

# ESD SUBTYPE QUICK REFERENCE HANDOUT

## TYPE A — EMOTIONAL HYPO-EMPATHY

### Core Traits:

- Low or muted emotional resonance
- Understands others but doesn't feel deeply
- Appears steady, calm, or unaffected
- Emotional responsiveness requires conscious effort

### Somatic Cues:

- Flat affect
- Minimal micro-reactions
- Low muscle responsiveness
- Even, shallow breathing

### Touch Needs:

- Gentle activation
- Rhythmic, warm pressure
- Slow “melting” techniques
- Avoid sudden shifts or overly emotional tone

### Communication:

- Invite awareness (“Notice this area...”)
- Keep tone warm but structured
- Avoid emotional intensity

### Red Flags:

- Dissociation
- Emotional blankness
- Inability to describe internal state

### Aftercare:

- Body-awareness practices
- Warmth, movement, grounding

## TYPE B — EMOTIONAL HYPER-EMPATHY

### Core Traits:

- High affective resonance
- Feels others' emotions instantly and intensely
- Prone to emotional blending or merging
- Over-identifies in helping roles

### Somatic Cues:

- Breath holding
- Emotional mirroring
- Muscle tension spikes
- Rapid state shifts

### Touch Needs:

- Slow, heavy, predictable pressure
- Long holds
- Weighted grounding techniques
- Clear structure

### Communication:

- Gentle, concise, regulating tone
- Short grounding prompts
- Prevent emotional spillover or processing

### Red Flags:

- Tearfulness
- Panic or overwhelm
- Taking on therapist's energy/emotions

### Aftercare:

- Grounding exercises
- Weighted sensation
- Journaling or mindful breathwork

## **TYPE C — COGNITIVE-DOMINANT EMPATHY**

### **Core Traits:**

- Strong intellectual understanding of others
- Low affective resonance
- Emotion is processed through thought, not feeling
- Can seem calm, rational, objective

### **Somatic Cues:**

- Controlled posture
- Low emotional expression
- Focused gaze
- Minimal reactive shifts

### **Touch Needs:**

- Sensory awakening
- Varied textures
- Rhythms that increase body presence
- Embodiment-focused pacing

### **Communication:**

- Clear explanations
- Help link sensation → experience
- “What do you notice physically?”

### **Red Flags:**

- Over-analysis
- Emotional distancing
- Staying “in the head”

### **Aftercare:**

- Sensory-based practices
- Embodied movement

## **TYPE D — EMPATHIC DYSREGULATION (OSCILLATING)**

### **Core Traits:**

- Alternates between over-feeling and numbing
- Nervous system moves from fawn → freeze
- Unstable empathy boundaries
- Vulnerable to emotional overload

### **Somatic Cues:**

- Sudden breath changes
- Muscle tension → collapse patterns
- Rapid shifts in engagement
- Difficulty staying consistent

### **Touch Needs:**

- Predictable rhythm
- Medium, steady pressure
- Slow transitions
- Stabilizing containment

### **Communication:**

- Validation + clarity
- “We’ll go slowly.”
- Encourage pacing and safety

### **Red Flags:**

- Freeze state mid-session
- Emotional whiplash
- Sudden withdrawal

### **Aftercare:**

- Consistent routines
- Small, grounding practices
- Predictable self-care structure

## **TYPE E — EMPATHIC SHUTDOWN (TRAUMA-LINKED)**

### **Core Traits:**

- Empathy muted by overwhelm
- Appears calm, withdrawn, or detached
- Protective numbing
- Emotional response system downregulated

### **Somatic Cues:**

- Very still body
- Flat or frozen expression
- Slow or restricted breath
- Low responsiveness to pressure

### **Touch Needs:**

- Rhythmic awakening
- Gentle activation without flooding
- Gradual tempo shifts
- Warm, attuned presence

### **Communication:**

- Soft, steady tone
- Build safety slowly
- “Do you notice this?” instead of emotional language

### **Red Flags:**

- Dissociation
- Emotional blankness
- Sudden loss of presence

### **Aftercare:**

- Awareness-building
- Movement
- Warmth + sensory grounding

## **TYPE F — DARK EMPATHY (STRATEGIC / INSTRUMENTAL)**

### **Core Traits:**

- High cognitive empathy
- Low affective empathy
- Reads others precisely
- May use empathy strategically
- Strong but rigid boundaries

### **Somatic Cues:**

- Controlled, deliberate movements
- Steady gaze
- Low emotional variability
- Strategic communication patterns

### **Touch Needs:**

- Clear structure
- Professional firmness
- No ambiguity in energy or intent
- Respect autonomy and space

### **Communication:**

- Direct, concise, factual
- Avoid emotional overtones
- Maintain clear boundaries

### **Red Flags:**

- Boundary testing
- Charm used to shift dynamics
- Power dynamics in conversation

### **Aftercare:**

- Autonomy-supporting suggestions
- Clear, structured self-regulation exercises