

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:
