

Steph G (host): Welcome to Harder To Kill Radio, a top-rated health and fitness podcast. It's Steph Gaudreau, your host. This show is all about finding out what it takes to build unbreakable humans and passing that knowledge on to you, so you can unleash your inner badass and change the world. We have another amazing guest on the show this week. So let's do this.

I am especially excited for this week's guest. I know I say that about every guest that I have because they are just the best of the best people making such a difference on this planet. But this woman in particular I met totally by chance. She has really impacted my life in a very deep and profound way. She helped me to realize something about myself and how I process and see the world. I know this is going to land really, really hard in a good way, for so many of you who are listening today. I hope I've sufficiently teased you with that opener. We're going to go ahead and jump right in with the Miss Karina Antanopoulos of Synchronize Within.

Thank you so much for joining me on this episode of Harder To Kill Radio, where we talk about how to build unbreakable humans through fitness, nutrition and mindset. I'm super excited to have a wonderful guest with me today who actually introduced me to something incredibly important in how I identify myself in my own life and opened up this world of very interesting stuff for me. And we just happened to meet by chance. She literally has changed my life in a lot of ways. I'm excited to welcome to the podcast Karina Antanopoulos of Synchronize Within. We're going to talk about HSPs and all kinds of great stuff today, welcome to the show.

Karina A: Awesome. So glad that you have me here and really excited to talk about being a highly sensitive person.

Steph G (host): Oh my gosh. We have a mutual friend and chatted on the phone, was that last year? Beginning of last year, I can't even remember.

Karina A: It's probably more like two years ago.

Steph G (host): Two years ago. Yeah. And I had never heard of this term HSP or highly sensitive person and you introduced me to that term on that day and it

was basically mind blown from my perspective, 'cause I do identify as an HSP now. My life makes so much more sense. And I don't feel like a crazy person. We're going to talk a lot about this and what it means and all the great stuff that you're doing because part of your mission is to help people who are HSPs to basically use that as, I don't know.

Karina A: Strength.

Steph G (host): Yeah, use it as a strength. I'm so interested to dive into so much of this stuff with you. But I would love to have you share some of your background. How did you get to this point of being somebody who's a coach and interested in helping other HSPs in leadership. What brought you to this moment? That's a big question right?

Karina A: How far back do we want to go right? I'll briefly just share that when I was a kid. My father is Greek and he's off the boat Greek. Being this little highly sensitive, more introverted young girl, anytime anything was too overwhelming for me or it was just beyond my comfort zone, he would call me sensitive. He's like, "Oh, you're so sensitive." And so my whole life I feel like he really tried to make me stronger and put me in leadership positions. He put me in soccer and karate and all these things that were so against the way I am. I found pleasure in it. I found connection in it. But it wasn't where I thrived.

Maybe if I went rock climbing or did yoga or something, as a young kid, I'd be in a different place. But that's not the way my life went. I had to go through that. I really do think it made me a stronger human being. Something I really appreciate about my father is that he didn't get me. But he always pushed me outside my comfort zone. As an adult I see how important that is because I really do see how people are constantly hiding in their comfort zone and then they feel powerless and they feel like they can't make any changes in life. At the end of the day the sensitivity felt like a curse, but as I got older and I really started to embrace it, everything I learned that came along with it is really what helped me develop that strong foundation and that connection to myself.

Just to share a little bit more, I first learned about the term highly sensitive person in college. I was an under grad in psychology and came across it 'cause I was doing some self-inquiry, trying to understand, "Why do I feel different? Why do I feel weird? Why do I feel like no one else feels this way." I came across this term highly sensitive person. I didn't do too much research into it. I just saw that word and I immediately clicked away. I was like, "Absolutely not. I'm not calling myself a highly sensitive person. There was way too much trigger around that.

I then came across the term empath. I was like, "Okay, I can grasp this one. This has on trigger for me. I am an empath, I feel what other people feel. That's why I get overwhelmed. Stuff like that." After college I became a health coach and I really dove into the coaching world and all about health. I had poor digestion, which is pretty common for highly sensitive person, with the nervous stomach. Yeah, and then I kept doing the health coaching thing. And then I really felt like I wasn't doing my thing. I felt like there was more.

As I kept going on my journey, I ended up connecting with a business mentor who came out of the closet that she was highly sensitive and I was like, "What?" Wait a minute. What does this really mean here?" And I went to one of her conferences and she talked about it in a way that Elaine Aron, the main research psychologist of the highly sensitive person trait, she talked about it in the way Elaine Aron teaches about it, which is that being sensitive, it does not mean that you take things personally or that you are overly emotional all the time. Sure, maybe every human being can experience that, but those aren't the distinguishing features of a highly sensitive person.

So once I really started to see how these things that I thought were bad, weren't what I thought the term was about. I also started to see how being highly sensitive was a strength. If I'm not accessing those strengths then I'm really missing out. That's when things really started to turn around for me. It was probably about 2013 where I started to make that turn. That's when I started my first highly sensitive person meet up group. Ever since

then, I've experienced a drastic shift in feeling safe, feeling grounded, feeling like I belong somewhere and knowing that everything is going to be okay.

So at this point, every time I moved, I jumped around a lot with my husband. Every time I moved I created a new meet up group. The groups are called A Place for Highly Sensitive People. 'Cause for me, I always felt like I didn't have a place in the world. This meet up space is a place for us to come together. I have maybe four or five. We have one in San Diego, Colorado, Hawaii, Long Island, New York and upstate New York. Who knows where we're going to live next year, maybe it's Virginia, maybe we're going to be back in San Diego. I don't know. But I just know that for me, community is so important in order to feel like a strong human being as a highly sensitive human being.

Steph G (host): That's awesome. So I have so many of these ... My brain is asking all of these questions I want to ask you. If you could, describe it, what would be some of the defining traits or characteristics of someone who might identify as an HSP?

Karina A: Great question. This is really basic for anyone who is just learning or hearing about this for the first time. There's actually an acronym, so first let me share with you that Elaine Aron has a documentary called Sensitive. I highly recommend everyone watches it. It's funny, 'cause every time I show it in one of my meet up groups, all the highly sensitive person in the group are like, "Yeah, okay and." It's like, "We know." Everything she shared is like, "Yeah we know." But I learned that Elaine Aron created the documentary more for people who aren't highly sensitive to help understand us.

The way she organized, there's actually an acronym and it's does. That explains the four distinguishing traits of being highly sensitive. The first is D, which is depth and processing. Really that means that we think deeper. We go deeper. We think outside the box. We come out with these really abstract ideas and paths of life. We create new ways for the world

just because of that depth. We also feel part of that depth is feeling, so feeling and thinking deeply. And then always over-stimulation. Because we have our five senses are turned on at a higher caliber, we receive everything more than a typical person, who are not highly sensitive.

Everyone has their thing. For me, I'm more sound sensitive. So everything seems louder, especially when I'm more stressed out. My husband's also highly sensitive, his is smell. So I really think it's funny because, I don't remember where I heard this recently. But it was like, "Well if being highly sensitive was something that was weak, we would have dropped out of the gene pool a long time ago." But because we're still around and actually are growing, really we're here to warn the others. We use our five senses and then our sixth sense is intuition, if some people have access to that, to warn others, 'cause we see things that people do not see. We feel things that people do not feel, so we warn the others.

But part of that always being turned on is over-stimulation. So really needing to learn mindfulness practices to center yourself, ground yourself, really take care of yourself. E of the acronym is emotional responsiveness, which is also high empathy. Picking up on how people feel. We walk into the room we feel a vibe, like, "Oh, what happened in here?" And then even, we're watching a commercial for animals who need homes and they're like with the music in the background [inaudible 00:11:31] it's like, you start crying 'cause you feel so deeply. All of it comes together. Just feeling so deeply with the emotional responsiveness.

I think it's like if, with our emotional intelligence, if we are able to acknowledge what the emotion is and not allow ourself to judge our emotions, then emotional responsiveness is okay. But when we are judging our emotions, then it takes us to the next level and then that's when it's overly sensitive. That's where people start to feel like it's a curse to be highly sensitive. S is the last piece and it's subtlety. We are able to pick up subtleties in our environment and pay attention to details that

maybe other people may not pick up on. So noticing if something is a little off or it's not in its place we [inaudible 00:12:30] has their thing.

Steph G (host): Yeah. And as you're talking and describing all these things, I'm nodding my head profusely because this is exactly like you were talking about the cat, like the pet commercials and stuff like that. Any video that has an animal, like Facebook right, my husband shows these videos to me all the time, it is literally I will cry. This little cat was rescued and it was abandoned and now it's so healthy and happy and I just immediately will start crying. It's just the visceral response. Anyway, that's just a little story from me about mine.

I'm also super noise sensitive. And smell. I don't think, at the time we first talked, there's an eight story condo building that's being built next door to where we live. And the construction's been going on for 15 months. I've just felt like I'm crawling out of my skin sometimes. I'm so glad you mentioned stress. 'Cause when I feel stressed more than usual, that stimulus is just even more unbearable. I'm hoping that some people listening to this will be like, "Oh, okay. It's not just me. I'm not just overreacting."

So I'm curious, what are some of the things that either in your studying HSP or your self as an HSP, what are some of the misconceptions people have had about how you process the world? In other words, are they like, "Oh you're just overreacting." Or like, "You need to better learn how to handle yourself." What are some of the things people either told you or you've heard of, how it's misconceived.

Karina A: The first one, which is pretty basic. People, for whatever reason assume that if you're highly sensitive that means that you're more introverted. That's not the case. Actually 30% of highly sensitive person are extroverts. That's one piece. The other thing is, which is very interesting is that there is a sub-group of the highly sensitive person world where there are some of us who are called high sensation seekers. That's me. It's kind

of like I love to travel. I love roller coasters. I love meeting new people. I like occasionally going out for a drink and dancing, all that kind of stuff.

But we have a limit, and when we hit that limit, if we do not take care of ourself and step back, then we will fall apart. That's something I've really had to become mindful of. Actually, around the time that I lived in Colorado, it was 2013, the year I started my first meet up group. I was developing adrenal fatigue. It was terrible. It was so bad. I didn't have a support system there. For whatever reason, altitude and my husband was in vet school. He was taking care of his stuff. It was just a lot of pressure on me. I was in grad school online. I was trying to build my business. It was just way too much and my adrenals were telling me, "Karina you need to slow down." So that's something that we really have to be mindful of. That's the first piece. Introversions and also being high sensation seekers, something you want to look out for.

There's actually a self-assessment on Elaine Aron's website, hsperson.com if you haven't already looked at that. And there's also one for the high sensation seeker one. It'll help you see what kind of highly sensitive person you are. Then there's the pieces around, like I said before around taking things personally. I've actually realized that people who are not highly sensitive take things personally. This is just a human thing that we do. It's something that we have to learn to not take things personal.

I do think that maybe, kind of like with highly sensitive person, we just do things a little bit more. So maybe you notice it more with us because we're more reactive or responsive about it. But everyone is doing that. I know for me, when I read the Four Agreements book, that really helped me. It was one of the grievance, don't take things personally. I was like this is number one. That book really helped shift that pattern for me and to see that.

Here's the thing about being highly sensitive. Someone is not saying anything or doing anything but you have this intuitive vibe that they're

thinking something or feeling something, you're reading their thoughts or you think that you know what they think. But, oftentimes you do not, people need to hear that. I actually call this intuitive empathy. Where you're tuning into something that is not being shown. That could be really good for if you do one-on-one work with someone or you really can read the room and give people what they need.

When you're just walking down the street and you feel like, "Oh, that person's judging me." And then you will shut down 'cause you feel insecure, that's not serving you, so do not do it. It's like a tool. It's just like your imagination. It's just like a hammer. You're not going to eat with a hammer. You're going to use it to hammer a nail. Same thing with your imagination. You can imagine all the bad things that could happen in life. Or you could imagine all the possible good scenarios of being a visionary. Same thing with being highly sensitive is especially your empathy and your intuition. It's really how you use it as a tool.

Steph G (host): Totally. You mentioned staying centered and grounded a couple times. I'm curious to know how that plays out, either with you personally or with the folks that you've coached I'm sure there are some differences among people and their preferences. But what are some of the ways that you stay centered and grounded, especially the times when you're a little bit more stressed out and maybe that over stimulation piece is really kicking in or you're really just drinking in the room and feeling everybody's feelings all at once. How do you manage it, for lack of a better term?

Karina A: I will just say, as a basic answer, if you haven't yet explored mindfulness, meditation, it's like key foundational number one. 101 HSP. Because the whole thing about mindfulness is you are focusing on one thing at a time. If have a million things that you're focusing on, you're going to be overwhelmed. But if let yourself just focus on one thing and not judge it or not judge that everything else is there. Then you're going to be a lot more grounded and centered and present.

It's being able to discern what you're focusing on. That's definitely something to practice. It's not something that happens over night or happens with a few weeks. You build that muscles up of mindfulness. One of the primary pieces that I teach in my program is that you have to shift the inner if you want to see an outer shift. There's this huge misconception in our personal development world that I'm just going to change this external thing or I'm going to get a new job or I'm going to change my location. Or I'm going to change the way my body looks and then I'm going to feel better.

But that's not the case. We need to shift the inner and then actually, the outer follows much easier. I don't like to actually use that word easier, 'cause it doesn't always feel easy, but it flows. When you really let yourself just focus on that inner shift and that can be done in ... I have different exercises that I do in regards to journaling. There is a series of questions that I answer. Even before this podcast, I was like, ""Oh my God. I'm feeling all over the place. I'm just in San Diego for a couple days. I'm not grounded. And I got out a piece of paper and I answered these five questions. It helped zero in and focus my energy back to the feeling that I want to feel when I show up here and share with everyone so that everyone can receive instead of it being about me.

Steph G (host): Absolutely. I'm going back to what you talked about at the beginning. You mentioned how you heard about HSPs and you were like, "No. That's not who I am." And then landed on this term empath. I'm curious, how do you personally differentiate between the two and why do you think the term HSP carried some kind of, I don't want to say necessarily shame, 'cause that's speaking for you-

Karina A: Oh yeah.

Steph G (host): But is there something about it that ... Why do you think you had attached a different meaning to HSP compared to empath?

Karina A:

I would say, our society. I also am from New York. Anything that was sensitive is not okay. Living in San Diego or living in California that was a lot better. People would be like, "Oh yeah, I'm sensitive too. We're all like. We're good." It's like, "No." Even when I moved back to New York two years ago, there was still this vibe of it's not okay to be sensitive. It's like a dog eat dog world. You gotta push. It's competitive.

I've just been trying to expand the awareness over there as well, that this is not a bad thing. It's very interesting. It's a lot about the culture. We have Asian cultures who are typically more sensitive. I actually had a few people come to my documentary viewing the last one, and they thought they were highly sensitive. But because of their culture they're just naturally more sensitive. But it doesn't mean they are a highly sensitive person. That was a very interesting thing as well.

Again, I think it goes back to not being able to ... As a young girl, I wasn't able to always control my crying. My dad didn't like that 'cause it made him feel uncomfortable probably. My mom was okay with it. She would talk to me. She was highly sensitive so she would hold space for me. She was like my saving grace growing up. But there was shame around it.

I will say that growing up I had a lot of shame around the little girl version of me. I call it my ugly duckling self. You know the story of the ugly duckling is like she always grows up into a swan. But when you're an ugly duckling you don't know that. There was just being very awkward and taking in the world.

Also, I had a lot of health challenges with allergies and I always felt overwhelmed physically. Then it made me overwhelmed emotionally and then I would be too overwhelmed then I would start crying. Not knowing how to manage the crying I would feel like something's wrong with me. That is a big thing that often gets in highly sensitive people's mind is that, "There's something wrong with me. Please fix me and I'm not good enough 'cause I'm not "strong enough" or I'm weak 'cause I'm sensitive." Those are some really strong things that I've uncovered over the years.

Steph G (host): Yeah, as you're talking I literally am tearing up here 'cause that story that you just shared about yourself as a young girl and growing up. That could be my story. I also am from the east coast. I'm from Massachusetts. I lived there first 25 years of my life and now live in California. So I totally get the difference in culture and pace. A real perceived expectation and I think that, that I just wanted to echo what you say there is so ... I think unless you've lived in the northeast and the west coast you don't quite get it.

We get these big regional stereotypes, for lack of a better term. Like southern charm. Or stuff like that. But there really is a different vibe and different energy between the two places. And having lived in San Diego now for 12 or 13 years, I can totally see. I feel my energy shift when I go back to the east coast, the northeast and Massachusetts and go see home and visit everybody. It's sometimes really uncomfortable. So thank you for talking about the shame piece of that. I know that's very vulnerable but at the same time very, very powerful in understanding where some of this comes from and why certain labels. We don't want to necessarily attach ourselves to them sometimes because of how we think we're going to be perceived.

Karina A: Yep, and then you were also saying something about being highly sensitive, being empathic. I want to talk briefly on that. We are using a lot of labels on this episode, right? If you can't tell. It's funny because I used to hate labels. I remember in high school, I wanted to be everything that you thought I wasn't.

So if you said Karina's this way, I would the next day do the opposite. I did not want to be put in a box or labeled. But actually in a way it made people very confused. They didn't know how to show up with me. It also made me very confused, 'cause I'm like, "I don't know who I am." And I would constantly was putting on different masks in different environments, trying to adapt and fit in everywhere I went. That's a strength. But in regards to my core sense of self, I wasn't grounded. I didn't know who I was.

These labels, if it doesn't resonate with you, that's okay. Ask yourself, why doesn't it resonate? But then I'll also want to bring in the Meyer's Briggs personality types. With the Meyer's Briggs, I'm actually an ambivert, so I actually switch back and forth between the introvert and extrovert. But I'm always pretty much an NFP, intuitive, feeler, perceiver. Pretty much with the Meyer's Briggs, the intuitives who are also feelers are the empaths. You don't have to be an empath to be highly sensitive as they say. But oftentimes, if you are a strong empath then you probably are highly sensitive. Because if you notice, if you ever take the Meyer's Briggs they say, "Oh, this personality type is rare. It's on the rare side." And actually there's only about 20% of the population is highly sensitive. I say only, but actually, that's a lot. But it's not the majority. 80% of us are not.

Steph G (host): That's crazy. This brings up a couple questions for me. You mentioned your husband is also an HSP. When you work with people in general, do you find that they're surprised that men could be either empathic or HSP just because of again, cultural norms and what we have, not me you and me, but we as a society as a western culture, as an American culture has said, "These are the norms of what a guy is like." Do you work with men and or, I guess an alternative question would be how do you think men handle finding that out? Just because of the challenges around that?

Karina A: Definitely. Men and women equally are highly sensitive. I'll just start off like that. It's just that yes, culturally we women are more socially, it's more acceptable for us to be sensitive or be empathic or emotional or whatever. For the men, I do work with both men and women. If you haven't noticed, this is a conversation that I had with someone recently that with all the divorce that happened since the 60s, the kids often go to live with the mom. The dad has to give the money, he has to pay a bill, a check to the mom every month. So we actually have a generation of men who were raised by women.

This has contributed greatly to more men being more empathic, more sensitive in general and emotionally responsive. Actually, my husband,

his parents split when he was young and he lived with his mom and his sister. And then later on his mom remarried and it was a great remarriage. But his mom was like his person.

It's just really interesting what is supported, what is not supported and it's also interesting 'cause certain people that I see, certain family members, extended family members, they have kids. If the boy is crying, they're like, "Oh the boy cries a lot." And I'm like, "That's okay. I'm like come on guys, I'm the highly sensitive person coach here. I talk about this every day here. And you're saying to me, ooh, that boy cries a lot." I was like, "He's probably highly sensitive. And he's very in tune and he's very aware. Don't start the judgment now." I'm helping them refine the way that they're making these observations and saying them. It starts now. It starts when they're a very young person.

Steph G (host):

Absolutely. Along those lines. You and your husband are HSPs. My husband hasn't taken this quiz. I do not think he is an HSP. Just based on his personality. Do you have advice for people who either they cohabitate with someone who's an HSP and they aren't, or vice versa? Or they work with someone who's an HSP and how to navigate the differences between those different types of seeing the world. Is there advice that you have for an HSP who's trying to navigate their space that they have to deal with other people and saying, "Actually this is how you can support me." In having that conversation or communicating to them or ... Do you have advice for people on the other side of it who may not be an HSP? But how to hold space for people who are?

Karina A:

This is a tough question. I first want to acknowledge that my husband is highly sensitive, but he and I are very different. There's a very large spectrum. He's more of a thinker type and I'm more of a feeler type. He's also a J, a judger and I'm a perceiver. There's been over the years communication disruptances and misunderstandings because of our processing the world. Even though we're both highly sensitive. That's something to keep in mind is your communication style. Whether you're at work or you're at home or you are with family or partner or a friend.

I actually recently asked all of my family members to take the Meyer's Briggs test, because it really helped me understand their world. And not make me feel so bad about myself. It's funny because I am an intuitive feeler and the majority of my family members are sensors, they use their five senses to process the world, make decisions. I go to the sixth sense level. That's why I'm the weird one 'cause I'm always tuning into things that are not there. They rely on me for that sometimes. But it's just very interesting. I think that's why I always felt so different from everyone, because of that.

But once, I'm not kidding, once I realized, "Wow. We just have a different way of processing the world." Then it helped me first of all make myself feel like there's nothing wrong with me. And then when I'm showing up with people, I didn't feel threatened by them. For every person, it's really also about how you perceive it. If you feel like you want people to accept you before you've accepted this part of yourself, that's not going to happen. That was a huge awakening for me. I needed to really embrace this and learn how this is a strength.

And then even be able to teach people how to be with me by showing up and by showing them, by modeling it to them. That is the best thing that you can do. I'm not even sure if I can give any specific examples on what you can do. I have YouTube videos that I do. I share all of that in my videos. So if you want to learn more about the specifics I would say jump on over there. But communication styles. But really how you model to others. You teach people how you want to be treated.

Steph G (host): That's such good advice. Yeah, we'll link to your website so people can hop over to find your YouTube channel and watch some of your videos. You have some awesome videos about all of this stuff and helping people get a little bit more in depth. I feel like sometimes, blog posts don't necessarily convey it super well. I know your videos are great. You're also launching a podcast. We'll talk about that in a couple minutes.

I'm curious then, with the coaching and mentoring that you do, you've mentioned this a couple times, how being and HSP is a strength. I'm curious if you can give us a bit of an overview of your own personal views or philosophy on that. How can other people use this as, if they're leaders or they're trying to establish a business or from that perspective. How do you see HSP as being a strength that could be capitalized on?

Karina A:

Yeah. They're coming out with more research on this in general. But the direction of where our industries all across the board are heading, if you don't have a highly sensitive person on your team then you're really missing out. Highly sensitive people tend to notice trends before they happen. They tend to ... So the way that we process things is that we're able to pick up on information from 10 different places.

And then we're able to bring them together. And not just bring them together, but then add them to all the information that we know about, all the things that we experience from our past. Then it comes together as one and then we see things, we feel things, we had this vision.

Oftentimes, that's where the market goes. That's where industries grow into. That is one of the most valuable things as to why it's great to have a highly sensitive person on your team, especially who has been doing a lot of personal growth work and is really connected to themselves and their intuition.

I would say developing your intuition as a highly sensitive person, there are going to be people who are not more intuitive, but I say everyone can develop it. This, I would say is my secret weapon. When I am disconnected from my intuition, or my heart, however want to call it, I feel lost, I feel confused. I feel overwhelmed. I'm over analyzing everything. I'm in fear mode. But the minute I drop into my intuition, into my heart, I'm back, I'm grounded, I know exactly where I'm going.

The thing is, is we are here to create a new world. Highly sensitive person, we live in a world that doesn't really work for us. So we have to create a new world. The one where it does work for us. Therefore a lot of

us are creating new pathways that don't yet exist, therefore no one has created these systems yet.

In the work that I do, I help people create the systems. I help them learn how to see what is going to work for them, see what is going to be the next step. Because I truly believe that we have a connection to something greater than us. If we deny that, and we feel like it's all up to us, we're going to burn out and we're going to shut down. And then we're not going to be able to make the difference that we came here to make. But if we feel that connection to that something greater than us, then we can stay open to it and when we're meditating or we're running or whatever it is that really helps you be present, you're able to receive those insights and that miracle, that inspiration, that spark is like, "Ooh, let me do that." And then you go and do it. And then you follow through on it. And then it takes it to the next level, maybe something that hasn't yet been done. Or maybe it hasn't yet been done by you.

Here's the other thing. I'm sure you've heard this before but even though there's 100 people doing the same thing, you also need to do it. Because you're going to do it in your way. You're going to do it with your energy. People need your energy. Some people, I believe that they need your specific makeup to hear the message. If you're not showing up, that person's not getting the message and boo hoo, you're slowing down everyone else.

It helps me wake up in the morning as a leader, as someone who, I call aspiring leader 'cause a lot of us don't consider ourselves as leaders as highly sensitive, because we've maybe been more of a beta leader. We maybe have been in the side leading the way, but helping people step up, rather than being the one who's like, "Follow me. Look at me. Listen to me." I feel like for me, aspiring leader as a highly sensitive person, I'm here to build other leaders. I'm here to show people and help people see their greatness so they can do what they're here do to as well and keep that ripple effect going.

Steph G (host): Awesome. I know you mentioned mindfulness and meditation. Earlier, as a way to stay centered and grounded. But I'm curious to know, as somebody who's studied science in college and was always really interested in science and you've studied psychology. There's definitely an aspect to serve the rational minds. It's gotta be. We've gotta support it with research. It's gotta be proven by fact. It has to be shown by whatever, concrete evidence.

And yet, there's that aspect of HSP or even just in general in intuition that this part of our brain can sense and feel. And probably has hard time attaching language to that feeling. And yet, we're living in such a culture and such a world now that's like, "Nope, it's gotta have. Where's your evidence? Where's your scientific study? Where's your facts?" How do you, besides things like mindfulness and meditation, I guess the question is, how do you help people to start to at least tune into that intuition. I hear this a lot, people are like, "I would just listen to myself. Yeah but I don't even know what to listen for. Do you have any advice there?"

Karina A: I do. This is one of my favorite topics. I've created a bit of a system around this, because I have the same thing. I'm like, "Okay, I have this intuition. But how does it work and how can I rely on it? As a practical thing that's methodological, whatever that word is, that I can keep coming back to and it's the same every time. When you are activating your intuition, there's a few things that you want to pay attention to.

The first piece is consistency. If you ask yourself a question and the answer to that question keeps changing, it's probably that it's not the right answer. What you want to do is you want to step back for a minute. You want to keep asking the same question over and over. When you start to receive consistency in your answer, then you know that that's your intuition. Your intuition will always speak to you with consistency.

For example, where my husband and I are going to live next. That's always the big question, "Where are we going to live next?" It can be so overwhelming. Like, "Ugh. I don't know. I don't know." But it doesn't

matter because over the year, every time we have that conversation we keep coming back to the same places and then things start getting weeded out. The consistency piece. That's your intuition talking to you. That's one piece.

There's another piece that's a little bit more for my feelers. But if you're able to ... If you imagine that you have three options in front of you. You put them on an imaginary scale, one of them is going to feel heavier and one of them is going to feel lighter. If you're able to tune into the one that feels lighter then I say it's like you're flowing into the opening. That's what I call it. You're going into the opening.

The lighter option is always the one that for your highest good and is going to help you expand and grow. If you focus on the heavy one and try to fix it and make it right. This has to be the one, then you're just going to be spinning your wheels and wasting all that energy. Why not just go for the lighter option and I know for some people that sounds very flighty or whatever, but I'm not even kidding. When you're in a completely stressful state and you're completely overwhelmed, if you just ask yourself, which feels light and you just go for that, then you enter into a new space and you're able to move forward from that stressful situation.

Steph G (host): I love that. I'm probably more on the feeling end of things than the thinking end of things. That's one of the things that's really helped me is the energy around that decision or around that option, heavy, light, all the time is where I go. What feels like it's going to be, like you said, "Not necessarily the easiest option. But just feels like it offers less resistance." Gosh that's so good. I hope that helps some people who start to tune into that because I know that we're always like, "Listen to yourself." And then it's like, "I don't know what I'm listening for." You don't know where to begin with that.

Karina A: Right yeah.

Steph G (host): You mentioned this earlier, but you talked about comfort zones. I know people and I've done this myself where I'm like, "Okay, my gut feeling on this is, or my intuition is telling me yes. I know what I want. I really do." But I am so scared. I'm so scared that it's keeping me completely stuck in place. I can't move outside my comfort zone. I don't even want to put a toe over that line because I'm so terrified of what might happen. How do you help people who are in that situation where they know in their gut what they want but they can't seem to make their physical selves or their emotional selves or whatever it is, move a little bit closer to the edge of that comfort zone.

Karina A: We want to acknowledge here that the comfort zone is very much part of our evolutionary development. We need that. We need to feel safe. But we also need to grow. So there's that back and forth of feeling safe but also growing. It's like a dance. This is the fear based mind, the amygdala, the part that's like the animalistic part of the mind where we don't really have control over. There's a tool that I've used. If there's something I have extreme fear on that I really don't have access to and I can't even explain it. Maybe I can just acknowledge that it's a fear.

I don't know if you've explored this at all, but emotional freedom techniques, or EFT, has really helped me clear out some of the, create some space. That's what I call it, create some space so that I can come back to that situation and be like, is this for my highs good***? Or is this really something that is something I should not go in the direction towards. But the EFT, it's tapping on acupuncture points, if you don't know it. It helps rewire the brain back to the amygdala, helping neutralize the fear so you can make a clear, logical, if anything is logical decision if it's something to move forward on or if it's something to let go of.

Steph G (host): Awesome. I'm sure that will help some folks out there at least have a place to start. You know you mentioned earlier how you had to work on your gut health a little bit. Sometimes these can be characteristic of HSP. I'm curious to know what you did, you don't have to be super detailed, what are some of the ways you supported that in your lifestyle that helped

you to take care of that component of, I guess the physical or physiological component of your version of HSP?

Karina A:

Originally, my thing was the elimination diet. Like, "Okay, I'm going to take this out. I'm going to add it back in." But that took so much work. Then I moved to Colorado and I met this amazing woman who's a nutritionist and she uses muscle testing. I'm not sure if you guys know, muscle testing applies kinesiology but she was able to go through literally a list of all these foods and charts on supplements and foods, everything you could think of, to help strengthen my gut. She muscle tested everything. I've been working with her since 2014. Almost three years now.

I had eczema. That's why I had originally went to her. I had bad eczema on my legs. I have scars. It was terrible, always scratching. She helped heal my gut so that the eczema went away. I also healed it by emotionally, mentally in regards of those connections of anger. Eczema is anger, like, "Ah. I'm not expressing my anger." It's not just a physical. But there's the other layers to it as well that you want to look at. That first.

And then later on with the adrenal fatigue came hormonal imbalance, thyroid issues and then skin breakouts. I had really bad skin. This was later in life I had skin issues. I remember looking in the, I would just cry. I'm like, "Oh my God. This is so bad." But I literally forced myself to look in the mirror and tell myself, "I love you. I love you. Even though you have this acne, I love you." That was the hardest thing to do but it was a part of strengthening a connection to myself and unconditional love to myself. Again, that's the emotional piece.

But the muscle testing. She does it virtually. She just uses her own fingers. She tunes into my energy fields and every single thing I've brought to her, she's helped me with. I'm not saying there's, maybe there's science behind this. I know chiropractors use muscle testing. I am not the person to talk about the science behind it. All I know is that it's worked for me. That's just what I'm saying.

Steph G (host): Awesome. I appreciate you sharing that. Again, there could be somebody listening to this going, "Yeah, I've tried every elimination diet under the sun." I'm open-minded about that stuff. If it works for you, far be it for me to tell you whether it's right or wrong.

Karina A: It's not just the typical wheat, corn, dairy, typical allergens. I'm sensitive to eggplant. I'm sensitive to chickpeas. I'm sensitive to mushrooms. And grains. Certain things, I was like, "What? This is "healthy" food. So I don't understand why I'm still not feeling good." So yes. I would say if you've tried everything like I did, find someone who is really skilled at doing muscle testing and see what they say.

Steph G (host): Before we do the little rapid fire session, tell us about your new podcast. That by the time this show is out will have been out for a month or two.

Karina A: I will be releasing the Highly Sensitive Leadership podcast, which I'm so excited for. My focus really has been around a relationship and leadership development. I really see both of those going hand in hand. There are five types of relationships that maybe really need to look at. This is part of building a really strong foundation as a highly sensitive person. Our first relationship is our core sense of self. Our relationship to ourself. Then we have the relationship to others in our community. We have a relationship to space in our environment. Space is like universe is connected in there. Then we have our relationship to our health, physical, emotional. And then we have our relationship to our work and when we are showing up at work.

Again, to me, this covers all the bases. But at the end of the day, how you are in relationship with one thing is how you're in relationship with all things. If you really work on your relationship with yourself, you're going to show up differently at work. You're going to show up differently in community settings or with your body. So really, a lot of the podcasts are different conversations I'd call it. Not even interviews. Conversations with some amazing colleagues and friends who are highly sensitive and who are thriving in this world. Really, the big intention is I want you to flow. I

want you to thrive. I want you to feel like you have a strong foundation to go back to every time. So that if you're going outside your comfort zone, if you want to step up as a leader, you always know that you have this solid foundation to come back to. [inaudible 00:50:29] we're going to be talking about will go into what you need in that foundation so that you don't feel like you're going to always fall apart.

Steph G (host): That's fantastic. I'm sure there are lots of people who are listening to this who are first hearing about HSP and they're like, "Yep. I think that's me." And so this is a great extra resource for them beyond the coaching that you offer and all the stuff that's on your website to just delve more into that world and get some support. They'll definitely make sure they go check out your podcast. It sounds awesome.

Karina A: Yep, definitely. Just as a last little free gift that I like to give everyone. I have a master class. It's on how to create your vision and thrive as a highly sensitive person. To me, if you don't know what you want, it's really hard to move anywhere. The majority of my work goes to really helping people get clarity on what it is that they want. This master class will help you create your vision. It will help you get clear on what you want. If you want to receive the master class you just go to hspleaders.com you can sign up for the master class right there.

Steph G (host): That's such a generous and amazing gift that you're giving people. Alright it's time for rapid fire questions and then we're going to wrap this up. You ready?

Karina A: Yes.

Steph G (host): Something you always do as part of your morning routine?

Karina A: Drink water.

Steph G (host): Awesome. That goes into my next question which is coffee or tea?

Karina A: Tea, herbal.

Steph G (host): Do you have a favorite kind of herbal tea?

Karina A: Anything rooibos

Steph G (host): Ocean or mountains?

Karina A: So hard but I will go with ocean.

Steph G (host): A book that you really love.

Karina A: The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz.

Steph G (host): Great book. An area of personal development that you are working on?

Karina A: I'm working on, if you know the chakra, my first chakra, which is where we're living. This has been a huge up and down for me and my husband. So where we're living. Our environment. Our space. Where are we meant to settle down. That is what I'm working on.

Steph G (host): Fantastic. And then the last question which is something I ask everybody, which is, in your opinion, what is the most important ingredient in building unbreakable humans?

Karina A: Community.

Steph G (host): I like that.

Karina A: Feeling alone and feeling like I don't have anyone who gets me is that was, ugh, I was just constantly in survival mode. But the minute I feel like I connect with my community, I felt safe. I felt braver. I felt more confident. Everything came from community.

Steph G (host): I love that. And I think, so many things we've talked about in this podcast have been about, yes, I don't want to say working on yourself 'cause implies something's not working. But just self-awareness. There's been a self-awareness piece in a lot of the stuff that you've talked about. But there's also been a huge component of we have to build that community.

We have to feel like we're not alone. We have support. I think those two things, a lot of times, at least in popular coaching spaces and personal development spaces, sometimes it pushes in one direction too much over the other. I see them together as yin and yang. There's gotta be a little bit of both. I just wanted to echo that stuff that you said, 'cause I think it's been so great.

Karina A: Yes, definitely. I totally agree with the, you need to have your inner voice, your inner guru, I call it. It's like, okay, have your guys, but community is supposed to bring out your inner voice. To me, that's the best type of community is the people who are going to bring out your inner light and not tell you what to be but ask you who do you want to be.

Steph G (host): I love that. I can't think of a better way to wrap it up. That's a fantastic way to put it. Gosh this has been so fun and so enlightening in a lot of ways. I'm just so thankful that you've been on the show. Tell everybody where they can find you online and we'll send you off.

Karina A: Okay, great. Thank you so much for having me. It's been such a pleasure. Again, if you want my master class, go to hspleaders.com or if you'd like to watch my video blog, I do new Facebook Live every week. You can go to my website synchronizewithin.com or if you want to get on my Facebook group, that's a place for highly sensitive person on Facebook.

Steph G (host): Fantastic. Thank you so much for being on the show, Karina Antonopoulos. You are just doing so many great things in the world. I appreciate your voice and your courage in the things that you are teaching people. It's just so needed and so valuable. Thank you so much for being on the podcast.

Karina A: Thank you so much for asking me to be here. Thank you. Thank you.

Steph G (host): You're welcome. Wow. If you had some insight from this show, I'd be particularly curious to hear about it. Find this show post on social media, on the website, stupideasypaleo.com go to the show notes. I would love to hear if you have discovered anything about yourself. Because ultimately,

this show is about, yeah it's about talking to cool people, certainly. But even deeper than that, it's helping empower you to not only learn about yourself but then to be able to take action in your own life in these areas of fitness, nutrition, mindset, just personal development. I would love to know how this episode landed for you. As always, I would be incredibly honored and grateful to have your review and to have you hit the subscribe button on iTunes. It has a dual function. I'd love to hear your thoughts on the show. As always, but when you hit the subscribe button, it also helps other people to discover the show. So if you're like, "Hell yeah. I want other people to hear about Harder to Kill Radio because it's so valuable and the guests are so powerful and knowledgeable, then hit that subscribe button. I would be so incredibly grateful to you for that. Okay, until next week when we have another really cool guest, stay healthy, happy and harder to kill.