

Appendix A

THE SUPER-FEELER EXPLAINED



What makes a super-feeler?

- Genetics—a super-feeler can be “wired this way.”
- Early life experiences can also increase the likelihood of becoming a super-feeler.
- The experience of the super-feeler is most intense in childhood and adolescence because the parts of the brain that help to calm emotion aren’t fully developed until adulthood.

What makes a super-feeler unique? Super-feelers . . .

- Can have a keen sense for emotions in their environment
- Can experience emotions very intensely—their own and those of others

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- Can pick up on others' stress and emotions easily
- Can be more sensitive to perceived threat in the environment (this is why super-feelers become more upset when someone raises their voice)
- Can either be explosive or very agreeable
- Can be motivated to manage others to protect themselves from feeling their pain
- Can feel alone as many will struggle to understand their emotional experiences
- Can hide that they are a super-feeler well, mostly to protect others or relationships or out of embarrassment

What happens with super-feelers? Super-feelers . . .

- May try to find ways to reduce pain/avoid emotions, sometimes with unhealthy behaviors
- Because of this tendency to avoid emotions, super-feelers can be vulnerable to developing eating disorders, anxiety, depression, other mental illnesses, and some chronic health issues, especially if they are exposed to significant or chronic stressors
- Will need support from their environment to manage their emotions until they develop the advanced skills to do so (and until their brain completes its development)
- Are likely to succeed in the caring professions (e.g., as social workers, doctors, nurses, psychologists) and might perform unusually well in the world once they learn to manage the emotions they sense and feel