

What to Know About the HSP Gathering Retreats™

The HSP Gathering Retreats^(Since2001) were co-founded in the U.S. in 2001 after honoring a series synchronistic events which led Jacquelyn to connect with research psychologist, Dr. Elaine Aron. Elaine and Jacquelyn Strickland, a Licensed Professional Counselor, in Ft. Collins, Colorado held the first HSP Gathering in May 2001 in Northern California for 37 HSPs !



Since that time there have been 36 (including the one in Sept 2019) HSP Gathering Retreats both nationally and internationally. There have been 4 in the United Kingdom, 3 in British Columbia, Canada, 3 in Colorado USA, 2 in North Carolina USA, 1 in Texas, and all others on the East and West Coasts of the U.S.

It is interesting to note: This HSP Gathering Retreats are not a conference, a workshop, a seminar or a lecture. Yet, they can contain a combination of any of these, and most accurately, these retreats are loosely structured, non-hierarchical, and experiential in nature. Each one is different from the last based on the energies, temperaments and personalities shared by the participants. Jacquelyn is a seasoned facilitator honoring each individual's experience while encouraging a safe, open environment to share one's joys and challenges over the course of 5 days. One participant shared: *"It was the most comfortable, exciting, safe and beautiful experience for me to feel anxious in ... while simultaneously coming out of my own isolated, comfort zone."*

The purpose of the HSP Gathering Retreats has evolved over time. An excerpt from *The Artist's Way* (which I affectionately call the 'HSP Way') says it:

*"HSPs like other HSPs. HSPs help each other.
As HSPs, we must find those who believe in us
and in whom we believe, and band together for
support, encouragement, and protection."*

The HSP Gathering Retreats also serve:

- To raise the self-esteem of HSPs by providing a safe atmosphere in which to be seen, heard, and validated
- To value the trait of high sensitivity and its contribution to the world
- To foster the exchange of wisdom based on personal experiences
- To educate, motivate, and inspire HSPs to create authentic lives that work for them so that they embrace their unique gifts and manifest those gifts in the world
- To help develop supportive communities for HSPs locally, nationally and internationally

Gifts You Can Expect from attending a HSP Gathering if you are open to them

Someone once said: "You get what you bring to a HSP Gathering," and "You take home what you are open to receiving." Here are some of the gifts you might receive from attending a HSP Gathering Retreat:

- The chance to know and be known; to be seen and heard
- Support, guidance, and a sense of belonging
- Determination and courage to live your authentic HSP life
- Understanding, and acceptance
- Relaxation and rejuvenation

Focus on Needs, Not Approval

Ahhhhhh, what a comforting thought, isn't it? For four days, you can choose to *'focus on what you need.'* We can all come and go as we desire and all participation is optional. The freedom to identify your needs, *and take personal responsibility for them*, is a big part of the HSP Gathering Success.

So, if you find yourself needing a nap, or a walk, or if you find one of the break out sessions not meeting your needs please feel free to just get up and "find your joy" so to speak. No one will judge you. No one will wonder if you are okay - (Okay, *maybe*, we are HSPs after all.) We will all just "know" that you are focusing on what *you* need to do.

The HSP Quiet Zones – A Gentle Reminder

We have designated the sleeping rooms for napping, journaling, puttering, meditating, organizing, writing, and reflecting. Please do socialize – *very quietly* in your room, *with consent* of your roommate, or preferably in the group areas, on walks & at meal times...Thanks

A Word About Therapy and the HSP Gathering Retreats

The gatherings are not intended to be therapy, although for many HSPs they are very therapeutic. If you are in crisis, or great need, the gathering is probably not the best place for you this year. Please be aware if you find yourself becoming emotionally triggered into past therapeutic issues. As much as we might like to be available during such a time, it is just not possible to be a container for healing while we also take care of ourselves and enjoy the purpose of the gatherings.

And...this is very important

If you find yourself in a deep, therapeutic (problem solving) type of conversation with another HSP, it might be helpful to limit this discussion to 15 minutes. After that time, please check with each other about the extent of time and support you are capable, able and willing to offer at this time. (This is boundary setting.)

Because HSPs are capable of great empathy and compassion for others, we can easily become sounding boards and overwhelmed by issues other people are facing in their lives. It is important to

remember therapeutic issues (which we have all – either now or the past) simply cannot be solved in a four day weekend.

Finally, don't hesitate to contact a support person, your therapist or one of the co-hosts if you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation.

Other Miscellaneous Things to Know

Please come expecting and remembering that:

- HSPs are not all alike, thus a practice of tolerance of differences is important. This ranges from dietary preferences, spiritual views and understanding that what works for one HSP might not work for another. It also includes patience for different levels of understanding and knowledge about the HSP trait.

You might be disappointed if you attend the HSP Gathering expecting only to:

- meet a future HSP mate - wishful thinking .. but you never know ?
- market your business or professional service (although there is a networking table and you are welcome to share information there.)
- strictly adhere to the agenda as it is sometimes necessary to deviate to accommodate special circumstances

What about the Agenda at the HSP Gathering Retreats?

The full agenda is provided in your HSP Gathering Retreat registration packet upon arrival. It is important to know, however, that the agenda is loosely structured, and is only a small part of what makes a HSP Gathering so unique and special. The essence of a HSP Gathering is co-created by all participants coming together sharing in a non-hierarchical fashion.

Each HSP Gathering Retreat has several breakout educational topics which are presented by Jacquelyn Strickland, LPC, Dr. Elaine Aron, and other special guests.

Each HSP Gathering also has two special nights: **Art Night** and **Creativity Night**.

Art Night is a special, fun evening of relaxation and music as we create art collages which reflect our HSP trait. No experience needed, and all supplies are provided.

Creativity Night has always been *a very special night* at the HSP Gathering Retreats. It is a time for you - our dear creative HSPs - to shine. Please consider sharing your own creative talent which might include poetry, art, music, song, dance, monologue, photography -- or whatever you would like to share. Sign up with our HSP Master or Mistress of Ceremonies volunteer.

And finally..... The *RESPONSE – ABILITY BOX*

What do you do if you have concerns, issues, or questions that are not being addressed? What if you are not comfortable talking to Jacquelyn or another co-host about them? Well...no worries.... Simply write them out (anonymously) on an index card and put them in the Response Ability box. These will be read each night and addressed in the group as a whole.