

ESD SELF-INVENTORY

Empathy Spectrum Disorder — Practitioner Self-Assessment

Purpose:

This inventory helps practitioners identify their primary and secondary empathy subtype, recognize activation patterns under stress, and understand how their empathy expression influences touch, communication, and boundaries in session.

Instructions:

For each statement, rate how true it feels for you on a scale of 1–5:

1 = Not at all true

2 = Slightly true

3 = Somewhat true

4 = Mostly true

5 = Very true

Mark or circle your answer.

SECTION 1 — Affective / Somatic Sensitivity

- 1. I feel other people's emotions in my body as physical sensations. (1–5)**
- 2. I sense emotional shifts instantly, even before they are spoken. (1–5)**
- 3. I become tense or activated when others are upset. (1–5)**
- 4. I sometimes confuse other people's emotions with my own. (1–5)**

Subtotal (Affective/Somatic): _____

SECTION 2 — Cognitive Empathy

- 5. I understand others' perspectives even when I do not feel their emotions. (1–5)**
- 6. I analyze situations mentally before reacting emotionally. (1–5)**
- 7. I tend to stay logical during conflict or distress. (1–5)**
- 8. People describe me as rational, clear, or objective. (1–5)**

Subtotal (Cognitive): _____

SECTION 3 — Boundaries

- 9. I rarely feel overwhelmed by other people's emotions. (1–5)**
- 10. I prefer to maintain emotional or energetic distance under stress. (1–5)**
- 11. When overwhelmed, I shut down or become numb. (1–5)**
- 12. I withdraw or detach when I cannot help someone. (1–5)**

Subtotal (Boundaries): _____

SECTION 4 — Relational Patterns

- 13. I tend to fawn, over-accommodate, or avoid conflict. (1–5)**
- 14. I feel responsible for other people's emotional comfort. (1–5)**
- 15. I struggle to say no in caretaking roles. (1–5)**
- 16. I alternate between over-giving and burning out. (1–5)**

Subtotal (Relational): _____

SECTION 5 — Energetic Sensitivity

17. I absorb other people's energy easily. (1–5)

18. I feel drained by certain emotional climates. (1–5)

19. My mood quickly shifts based on the environment. (1–5)

20. I “pick up on” people’s internal states without trying. (1–5)

Subtotal (Energetic): _____

SCORING + SUBTYPE IDENTIFICATION

Calculate totals for each category:

- **Affective/Somatic Total:** _____
- **Cognitive Total:** _____
- **Boundaries Total:** _____
- **Relational Total:** _____
- **Energetic Total:** _____

Now match your pattern to the subtype profiles below.

TYPE A — EMOTIONAL HYPO-EMPATHY

Subtype Indicators:

- **Boundaries: High (15–20)**
- **Affective/Somatic: Low (4–10)**
- **Energetic: Low–mid**
- **Relational: Low–mid**
- **Cognitive: variable**

Pattern:

Muted emotional resonance, steady outward presentation, difficulty accessing internal emotional cues, prefers structure over emotional expression.

TYPE B — EMOTIONAL HYPER-EMPATHY

Subtype Indicators:

- **Affective/Somatic: High (15–20)**
- **Energetic: High (15–20)**
- **Relational: 12+**
- **Boundaries: Low–mid**

Pattern:

Deep emotional absorption, strong resonance, risk of emotional blending or taking on others' states, highly sensitive to tone, tension, and microshifts.

TYPE C — COGNITIVE-DOMINANT EMPATHY

Subtype Indicators:

- Cognitive: High (15–20)
- Affective/Somatic: Low (4–10)
- Boundaries: Moderate–high
- Relational: Low–mid

Pattern:

Understands feelings logically, remains composed, empathy expressed through clarity and problem-solving rather than emotional resonance.

TYPE D — EMPATHIC DYSREGULATION (OSCILLATING)

Subtype Indicators:

- Relational: High (15–20)
- Energetic: Mid–High
- Affective/Somatic: Mid-range
- Boundaries: Low–mid

Pattern:

Shifts between over-engagement (fawn/caretake) and shutdown, unstable emotional boundaries, sensitive to relational cues, nervous system moves between sympathetic and dorsal patterns.

TYPE E — EMPATHIC SHUTDOWN (TRAUMA-LINKED)

Subtype Indicators:

- Boundaries: High (15–20) (protective detachment)

- Affective/Somatic: Low
- Energetic: Low
- Relational: Low–mid
- Cognitive: variable

Pattern:

Appears calm or withdrawn; empathy muted by overwhelm; may go blank, foggy, or distant under pressure; avoids emotional intensity to maintain safety.

TYPE F — DARK EMPATHY (STRATEGIC/INSTRUMENTAL)

Subtype Indicators:

- Cognitive: High (15–20)
- Boundaries: High
- Affective/Somatic: Low
- Relational: Low (not motivated by obligation)
- Energetic: Mid

Pattern:

Reads others with precision but without emotional resonance; empathy expressed as strategy; maintains strong personal autonomy; requires ethical grounding.

PERSONAL INTERPRETATION SECTION

My Primary Subtype: _____
My Secondary Subtype: _____

How I show up in sessions when regulated:

How I show up when stressed:

How my subtype influences my touch and communication:
