

Elaine N. Aron, Ph.D.

Author of the International Bestseller
The Highly Sensitive Person

SPIRITUALITY

THROUGH A

HIGHLY

SENSITIVE

LENS

An Objective Look

at Meditation Methods

and Enlightenment

Reviewed by Nancy Eichhorn, PhD

There are moments—often in the early hours of the morning—when my body is still, my mind is not, and something else quietly observes. Thoughts move in familiar loops; yet alongside them, there is a sense of presence that feels spacious, steady, and not particularly invested in their content. It is not an idea so much as a felt experience—subtle, calm, and difficult to name.

Questions about this observer, and about consciousness more broadly, have motivated my choices of what to read and learn for years. They arise not as philosophical inquiry (though I have reviewed several philosophy books) but as curiosities: Who is noticing? What part of me is aware? What happens when awareness softens the nervous system rather than intensifying it, and I relax and let go?

Like many of my friends and colleagues, I have explored meditation in various forms—guided practices, mindfulness, mantra based techniques, and sound meditation. I understand the research supporting meditation's benefits. And friends who have practiced for decades, many steeped in Buddhist traditions, speak about meditation as life changing. But my need to know often left me overwhelmed by the broader spiritual landscape—by complex lineages, historical frameworks, and, at times, teachers whose authority felt questionable. Nothing resonated in daily practice

Then, unexpectedly, an invitation arrived to review Elaine N. Aron's new book, *Spirituality Through a Highly Sensitive Lens*. I was familiar with the term highly sensitive person, but I hadn't realized that Aron coined it or that her foundational work, *The Highly Sensitive Person*, has reached readers in over 30 languages. From the moment I opened this book, I felt a connection. Aron's voice is calm, thoughtful, and deeply human. Reading, I had the sense of sitting with her over tea, reflecting on life and the many ways we try to understand spirituality and a meditative practice within ourselves. She writes not as a distant expert, but as someone in an ongoing relationship with the material—grounded in both science and lived experience. Aron has practiced Transcendental Meditation (TM) for more than 50 years, and that long engagement shapes the steadiness of her tone.

The book itself emerged during the COVID lockdowns, after Aron was repeatedly asked by the media how highly sensitive people were coping. She admits she wanted to respond honestly: "I don't know. They are all unique!" Instead of offering simple answers, she began writing. What resulted, five years later, is what she describes as a "sanctuary"—a place for readers to pause, reflect, and discern for themselves what spirituality and meditation might look like, without pressure or dogma.

Early on, Aron acknowledges her own discomfort with the word spirituality; at one point, the book's working title was "Spirituality or Whatever" (pg. 19). She recognizes its vagueness and its potential for misuse, especially when unexamined beliefs eclipse psychological maturity. Rather than defining spirituality narrowly, she offers a practical and inclusive frame: our capacity to create meaning and connect with what feels essential—whether that is nature, life itself, or an inner source of wisdom. This grounded, psychological orientation runs throughout the book. Aron is less interested in dramatic mystical experiences than in how meditation practice reshapes everyday life over time.

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One of the metaphors that stayed with me is Aron's description of a "supernova" that began when Eastern contemplative traditions arrived in the West in the 1960s—the era when famous people like the Beatles traveled East in search of enlightenment. What began as a dim spark, she suggests, has grown into a widespread shift in human consciousness, resulting in an explosion.

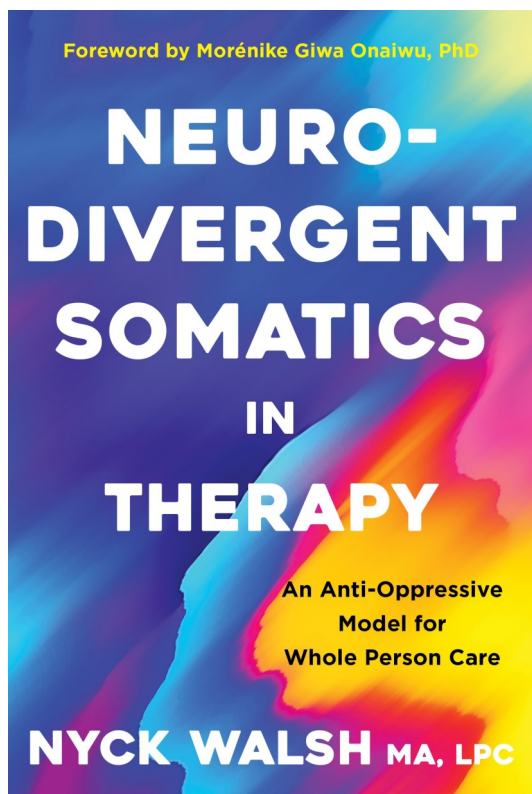
Drawing on neuroscience, contemplative traditions, and long term research, Aron defines enlightenment not as a sudden breakthrough but as the gradual stabilization of a background state of equanimity and meaning—a way of being that persists regardless of external circumstances. As she writes, the aim is to "gradually change your brain" so that life becomes easier and more meaningful from the inside out. I found this both reassuring and realistic. Awakening, in Aron's view, doesn't remove us from life; it changes how we meet it.

Across eight chapters, Aron weaves together objective analysis and personal reflection, clearly marking her memoir style passages in italics so readers may engage with them—or skip them—according to preference. Each chapter includes a section titled "What About You?", inviting self-reflection, and then follows with "What About Me?", where Aron shares her own experience. This structure felt respectful, emphasizing autonomy rather than instruction. Throughout, she pays careful attention to highly sensitive readers, acknowledging how deep processing, emotional responsiveness, and sensitivity to subtle stimuli shape spiritual practice. For HSPs, she suggests, the natural inclination to pause and reflect can be an asset—when paired with thoughtful methods and appropriate safeguards.

A significant portion of the book is devoted to helping readers make informed choices about meditation methods. Aron surveys major traditions, including Buddhism and Vedanta, and then delves deeper into the methods rooted in them. I feel like I have a better grasp of the Buddha's journey and how he developed his path to attain nirvana. And a clear sense of Vedanta and TM.

I was particularly struck by Aron's ethical attentiveness. Drawing on Ken Wilber's framework of "waking up," "growing up," and "cleaning up," she underscores the importance of emotional and moral development alongside altered states of consciousness. She does not shy away from addressing the harm caused by charismatic yet unintegrated spiritual teachers and explicitly cautions readers—especially highly sensitive ones—to prioritize discernment. Resources like the Association for Spiritual Integrity reinforce the book's commitment to safety and informed consent.

By the end of *Spirituality Through a Highly Sensitive Lens*, I felt less urgency to "figure it all out" (my normal mode of doing) and more permission to move slowly and thoughtfully (trying on something new). She doesn't promise transcendence, but she does offer something more sustaining: the possibility of living with greater ease, depth, and clarity over time. For highly sensitive people and non-HSPs alike, Aron's work is both reassuring and, at times, nudges us toward the affirmation that, while there is no single right path, meaningful change unfolds with integrity, patience, discernment, and practice.



SPT Magazine regularly receives requests to review books before they're published—a courtesy we appreciate and take seriously. We understand the responsibility inherent in evaluating work that may shape clinical understanding and practice—some books inform practice, others quietly expose what we do not yet know. While we don't review everything we read, we pause for work that promises to challenge, educate, and expand both our understanding and our compassion.

When I opened the pages of Nyck Walsh's *Neurodivergent Somatics in Therapy*, I expected to dive into the text. Instead, I spent hours reading, researching, and taking notes—only to realize, quite quickly, that I wasn't the right person to review this book. I didn't know the language. I didn't know the acronyms. I didn't even know what *neurodivergent* meant until Chapter One. What I did know was that this book was asking something of me: attention, humility, and time.

This is a work that deserves to be read slowly and reviewed with care. To rush it for the sake of a deadline would be an injustice—not only to the author, but to the lived experiences so courageously shared within its pages. The complexity of its concepts and the vulnerability of its voices require a more deliberate engagement than this issue allows. I'm taking the time to meet it there. In the meantime, clinicians and educators interested in neurodivergent affirming approaches may find this book worthy of their own careful attention.

Please look for our review in our next issue of SPT Magazine, Volume 16(2), 2026.

About Nyck: As a social justice, anti-oppression counselor, I recognize that I hold both privileged and marginalized identities and that these directly inform my lived experience. As a white, queer, trans, Autistic, VAST, highly sensitive, empathic, pro-Palestine Jewish human/earth-suit wearer, I am deeply invested in continual exploration and unpacking of these identities in support of liberation for all humans. Nyck is the director of Nyck Walsh Counseling & Training Center and creator of the Neurodivergent Somatics Model.

