

My Introversion Isn't an (In)Ability; It's a Preference



Write your name—the way you'd sign a check—in the space below.

Go ahead. Do it right now.

How was that for you? I have a guess: It was easy, mindless. You did it well and you did it fast. It was essentially automatic.

Now write your name again, in the space below—only with your other hand.

Go ahead. Do it right now.

How was *that* for you? Again, I have a guess: It was harder. It took more thinking and effort. It was the antithesis of automatic.

But you still did it. Much more slowly, using much more time and energy, and probably with shakier results. But you still did it.

Handedness, you see, is a preference. Practically from birth, we all naturally gravitate toward using one hand or the other to write, eat, drink, play ping pong, whatever.

Think of my introversion in these same terms—as a preference, not an (in)ability.

I'm *able* to make cold phone calls to perfect strangers in hopes of landing a job interview. But I tend not to use that approach, knowing that in the process I'll not only not put my best foot forward, I'll probably put my foot in my mouth. I prefer instead to send cold—but well-written and persuasive—emails or letters to potential employers.

I'm *able* to go to tonight's networking social after having spent the entire conference day attending workshops, sharing in small groups, and visiting the exhibit booths. But it would only exhaust me more than I already am. So I'm likely to go back to my hotel room and watch *Forensic Files* instead.

I'm *able* to blurt out the first thing that pops into my head in response to the question you've posed in our staff meeting. But "Ummm..." probably won't be too impressive. I tend instead to think about your question—during the rest of the meeting and, especially, afterward—and get back to you later with an intelligent, thorough reply.

I'm *able* to extravert if and when I wish—and I often do; call it an introvert life skill. But I usually *prefer* to introvert. It's my strong hand.