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University of Economics and  
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# **„A MODEL OF SUPPORT FOR HIGHLY SENSITIVE CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL AND EARLY SCHOOL AGE”**

# Emotion

Potential of highly sensitive



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**A model of support for  
highly sensitive children in  
preschool and early school  
age**

# Structure

**E-MOTION PROJECT model**

**The identification of the child's potential**

**Education and support for parents and caregivers**

**A forum for exchanging experiences**

# Justification for the support model (1/2)

Sensory processing sensitivity is a hereditary temperamental trait (Aron, & Aron, 1997), which is distinct from other personality constructs (Aron, Aron, & Jagiellowicz, 2012; Lionetti, Aron, Aron, Klein, & Pluess, 2019)

This trait is associated with **special benefits** (including a positive mood, greater awareness, responses to interventions) when a person is raised and lives in positive conditions/environment (e.g. Nocentini, Menesini, & Pluess, 2018; Pluess, & Boniwell, 2015)

In addition, this trait may entail the **risk of potential psychological difficulties** and the occurrence of stress-related problems when a person is raised and lives in inappropriate, negative conditions/environment (e.g. Ellis, & Boyce, 2011; Liss, Timmel, Baxley, & Killingsworth, 2005)

## Justification for the support model (2/2)

- Therefore, the concept of high sensitivity, treated as both a protective factor and a risk factor, became an area of research and practical interest and was used as the basis for the development and subsequent implementation of the international **E-MOTION** project

(Baryła-Matejczuk, 2019)

# E-MOTION PROJECT

The **main goal of the project** is to develop, test and implement a comprehensive model of support for highly sensitive children of preschool and early-school age.

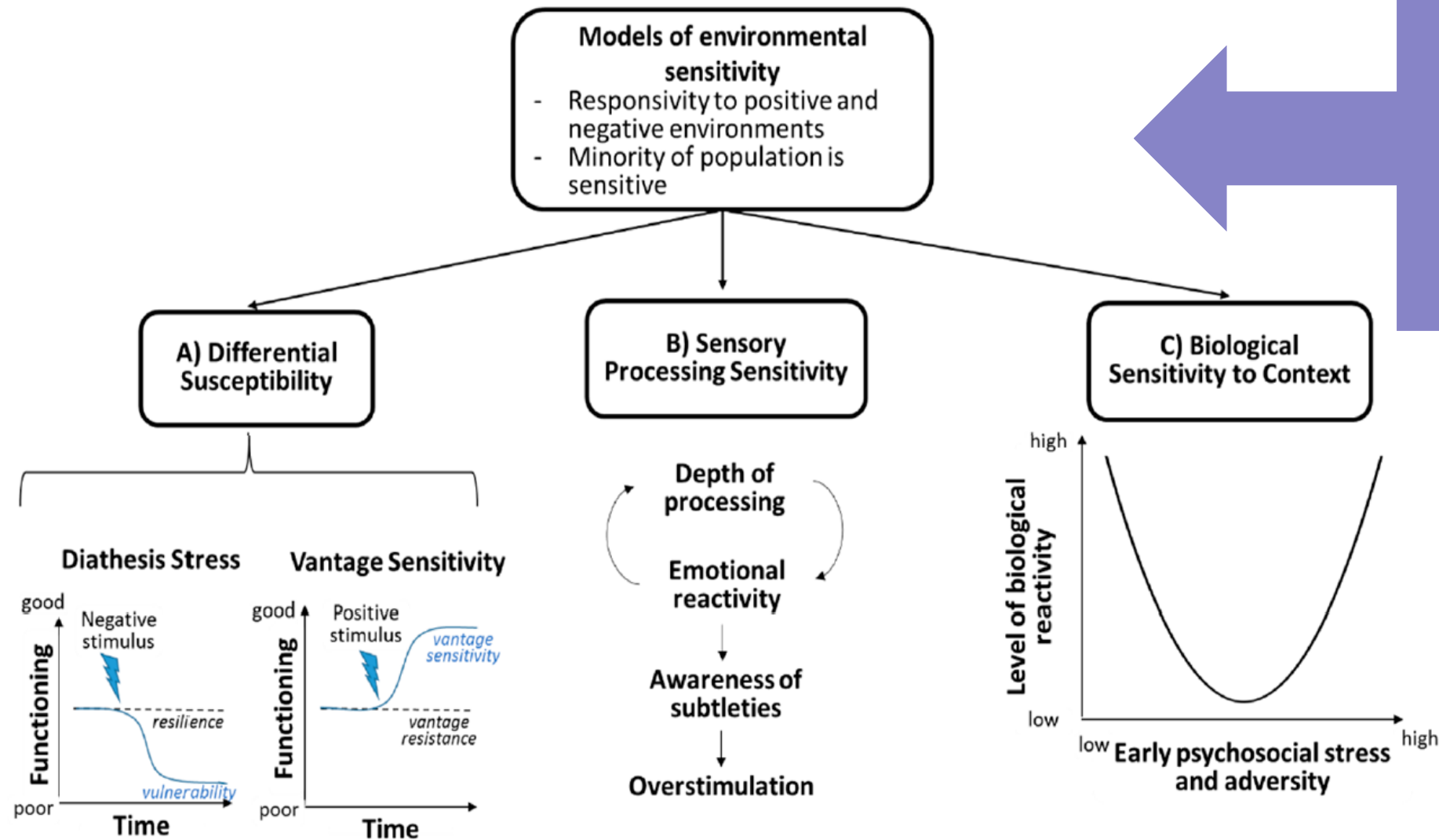
The model is built upon the approach of **Sensory Processing Sensitivity in Children** (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron, 2002).

The basis for its construction was also the broader construct of **Environmental Sensitivity** (Pluess, 2015).

In the explication of the specificity of children's development in this period of life, **developmental** regularities were taken into account as well as protective factors.

(Baryła-Matejczuk, 2019)





The model is built upon the *approach to Sensory Processing Sensitivity in children* (Aron&Aron, 1997; Aron, 2002). The basis for its construction was also the *broader construct of Environmental Sensitivity* (Pluess, 2015).

Source: Greven, C.U.; Lionetti, F.; Booth, C.; Aron, E.; Fox, E.; Schendan, H.E.; Pluess, M.; Bruining, H.; Acevedo, B.; Bijttebier, P.; Homberg, J. (2019), Sensory Processing Sensitivity in the Context of Environmental Sensitivity: A Critical Review and Development of Research Agenda.

# That is why we develop model of support....

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- By model it is understood an integration by representing diverse findings in a common system (Tack, 1972)
- The model is built upon the approach to Sensory Processing Sensitivity in children
- The basis for its construction was also the broader construct of Environmental Sensitivity
- to foster the potential of high SPS individuals and prevent negative consequences, support of teachers and parents based on prevention programs available (a.o. Temperament-Based Intervention)

(Allen, 2015; Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron, 2002; Pluess, 2015)



# That is why we develop model of support....

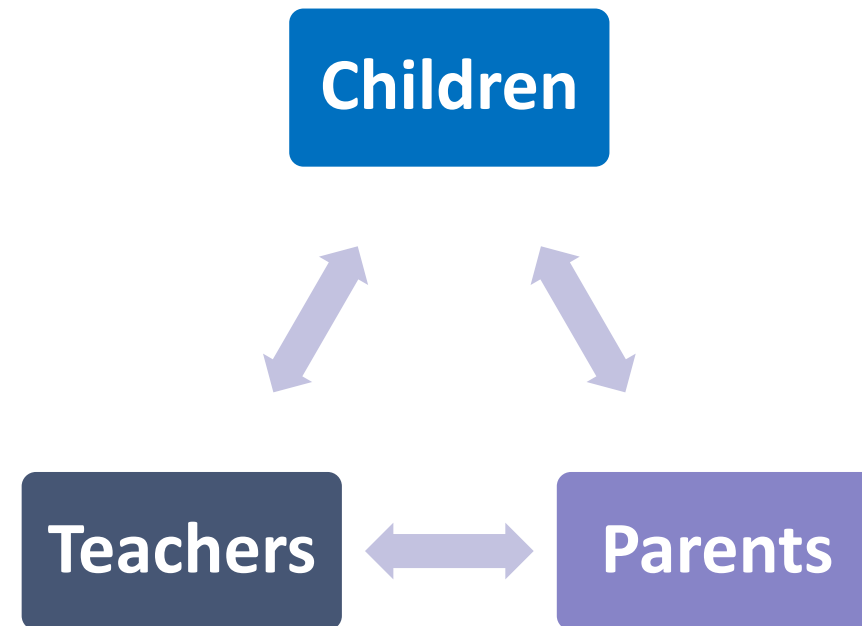
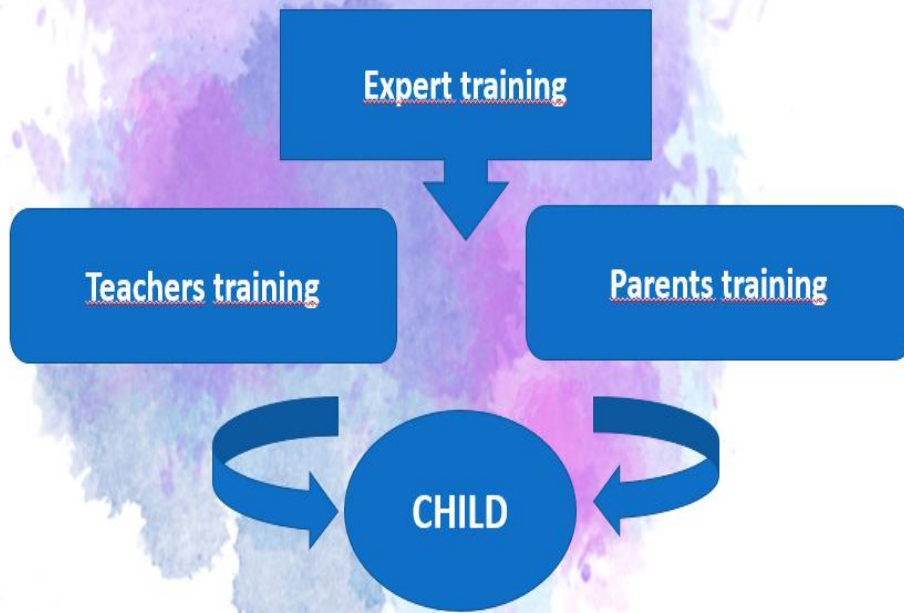
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- The purpose of the developed model is to realize the assumption that highly sensitive students have the opportunity **to fully use their potential**, manifested in creativity, intuition, acumen, brilliance, life wisdom or empathy.
- To be perceived through all their potential, not only one-dimensional through the prism of highly sensitivity (often labeled as shyness, inhibition, fearfulness, capriciousness/grimaces) and possibilities.
- Some of the highly sensitive children are excluded due to preliminary diagnosis of disorders and deficits (diagnosed as disturbed children, with attention deficits), the part will begin to satisfy needs in a dysfunctional way.

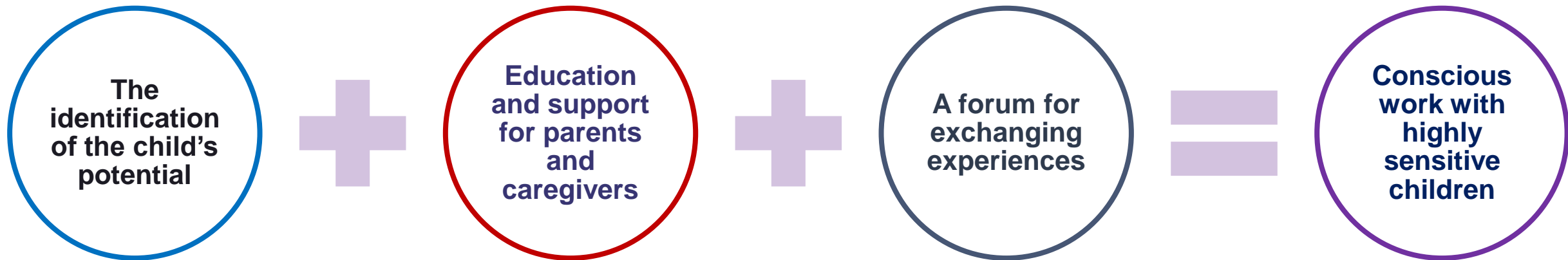
(Baryła-Matejczuk, 2019)

# The key aspect of the project is cooperation:

Structure of supporting interactions



# Support model scheme:



The main goal of the project is to develop, test and implement a **comprehensive** model of **support** for highly sensitive children in preschool and early-school age.

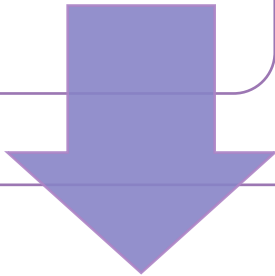
# Identification

**The  
identification  
of the child's  
potential**

- The initial assessment of temperamental features is often based on the analysis of behaviours
- in the case of HSCh may be confused
- a proper ,tool' can be the first stage of the process of support for HSCh and their families as well as their close environment
- ,positive diagnosis'

# Positive diagnosis

In accordance with a positive diagnosis approach (Hornowska, Brzezińska, Appelt, Kaliszewska-Czeremska, 2014) tests, questionnaires, psychometric tools may not only be applied to diagnose difficulties (as is sometimes assumed when using the term 'diagnosis')



but also to learn about the strengths and potential of children, their talents, predispositions in order to find out how to develop them and how to support the child's development.

# QUESTIONNAIRE OF SENSORY PROCESSING SENSITIVITY IN CHILDREN

Version for parents of  
preschool children

## PHYSICAL SPHERE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7					
Not at all			Moderately		Extremely						
Too hot foods bother her/him					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Finds intense lights unpleasant					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is sensitive to temperature changes					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Avoids being in the bright sun					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Dislikes certain food textures (e.g. diluted, pasty, lumpy)					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
If experiences something intensely, complains of pain (e.g. headache, stomach ache)					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
More often than other children, signals a need for rest					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Badly tolerates dirt, wetting, etc. on clothing or on the hands					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When many things happen at once, is tired more often than other children					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is difficult for him to fall asleep, especially after an active day					1	2	3	4	5	6	7



The younger the child, the more important to their development is environmental stimulation, and thus the quality of the environment (cf. Pluess and Bielsky, 2013; Pluess et al., 2017)

## Education and support for parents and caregivers

e.g. HSCh with a poor-quality material environment were more sensitive to the negative effects of a poor environment as adults, reporting significantly higher psychological distress scores (Keers, Pluess, 2017)

# Prevention *cognitive approach*

based on the assumption that if a person apprehends and understands facts, then they will make their own decision to cease a specific unconstructive activity. Therefore, the strategy of this approach is to supply information

(Baryła-Matejczuk, Domańska, 2018; Gaś, 1999, 2006)

# Prevention

## *Normative education approach*

- based on the assumption that people overestimate the universality of dysfunctional behaviours and difficulties experienced
- know about the history of life of high-sensitive people, normalizing beliefs about the ability to cope with the lives of people who are highly sensitive (beliefs such as: cannot cope in the 'hard' world)

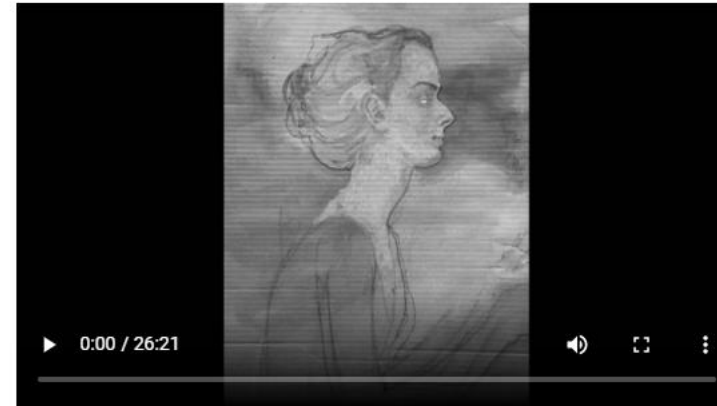
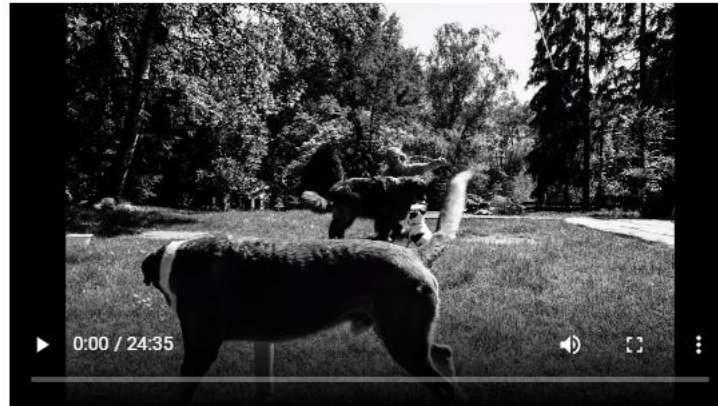
(Baryła-Matejczuk, Domańska, 2018; Gaś, 1999, 2006)

# That's why ....

**A forum for  
exchanging  
experiences**

# PODCASTY

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# Prevention *affective approach*

- assumes that adequately strong and stable self-esteem, problem-solving skills and - in relation to the research conducted - educational skills allow for the provision of sufficient support in order to avoid dysfunctional behaviours
- The strategies undertaken as a part of this approach are aimed at improving life and educational skills and are carried out in the form of educational initiatives.

(Baryła-Matejczuk, Domańska, 2018; Gaś, 1999, 2006)



# The essence of support for highly sensitive children



Conscientious  
work with  
highly sensitive  
children

- planning support for HSCh is not about **modifying** their personality traits
- conscience work focuses on providing conditions in which HSCh may have equal opportunities to develop their potential
- when training, supporting adult carers in providing an adequate level of support for highly sensitive children, attention should be paid to the **developmental tasks of preschool and early school age**.
- we should provide support 'in something'



WYŻSZA SZKOŁA  
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W LUBLINIE

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Thank you for attention!

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