



## Emotional Style Assessment

### 5. CONTEXT SENSITIVITY

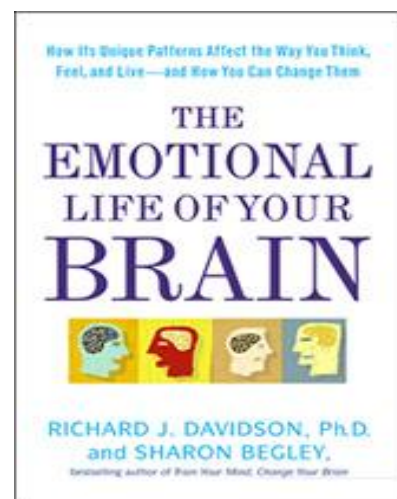
Depending on whom we are interacting with and in what circumstances, there are different rules and expectations. Most of us know when conversations with a particular emotional tinge have no place in a given circumstance. People who are especially aware of the social surround are at the Tuned In pole of the Context Sensitivity spectrum. Those in the Tuned Out side are oblivious to the implicit rules that govern social interactions, knowing when a behavior in one situation is fine, but is offensive in another. Sensitivity to context is largely intuitive, and could be thought of as the outer-directed version of the Self-Awareness dimension.

The following ten questions are designed to help you better understand your Emotional Style of 'Context Sensitivity'. If you are tempted to think long and hard about a question, or if you feel that there are too many nuances or exceptions, resist. The most accurate results come from making a snap judgment about whether a question is True or False about you. There are no right answers here - take it from the profile's creator, CIHM Founder Richard Davidson. This is not a pop quiz - it's about better understanding who you are, how you perceive the world, and how you navigate the obstacles of life.

The profile consists of 10 simple 'True/False' statements and should take only a couple minutes to complete. You can even ask someone close to you to answer these questions about you for an additional perspective. That serve as a reality check.

Following the assessment are some exercises that can help you adjust your Context Sensitivity. Nothing is guaranteed, of course, and what you get out of it depends a great deal on what you put in.

Remember, this is simply a starting point to learning more about Emotional Style. To learn more about how Dr. Davidson describes the neural underpinnings of Emotional Style, the remaining five dimensions and strategies and tips to shift within the continuum of each, we encourage you to read the book!

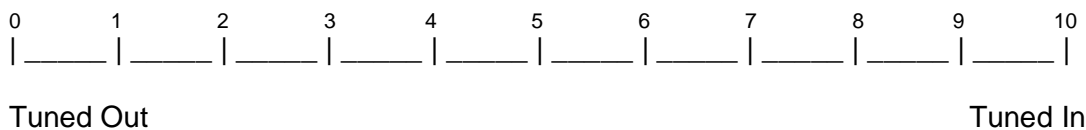


## CONTEXT SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT

| Question   | T or F? | Score |
|--|---------|-------|
| 1. I have been told by someone close to me that I am unusually sensitive to other people's feelings.   |         |       |
| 2. I have occasionally been told that I behaved in a socially inappropriate way, which surprised me.   |         |       |
| 3. I have sometimes suffered a setback at work or had a falling-out with a friend because I was too chummy with a superior or too jovial when a good friend was distraught.                                      |         |       |
| 4. When I speak with people, they sometimes move back to increase the distance between us.   |         |       |
| 5. I often find myself censoring what I was about to say because I've sensed something in the situation that would make it inappropriate (e.g., before I respond to, "Honey, do these jeans make me look fat?"). |         |       |
| 6. When I am in a public setting like a restaurant, I am especially aware of modulating how loudly I speak.  |         |       |
| 7. I have frequently been reminded when in public to avoid mentioning the names of people who might be around.   |         |       |
| 8. I am almost always aware of whether I have been someplace before, even if it is a highway that I last drove many years ago.   |         |       |
| 9. I notice when someone is acting in a way that seems out of place, such as behaving too casually at work.  |         |       |
| 10. I've been told by those close to me that I show good manners with strangers and in new situations.   |         |       |
| TOTAL =  |         |       |

Scoring: Give yourself one point for each True answer to questions 1, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10, and one point for each False answer to questions 2, 3, 4 and 7. All other answers score zero.

Plot your score on this scale:



Failing to correctly discern social context can lead to emotional responses that are appropriate in one setting but not another. It's appropriate to feel extreme anxiety in dangerous situations but not in safe ones. At the other extreme, which is less common, being too Tuned In to context can cause you to lose track of your genuine self: You may find that you alter your behavior to fit each different context. In this case, being a little more Tuned Out might be desirable.

### **Key Tools to adjust your Context Sensitivity include:**

#### 1. Breathing Awareness.

- a. To help you relax, start with a simple breathing technique from hatha yoga. With your eyes closed, attend to your breathing as you would in mindfulness meditation, counting the duration of each inhalation and exhalation.
- b. Once you have counted for several breaths, lengthen your breathing cycle so it takes you one more second. Keep increasing the length as long as you feel comfortable, then keep doing these longer breath cycles over a five minute period.
- c. Notice if the inhalation and exhalation are the same length. If one is longer, try to lengthen the other so that they take equal amounts of time. Once you feel comfortable with this breathing exercise, move on to other context training.

#### 2. Self-Awareness.

Exercises used for the Self-Awareness dimension (#4) can be helpful in generating better social context by using those skills that look inward to looking outward into the environment. Begin to notice what's happening around you more, and how various circumstances call for different responses.

3. Present Moment Awareness. Also used for the Social Intuition dimension, this can help you to pay attention to what is happening around you. To detect social cues, particularly subtle ones, you need to focus on things like tone of voice, body language, and facial expression. This is basically a matter of practice.

How are people reacting to what you are doing or saying? What is their body language saying? What are their expressions telling you? Is their tone of voice suggesting that you are on track, or way off base?

4. Body Scan. To increase Context Sensitivity, pay attention to what is happening inside you as you interact with others. To detect internal cues, particularly subtle ones, you need to focus on your current bodily feelings. The body often manifests physically what we are really feeling emotionally. What are they telling you about the situation you're in?

Practicing these skills makes you better at them, of course. Start small if you have a long way to go, and gradually add to your skill set. You may have noticed by now that many of these tools and exercises help your mastery of more than one emotional dimension.

\* \* \* \* \*

The exercises in this segment and the other five segments all work through the mind to actually change your brain. They have the power to alter your neural systems that underlie each of the six dimensions of Emotional Style:

- Resilience
- Outlook
- Social Intuition
- Self-Awareness
- Context Sensitivity
- Attention

Any decision to shift your set point on any of these dimensions should be based on thoughtful introspection about whether it is keeping you from being the person you wish to be and living the life you aspire to.

Emotions help us appreciate others and the world around us; they make life meaningful and fulfilling.