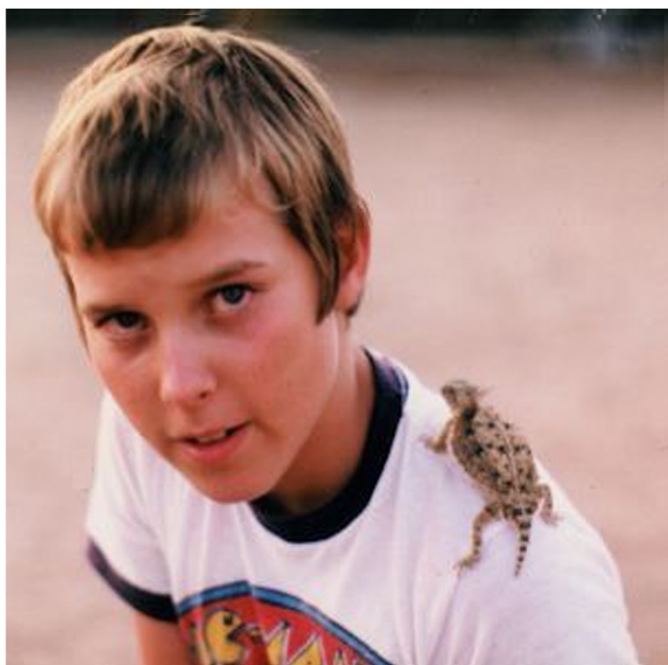

My Feelings Are Hurt

Growing Up as a Highly Sensitive Teenage Boy



Richard Carlson

**My Feelings Are Hurt:
Growing Up as a Highly Sensitive Teenage Boy**

By Richard Carlson

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Disclaimer: The information in this book should not be considered medical advice. The author is not a medical professional. Readers should always consult with medical professionals for medical advice.

My Feelings Are Hurt is a work of nonfiction; however, people's names, as well as certain facts and other details, have been changed.

Chapter 1

Why I Wrote This Book

I decided to write this book because I would like to prevent sensitive boys (and girls) from having their feelings hurt to the point where their emotions get out of control. Sensitive boys are not all the same, of course; I can only write about what I've experienced. I have included situations in which my feelings were hurt as a result of being teased. I also dedicated a chapter to my struggles in a couple of high school classes and the way my emotions started to control me when I was teased during that time. I really hope that sensitive boys will realize that they are different from most boys and figure out that they are sensitive. If I had known I was different, maybe my emotions wouldn't have influenced and practically controlled me. My

teenage years could have certainly been a lot easier and very different.

As I mentioned, as a young teenager, I did not know I was sensitive when, in fact, I had more emotions than most people. This is not uncommon: people realize that they are sensitive at different ages—some are children, and others are in their fifties or even older.

You might think it was very silly for my feelings to be hurt so much, but sensitive people react strongly to things that other people easily disregard.

Chapter 2

"Richard, you will marry a very beautiful girl. Don't worry about some girl turning you down. You will find a girlfriend eventually," Dad explained to me as he sat at the kitchen counter.

I was twelve years old and in sixth grade. At that time, we lived in the desert in Tucson, Arizona, in the Southwestern United States.

"Yes," Mom agreed. She was sitting on the family room sofa, watching TV.

"It doesn't matter if a girl doesn't want to be your girlfriend because, if one doesn't, that's on her, not you. She will miss out on being your girlfriend."

"Okay," I said, feeling hope blossom in my chest. I wanted to have a girlfriend very much!

Of course, the girls at school will like me. I am a shy, nice person. I am good-looking. I will make a

great husband one day.

Chapter 3

One day, I was eating lunch at the junior high school cafeteria with my buddy, Brad, and his friend Jenny. We were in the seventh grade. Brad's winsome personality always shined.

As I ate, I decided to tell Brad about my plan.

"I'm going to lose my virginity after I'm married," I said with a smile. I wasn't going to be a wanton young man.

Jenny made a long, mean face at me, and Brad broke out laughing when he saw my shocked facial expression. My stomach sank all the way through to the floor, and my heart jumped into my throat. My feelings were really hurt, not by my friend laughing, but Jenny's reaction. I thought, girls wouldn't like me, as I was not good enough otherwise Jenny wouldn't be mean.

Girls don't like me. I looked downward as I stopped chewing. *No girl will ever want to be my girlfriend.* I was incredibly sad.

They acted like nothing had happened. Jenny continued talking to Brad. Jenny was mean, but Brad was a good friend. He didn't know that laughing at me would affect my self-esteem.

My grandma and mom like me. Why doesn't Jenny? I shrugged. I felt very hurt, and I wallowed in my misery. And that was only the beginning.

Chapter 4

Mindy, a Native American girl, sat in the front in seventh grade science class. My seat was in the last row. I didn't know her at all. She was so pretty—but I was very shy, because of my sensitivity.

I decided that I wanted to marry Mindy one day. *Maybe I'll have half-Native-American kids with her.*

Later, at my friend Edward's house, I asked if he knew Mindy.

"I have English with her," he said.

"I like her," I said with a smile.

"I'll ask if she'd like to be your girlfriend," he said.

"Thanks," I said, full of hope.

The next day, during lunch, Edward and I were sitting in the cafeteria.

"Mindy doesn't like you," he said.

How embarrassing! My feelings were

really hurt: I thought that girls just wouldn't like me, because otherwise, she'd agree to be my girlfriend.

"Okay," I said, still in shock. "Maybe I'll find another girl, soon."

"I'll help fix you up," he offered.

I continued to eat my lunch, but all I could think of was the fact that another girl didn't like me.

Chapter 5

"Richard is gay," Robert teased me as we watched a horror movie at my friend Brad's house. All the teenagers burst out laughing. Robert was sitting on the other side of the living room.

I was too shy to tease him back. He had teased me in elementary school, too, but I was always too shy to do anything else but sit there.

His malicious smile made me nervous. I just sat there on a chair, frozen, staring at him and hoping he would stop.

Thankfully, everyone continued to watch the movie. They all knew he was a teaser.

I couldn't concentrate on the movie, though. I was still speechless. I did my best to pretend that I wasn't nervous and embarrassed.

Chapter 6

On a different day, Edward and I were at Brad's house with another kid named Sam.

Edward and I walked into the living room, where Sam was sitting on a chair.

"How's Richard doing?" Brad asked. "Still going to lose your virginity after you're married?"

"I'm fine. And yes, I am."

Sam sneered at me as he held my gaze for several seconds. Brad and Edward started laughing. I was so confused. My jaw dropped, and my stomach sank.

People don't like me. I felt like I wasn't accepted by anyone.

Chapter 7

"Kiss Sarah," Edward said.

He was making me feel uneasy.

Sarah was my new seventh grade girlfriend whom I had never met: I had asked her to be my girlfriend via a short note that Edward handed to her and her friends as he and I were walking by them on the field at school. I did not know her well enough to be her boyfriend. I was desperate for a girlfriend and the fact that we had never met, wasn't a reason to not date her.

Later Edward and I rode our bicycles to his house.

"Kiss her," he said.

I was shy. How could I get close enough to her to even attempt a short kiss? But Edward was adamant: "Kiss her, or you'll forever wish you had."

My self-esteem was also shot, though:

Could I even have a relationship with a girl, when my feelings were hurt? I hoped so, even though it wasn't obvious to me how hurt my feelings had gotten since beginning junior high. I was sensitive, as compared to most of my classmates and didn't know it, which was critical in my low self-esteem and opinion of others. Would I ever kiss Sarah?

A few months later, over the summer, Edward phoned.

"Sarah wants to talk to you," Edward said, and he gave me her phone number. I had misplaced her number.

I called her right away. This would be my second phone conversation with her.

"Hi. Is Sarah there?" I asked Sarah's mom.

"May I ask who's calling?"

"Richard."

"Hold on, please."

I waited and waited.

"Hi. This is Sarah," she answered.

"Hi," I replied.

"I want to break up with you. Okay?"

At least she'd asked nicely, trying to respect my feelings.

"Okay. Bye."

"Bye," she said before hanging up.

I had never kissed Sarah. We hadn't eaten lunch together at school. We had never held hands. We'd only had a few short conversations. Now I was more convinced than ever that I was undesirable as a boyfriend.

Chapter 8

Billie was my first semester eighth-grade science lab partner. She was a beautiful, dainty brunette—on the outside.

I wrote my name on our lab assignment and slid the page over to her to write her name.

"I'd better not put my name next to yours or put an *and* between them, because people might think we're together," she said with a frown. Both her tone and expression were really mean.

My heart started pounding hard; I was so embarrassed!

Chris, who sat behind us, burst out laughing. And it was obvious that he was laughing at me and not with me.

Billie printed her name well below mine, not anywhere near it.

"I wouldn't want someone to think you're

my boyfriend," she said with a sneer. My heart sank to the floor. My self-esteem was lower than it had ever been.

Chris chuckled.

No girl will ever like me.

Billie's cruelty dragged on throughout the entire semester.

I was thrilled on the last day of class. I finally felt safe because I wouldn't have to see her anymore. She moved far away the following semester.

Chapter 9

John had second semester eighth grade science with me.

"I'm going to lose my virginity after I'm married," I said to him.

"Most guys just want to have sex," he replied. "But I have a girl for you. Have you met Betty? I have class with her."

"No," I said. "I'll think about it."

I spent the next week or so musing over whether I should take a chance with love. Finally, I asked John, "Will you see if Betty will be my girlfriend?"

He smiled. "Sure."

He wrote a note asking her to be my girlfriend.

"Sign it," he said.

I signed and smiled. I had never met Betty, only seen her a few times.

The next day, John came to science class

with a note for me.

"We can be friends," she had written.

My self-esteem was crushed. I didn't believe a girl would ever be my girlfriend.

Chapter 10

Jennifer, a nice pretty girl, liked me, according to Roman, who sat next to me in second semester eighth grade science. Jennifer sat behind us.

"Jennifer really likes you," he said one day before she arrived. I had to wonder, though: Was he telling the truth?

I didn't do what I could have done, though. I didn't ask her to be my girlfriend because I was shy. Someone, possibly Jennifer, told Roman to tell me that she liked me.

Unfortunately, nothing came out of it. My self-esteem was still abysmally poor.

Chapter 11

The summer before high school, I rode my bicycle to Brad's house. A zephyr barely cooled my sweaty body.

I knocked on the door.

"Howdy," Brad greeted me. And then, "Come on in." I felt instantly welcome.

But then I noticed a girl and some other kids inside. I saw several of the popular kids at school.

"Oh, no. I'd better go," I said, suddenly feeling very shy.

"Okay. That's all right," he replied.

As I rode home, I felt relieved, but I was also disappointed with myself for being so timid.

Maybe I'd be able to date in high school. I wished and wished it would happen. I was really looking forward to the high school experience!

Chapter 12

I fell in love with a beautiful girl during my freshman year of high school. My friends tried to help me date Patty, but she wasn't interested. Unlike the other girls I had shown interest in, my friends and I hung around her and her cousin during lunch. She was nice; I wished she could have been my girlfriend.

Patty wound up dating two of my buddies (at different times). They asked me first sometime after I discovered that she didn't want to date me. I stopped hanging around her soon after. Patty's rejection hurt me. And the fact that she chose two of my buddies instead of me also hurt.

Chapter 13

Sally and Pete in first semester freshman English told me about a potential girlfriend. I didn't know Sally and Pete enough to say we were friends. We were sitting at the back of the classroom.

"Shannon likes you," Sally said before the teacher began class and before Shannon arrived. Her seat was close to mine.

"She does," Pete added.

I felt nervous. For some reason, I didn't believe them. I thought that they were pulling my leg.

Then, Shannon arrived and sat down. I didn't look at her until the next day. I didn't pursue Shannon, nor did I ask Sally and Pete if they were telling the truth. I just couldn't risk being disappointed again.

Chapter 14

I showed interest in another girl named Mindy. My buddies had suggested that I pursue her, but she declined. It was getting to the point where I no longer even wanted a girlfriend. There's no point going into details. You know the way it goes by now. I like a girl. She doesn't like me. End of story. Ugh! I feel awful just writing that! I decided to put off finding a girlfriend until I went to college.

Chapter 15

Toward the end of my freshman year in high school, Brad, another guy, and a girl and another girl named Mercedes were hanging out and talking. I just listened. I had nothing to say.

"I can't see why anyone would want a boyfriend like you," Mercedes said to me.

I was completely shocked!

My feelings were like the Titanic striking an iceberg and sinking to the ocean floor. Boy, did I feel embarrassed! Mortified, I slunk away. I just wanted to stay by myself and bemoan my predicament of being unable to find love.

Chapter 16

During my freshman year in high school, I had earned two failing grades, one in Algebra I and one in English. Bad grades always made me feel frustrated and distressed.

My hurt feelings had now reached their zenith. Ugh! I decided to make a personal change. I was going to do well in school and not pursue love until I was in college. Besides, my dad was looking for a job in the northeastern United States. I didn't know where I'd live and what options I'd have for attending college. If we moved, would I be able to get into a college that was close by? I needed as many options in life as possible, especially when it came to choosing a college.

Chapter 17

During my sophomore year of high school, a friend introduced me to two attractive girls and then another girl, but I wasn't looking for a girlfriend. I was adamant about doing well with my studies and waiting to attend a university before I started dating and having a girlfriend.

Chapter 18

Even in my senior year of high school, I wasn't looking for a girlfriend—but I fell in love anyway, with a girl on my school bus. I had talked with her briefly a few times, but never had the courage to ask her out on a date.

One day, she sat behind my friend, James, and me.

"Rich, why don't you sit with your girlfriend?" he said, pointing behind us at the girl.

"He is *not* my boyfriend!" she emphatically stated.

James just chuckled a little. My insides sank. She didn't like me, I thought.

In reality, though, what she'd said had nothing to do with what she thought about me. Of course, she'd say what she did. I didn't realize it at the time, but she would naturally

be embarrassed to imply that she'd like to be my girlfriend in front of everyone on the bus. I didn't realize that at the time, though. I felt worse than ever.

No girl will ever like me. I was adamant; I refused to believe otherwise. But I still had hope: At the university, I planned to find a girlfriend.

Chapter 19

At almost twenty-one years of age, I came down with a severe mental illness, paranoid schizophrenia. When I began to hallucinate, I finally figured out that I was more sensitive than most other people. At the time, I thought I was as sensitive as a girl.

Now, my feelings don't get hurt as much or as easily. But it was many years before I learned more about highly sensitive people on the Internet and started managing my own sensitivity. What a shame that my feelings had gotten hurt so much as a teenager because I had been unaware of my sensitivity. Ugh!

Chapter 20

How to Help a Sensitive Boy Succeed

You can help make a difference in your sensitive boy's life. As I mentioned much earlier, it might seem comical that the girls teasing me hurt my feelings so much. Please don't tell your son, "You're too sensitive." Chances are, your son is an introvert, like I am. About 70 percent of highly sensitive children are introverts. I believe that sensitive people feel pain, joy, and love more than the rest of the population. It's possible for a sensitive boy to be completely overwhelmed by his feelings. There are a number of strategies for improving a boy's self-esteem.

In elementary school, my father told me to exercise to build muscles, so I could stand up for myself. However, I didn't realize it would take a long time to build a stronger body by

doing pushups and sit-ups, so I was discouraged. If I had continued to exercise, perhaps my parents could have been proactive with me by advising me to eat the right foods to build muscle.

Also, I highly suggest that parents enroll their sons (or daughters) in the martial arts, such as karate. If your son is uncomfortable learning karate with a group of other kids, then, if possible, hire a one-on-one instructor.

Getting your son a simple weightlifting set could help, too. And, if offered at their school, they can take weight-training classes—but please don't force your son to take weightlifting at school if he doesn't want to.

I was generally not good at sports, and I had no interest in them. During elementary school, I was almost always the last one picked to be on a team for dodgeball or softball. Truth be told, I dreaded sports, and it hurt my self-esteem to be the last one picked.

The only sports I enjoyed were golf and badminton. Parents might try to help their sensitive sons find a sport that they enjoy. Don't worry if your son isn't interested in sports, though. You can try to get him involved in other activities he is interested in.

Sensitive boys are usually more caring and loving than typical boys, and they can be good listeners. Girls, as young as teenagers, are often attracted to nonsensitive boys, but as they grow older, many girls prefer sensitive boys. I believe a friend of mine told me exactly that in high school, but I didn't realize how sensitive I was.

I should not have been so concerned about doing poorly early in high school. My parents could have reinforced the fact that not all successful people did well throughout every year of school. Although my parents always told me to do my best at school, I was much too stressed about it. I missed out on a lot

because of my obsession with doing very well with my studies. Make certain your son takes some time to just have fun every so often.

I suggest reading *The Strong Sensitive Boy: Help Your Son Become a Happy, Confident Man* by Dr. Ted Zeff, *The Simple Guide to Sensitive Boys* by Betsy de Thierry, and *The Highly Sensitive Child: Helping Our Children Thrive When the World Overwhelms Them* by Elaine Aron. Also visit Elaine Aaron's website, www.hsperson.com, where she offers books about sensitivity and links to videos about it.

You can also look for several social media groups about being an HSP. I am a member of many groups and have found them to be helpful knowing there are people experiencing similar things.

If you decide to take your son to a specialist, there are psychologists and therapists who specialize in treating HSPs; in fact, some of the professionals are HSPs

themselves.

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About the Book:

Richard Carlson grew up as a teenager in the 1980s and early '90s. He was teased by his peers, and his feelings were often hurt. He was unaware that he was different from most people; he has a highly sensitive personality trait, which 15 to 20 percent of people, both men and women, are born with. He never realized how sensitive he was until he was nearly twenty-one years old. Unfortunately, because Richard didn't know he was sensitive, he didn't take rejection well, and his self-esteem was devastated. Indeed, he missed out on a lot as a teenager because of low self-esteem. For more information about this book, visit www.sensitiveboys.com

About the Author:

Richard Carlson is a highly sensitive

person (HSP). He has authored children's, young adult, and other books. For more information about Richard, visit www.richardcarlson.com .