Researchers launch new website for people to test their sensitivity

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Studies have shown that some people seem more sensitive than others.

Now researchers have developed a free online questionnaire that allows you to test exactly how sensitive you are.

The sensitivity test forms part of a new website launched today, which aims to provide reliable and evidence-based information on sensitivity.

The website offers an opportunity for individuals to measure their own, or their child's, sensitivity via a short questionnaire that assesses how they are affected by various psychological and sensory experiences. For example, how much they notice when small things around them have changed, whether loud noises make them feel uncomfortable and whether they dislike watching violent TV programmes.

On completion of the questionnaire respondents receive automatic feedback on their results, detailing where they sit on the sensitivity spectrum and what this means.

Professor Michael Pluess, Professor of Psychology at Queen Mary University of London, and one of the researchers involved in the development and management of this website, said: "Our website responds to the growing interest of the general public in understanding their sensitivity. Whilst there is a considerable amount of information already available online, the issue is that many of the tests provided aren't reliable. The questionnaire we provide is based on extensive research and has been developed and refined over time so people can trust the results they receive."

Sensitive people are defined by researchers as those who are more strongly affected by what they experience. Although everyone is sensitive to an extent, research has shown that people tend to fall into three different groups along a spectrum of sensitivity with about 30% classed as low, 40% as medium and 30% as high in sensitivity.

These groups are often described using flower metaphors with highly sensitive people known as "Orchids" since they require optimal care but are particularly beautiful when they flourish, individuals in the low sensitivity group are "Dandelions", as they tend to be robust and grow anywhere, and those who fall in the middle group are "Tulips" being less delicate than "Orchids" but not as robust as "Dandelions".

By providing accessible blogs on recent sensitivity research and opportunities to take part in research studies, the website also aims to educate the public on the topic and in turn, help them to better understand their own sensitivity.

"Understanding how sensitive you are can be important for helping you to cope in different situations. For example, whilst highly sensitive people are more likely to struggle under stressful circumstances, they are also especially receptive to positive and supportive experiences. Whereas those who are low in sensitivity tend to be more resilient when facing adversity but may also benefit less from positive experiences," added Professor Pluess.

"Through our website we want to provide people with relevant, evidence-based information on sensitivity so they're able to better understand their results and receive practical tips to help them in everyday life."

The online platform is expected to be a valuable resource for researchers and practitioners as well, allowing them to access sensitivity measures, share research articles and advertise their own research projects and recruit participants.

The initial development of the website has been funded by Jacobs Foundation, a private foundation based in Switzerland that supports research and projects worldwide in order to foster positive development in young people.

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Provided by Queen Mary, University of London

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