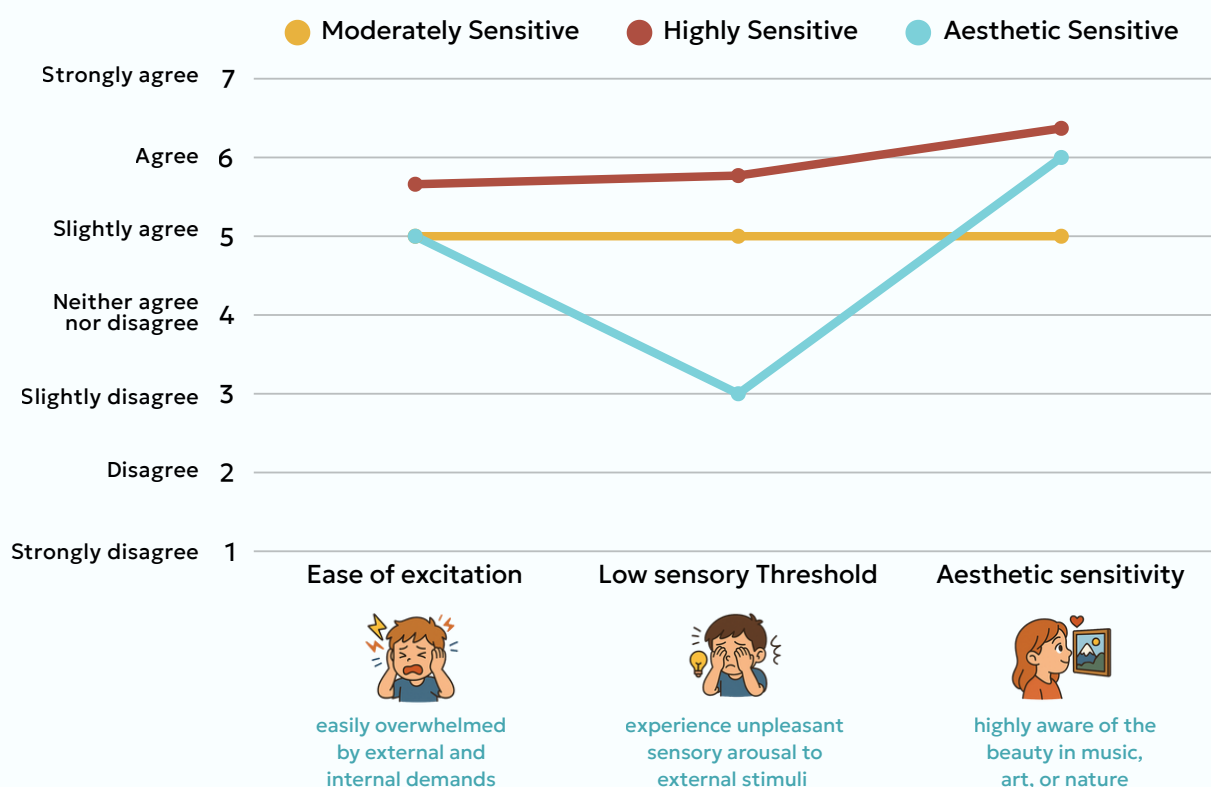
### AESTHETIC SENSITIVE



**Stronger** tendency to **aesthetic sensitivity**,  
Low/slight tendency to the other 2 aspects.

**Note:** These groups were identified using a method called Latent Profile Analysis and reflect patterns in this specific group of children. They may not apply to all children and are not fixed categories.

## Self-reported by DREAMS participants at Primary 5



## WHAT DID WE FIND FROM DREAMS PARTICIPANTS?\*

\* These findings were based on a subsample from DREAMS.

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### Sensitivity at Pri 5 predicted School Adjustment at Sec 1 and Emotional problems at Pri 5 and Sec 1

Compared to **Moderately Sensitive** children,



- **Highly Sensitive** and **Aesthetic Sensitive** children reported doing better in adjusting to **Secondary 1**.
- Better school adjustment to Secondary 1 is in turn associated with experiencing fewer emotional problems.



- **Highly Sensitive** children, however, also reported experiencing **more emotional problems at Primary 5**,
- Which could negatively impact their school adjustment and their experience of emotional problems at Secondary 1.

## WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?



### Embrace sensitivity as a strength

Sensitive children don't just react strongly to challenges-they also absorb positive experiences deeply, especially if they display high **Aesthetic Sensitivity**. Pay attention to how their sensitivity helps them connect with others and notice the good in their world.



### Recognize your child's unique sensitivities

Sensitivity isn't the same in every situation. Observe what specific environments or experiences trigger strong reactions in your child rather than assuming they are always "sensitive." This will help you provide better support.



### Offer support and coping strategies

Teach your child ways to manage their emotions, such as deep breathing or talking through feelings. Breaks from sensory input can help the child recharge and feel secure



### Create a calm and supportive atmosphere

Adjust the environment when required to help your child feel safe and calm. This might mean reducing background noise at home or setting aside a quiet corner where they can relax and recharge