

The logo for 'Introvert Insights' features the letters 'ii' in a large, stylized font. The first 'i' is purple with a solid dot, and the second 'i' is orange with a wood-grain texture and a matching dot. To the right, the word 'introvert' is written in a purple, lowercase, sans-serif font, and 'insights' is written below it in an orange, lowercase, sans-serif font with a wood-grain texture.

# ii introvert insights

The Newsletter for Introverts

August 2017

## Capture the Seemingly Random Fruits of the Solitude Around You

I do my best writing in the shower. Or when I'm two hours into a four-hour drive on the interstate, or two miles into a four-mile run on the dusty farm road near our house.

Similarly, along with the bottle-necked anxiety and grief that flow out of me during the acupuncture treatments I have every few weeks, out comes idea after idea after idea.

The needles prevent me from moving in the moment; even a gentle brush of the hand or lift of the toe is a sure recipe for the brief but nerve-wracking (literally) “zinger” that jolts you back to the present. Painfully.

But as the warmth of both the heat lamps and the outside sun relaxes my body, and the steady drum-beat of the mesmerizing background music clears my mind of virtually all else, the floodgates open—and connections that seemingly didn't exist a few seconds before suddenly appear as though they've merely been awaiting their cue for weeks, months, even years.

It's a never-ending mystical prank: The best I have to offer comes to me and through me any-

where and anytime the universe tricks me into not having a pen and paper handy.

But it's no accident, and it's no practical joke, either. It's simply the seemingly random fruits of seemingly random solitude, appearing in anything but random fashion.

### Solitude in Plain Sight

We introverts tend to be a reflective bunch. Forever in our heads. Lost in thought. And thirsting for the quiet alone time that makes it possible to **get** lost in our thoughts in the first place.

But the productive solitude we crave is often right in front of our faces, needing less to be actively sought out than simply spotted—and then harnessed.

When I think of solitude, I think of a monk out in the middle of an idyllic forest, completely alone, bathed in total silence. That's my kind of solitude. Ideally.

But life is not ideal; it's messy and overscheduled and cluttered and noisy. So where is the solitude then,

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# THE INTROVERT LIFE

## CAREERS

### With Email, You Can Continue a Job Interview After It's Over

We introverts have “a lot of elevator moments,” writes author Arnie Kozak in his thoughtful book *The Everything Guide to the Introvert Edge* (Adams Media, 2013).

He's talking about those annoying, uncannily predictable times when “[we] think of the right comeback a few minutes after an encounter.”

My own elevator moments have frequently come after job interviews, not only in the elevator itself but also during the walk out to the parking lot. And then on the drive home. And then **at** home.

It's frustrating, but it seems to be

an introvert trait. Being people who generally do better in life when we have time to think, the job interview situation can be particularly challenging for its near total lack of time to think before having to respond.

I have found, however, that there is a simple, perhaps even unexpectedly advantageous way around the problem: follow-up. Namely, via a well-composed email sent to your interviewer(s) after the fact.

It gives you a chance, first, to thank your interviewer(s) for their time, which is a) common courtesy, yet b) remarkably uncommon according to the many employers I have interviewed for career-related articles over the years.

As importantly, the follow-up email lets you take care of those elevator insights by expressing them instead of eating them and dealing with the indigestion that ensues.

Your follow-up email need not be complicated. To wit:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for speaking with me today about the position ...

It occurred to me during my ride home that I forgot to mention something to you ...

Then simply let your response come out—better late than never.

## PARENTING

### A Little Decompression Time Promotes Sharing—Eventually

Every day when our kids get home from school, I tend to immediately ask them how things went, the moment they get off the bus. The answer is often, and I quote: “uteh mfdl wrgr.” Or simply a vacant

stare accompanied by an open mouth. And drool.

It's so easy to forget that the kids are depleted, and that the introverts among them—which is most of them in our case—simply need some time to decompress before they offer up a play-by-play breakdown of their chaotic, overstimulating school day.

I was the same way when I was a child, pounding through eight hours of school each day. And I'm still the same way if I've been gone all morning and afternoon writing, or volunteering at school, or running errands among the crowds around town.

So my kids and I have come up with a way to handle things after I have foolishly started peppering them with too much too soon.

“Do you want to *defer*?” I ask. Meaning: Do you want to wait a

while before you/we talk?

The answer is inevitably yes, and it leads to two different potential outcomes, both of which satisfy parent and child alike:

1) We talk a half-hour or an hour or three hours later, when child is more recharged and I'm even more ready to listen.

2) Remarkably, child will start talking anyway, moments later in some cases. It seems that giving kids a little power to decide when to share often compels them to begin sharing nearly right away—because suddenly they're deciding to and not feeling obligated to.

Win-win. All from a simple question that respects the introvert's preferred way of operating—especially after a school day that not only fills the brain, but drains it too.



# RESEARCH YOU CAN USE

## Seeking Respite? If You're an Introvert, Look to Mountains

Whether you're looking for a place to live or seeking respite, you might want to zero in on wooded, mountainous geographic areas if you're an introvert, suggests a recent study in the *Journal of Research in Personality*.

The published article summarizes the findings of five related studies.

In one, the researchers analyzed more than 600,000 personality assessments from across the United States and found that residents of mountainous areas are more introverted, generally speaking, than residents of flatter, open areas.

In another study, the researchers found that extraverted participants expressed more happiness when they were taken to a flat, open area, perceiving it as "more sociable" than a hilly, forested setting.



Introverted participants, on the other hand, perceived a wooded, secluded area as "more peaceful, quiet, and calming."

"Some cities and towns have geography that is more accommodating for some people than for others,"

says lead researcher Shige Oishi.

"If you know you're introverted, then you may be rejuvenated by being in a secluded place."

**Sources:** *Journal of Research in Personality*, July 2015; *Science Daily*, February 27, 2015.

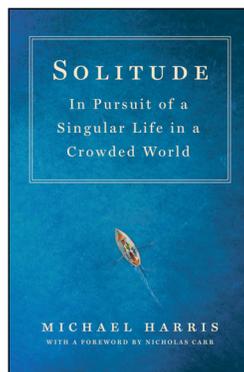
# REFLECTIVE READS

## Solitude Is a Vital Resource That Should Be Protected

Solitude—the revitalizing alone time that most introverts crave in some form—is so rare these days in our natural habitat that it is perceived as a lost art at best. Or as an indulgence, writes Michael Harris, author of the new book *Solitude: In Pursuit of a Singular Life in a Crowded World* (St. Martin's Press, 2017).

It's neither, Harris argues.

"Solitude has become a resource," he writes. One that can be abused and depleted. Or one that can and should be protected, the way we preserve wilderness areas and wetlands.



But there's a catch to this heroic-sounding assignment, Harris notes: "we" is really "me/I."

"[W]hile forests and oceans may be preserved by the efforts of agencies and governments," Harris writes, "the experience of solitude is

by definition a personal one, so the struggle to preserve it must largely come from an individual."

In other words, it's up to you—and me, and every other person who cares about it—to make solitude a purposeful priority in our lives. It offers too many benefits not to:

1) It leads to day-dreaming, which in turn leads to new thoughts and new breakthroughs.

2) It helps us to better know who we ourselves really are vs. who the world wants or demands us to be.

3) Paradoxically, it helps us connect—especially through reading—with others whose perspectives are very different from our own.

# Your Hate-Hate Relationship with Phone Calls Is Commonplace Among Introverts—So Be Prepared

One of my best friends called me on the phone the other day.

I let it ring.

My brother Mark called me too, just to catch up.

I didn't answer.

I got a call from a past writing collaborator as well, along with a call from CVS Pharmacy ("your prescription has been refilled") and another call from my graduate school alma mater (give us money).

They all went to voicemail too.

With the rarest of exceptions—the only true rare exception being my lovely wife, Adrienne, since our kids don't use the phone for the phone function anyway—my reaction to a phone call is a mental and often audible "ugh." Phone calls don't make me dance; they make me wince.

The same phenomenon holds true in reverse, when I have to **make** a phone call. My brain says "I don't want to" or "Can't we do this some other way, friend?"

Such is life for the typical introvert when it comes to the good old-fashioned telephone. And while I don't have any double-blind scientific studies to back me up, I have talked to enough introverts—Adrienne being just one of the many—to know that we introverts have, at best, a conflicted relationship with the phone.

Texting? No problem. Even appealing in many ways, given its similarity to email in both form and function.

The same goes for using the phone to access the Internet or take pictures. No trouble there, either.

But talking? On the phone? Like I said—ugh. And I am most definitely

not alone.

In fact, there are several sensible reasons for you to resent the phone if you're an introvert. And they all relate to the oversized amount of energy you have to invest, whether you're the caller or the called.

## Goodbye, Energy

I don't know which is worse (or better): calling or being called. They both have far more draining downsides than refreshing upsides.

When I'm the one making a phone call, I feel like I'm interrupting the recipient in the middle of who knows what with who knows whom. I hate being interrupted myself (yet another common introvert trait), so the thought of potentially interrupting someone else isn't at all appealing.

Neither is the parallel thought of trying to then gauge that person's mood and adjust my words and tone accordingly—on the fly, no less. It's not so bad if I'm calling someone I know. But if I'm calling someone I don't know, and that person isn't in a position that is naturally intended to field calls from total strangers like me, then I have a very difficult time. I'd much rather text. Or email. Or live chat. Because then the interruption factor subsides or disappears, all while I get the chance to think before I speak—with my energy-saving, typically more articulate fingers vs. my energy-spending, often less articulate mouth.

When I'm on the receiving end of a phone call, on the other hand, **I'm** the one who's expected to immediately drop everything. And instantly gather my thoughts. And instantly think and speak on my feet.

Moreover, phone calls that could have been 10-second texts or emails turn into five- or 10-minute verbal time wasters. And I have only the caller's voice to rely on during our interaction. And I don't have access to the multiple nonverbal cues that I'd have at my disposal in a much more welcome one-on-one, face-to-face chat over coffee.

Yup. "Ugh" is about right.

## Preparation Is Salvation

The key to handling phone calls as an introvert, whatever direction they're going, is preparation.

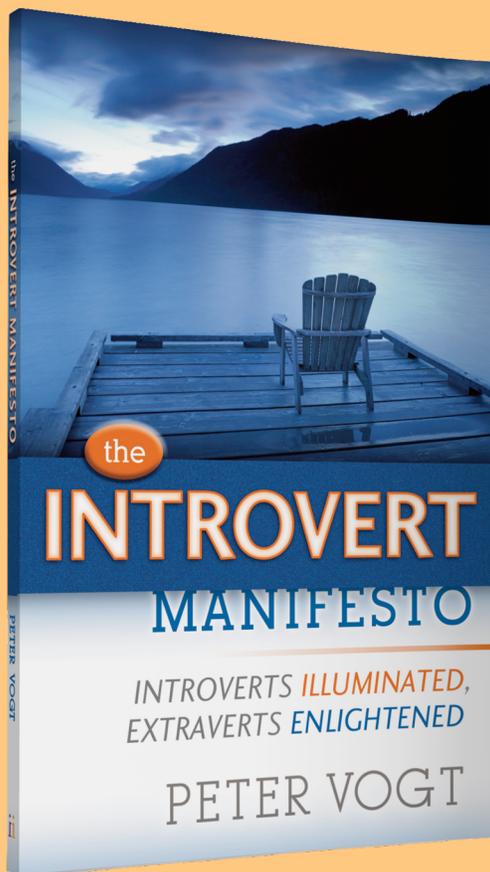
On the receiving end of calls, use your Caller ID to your advantage whenever you can. If you're expecting a critical call—for instance, if you're waiting to hear back from someone you interviewed with for a job—type that person's name and number into your cell phone's contact list so that when they call, you'll know who's on the line.

Be sure as well to lean heavily on the introvert's best phone friend: voicemail. Let calls go to voicemail and return them when **you** are ready.

When you need to make calls, shoot for days/times when you yourself are likely to reach the recipient's voicemail, then leave a message. Or when you know you simply must actually talk to the person, prearrange a day/time to chat so that when you call, the person is less likely to be (or at least feel) interrupted and therefore annoyed.

Yes. We introverts have a thing about the phone. Know that it's normal, sensible—and that you can develop your own ways of operating so that the phone won't hang you up.

# How Introverts Really Tick. And Why.



That's the radically simple idea behind *The Introvert Manifesto: Introverts Illuminated, Extraverts Enlightened*, by Peter Vogt, editor and publisher of *Introvert Insights*.

Read extensive excerpts and order your paperback copy now at:

**[IntrovertManifesto.com](http://IntrovertManifesto.com)**

Also available on Amazon

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in the real world with its abundance of real constraints?

For me it's in the shower, as the



steady stream of hot water hypnotizes me through both sound and touch. It's on the highway as the rhythm of the tires hitting cracks in the pavement drives distractions out of my consciousness. It's on the dirt road as my feet pound out the miles a few yards at a time, and my head finally concedes that I will (probably) still be alive when it's over and thus frees itself to focus on less morbid thoughts.

Solitude doesn't have to be planned, scheduled. It's already around us, albeit in smallish doses, and the apparent randomness of its appearance in our daily lives only makes sense given that solitude itself—in what *Solitude* author Michael Harris refers to as “an involuntary process, like the pumping of a heart”—inevitably leads to day-dreaming, which in turn leads to

new ideas and combinations of ideas. As Harris notes:

*Given enough solitude and enough time, the mind shifts into default mode and pans through connections that at first seem wholly random. It explores problems with a curiosity and openness we might never choose to entertain. But this randomness is crucial. “The power of the wandering mind,” says [University of British Columbia researcher Kalina] Christoff, “is precisely the fact that it censors nothing. It can make connections you would never otherwise make.”*

All we have to do, then, is be ready: Be ready for the small doses of solitude that quietly visit us each day. And be ready to capture the fruits they're bound to bear.



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## INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“Solitude is creativity’s best friend, and solitude is refreshment for our souls.”

~ Naomi Judd

“Beauty begins the moment you decide to be yourself.”

~ Coco Chanel

“For introverts, to be alone with our thoughts is as restorative as sleeping, as nourishing as eating.”

~ Jonathan Rauch

“I’ve always had a sort of intuition that for every hour you spend with other human beings, you need x number of hours alone. Now, what that x represents I don’t really know, whether it be two and seven-eighths or seven and two-eighths, but it’s a substantial ratio.”

~ Glenn Gould

“Lighthouses don’t go running all over an island looking for boats to save; they just stand there shining.”

~ Anne Lamott