



Illumination and Inspiration for Introverts

October 2017

What Type of Introvert Are You? The Possibilities Are Illuminating

There's no such thing as an apple.
Actually, let me rephrase that:
There's no such thing as **an** apple.

Apples do exist, of course. But speaking precisely, the term "apple" is a form of shorthand for a phrase something along the lines of: "food item that has the general traits of what is known as an apple."

Apples, it turns out, come in many types. In my part of the world the stores carry Honeycrisps and Pink Ladies and Braeburns and Galas and Fujis and the often not-so-delicious Red Deliciouses. Elsewhere you'll find Cortlands and McIntoshes and Cameos and Ambrosias and dozens of others.

They are all apples, because they share the same basic general characteristics. But they are not the same.

There's no such thing as an introvert, either. Check that: There's no such thing as **an** introvert. Those of us who see ourselves as introverts share some key basic traits. But we are not at all the same.

Common sense tells us that all people are different from one another. But when it comes to introversion in particular, says Wellesley

College psychology professor Jonathan Cheek, the global concept of *introvert* just doesn't cut it.

Four Types of Introversion

Rather, says Cheeks, it might be more accurate—and therefore more beneficial—to think of introverts as falling into four subtypes:

Social—You treasure your solitude, and if you're going to socialize at all you'd prefer to do so one on one or in a very small group of people you know.

Thinking—You cherish opportunities to reflect, on your life and your creative ideas.

Anxious—You feel awkward in social situations, and you often dwell on the coulda-woulda-shouldas, not to mention what might happen in the future.

Restrained—You value taking your time and mulling things over before you act, and you thrive upon a slower pace of life in general.

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THE INTROVERT LIFE

GROUP INTERACTIONS

When You're Staring at Group Work, Your Mindset Matters

Three days a week, I drive a few miles to the campus of a nearby college, where I am taking French 111 with about 20, ahem, other kids.

At age 50, I'm trying to learn French from the ground up, and in doing so this way I'm already well beyond my comfort zone.

I love it; don't get me wrong. But it's draining, oh so draining at times.

Especially when our instructor hauls out the group learning activities. Every. Class. Session.

I go to class each day, as many introverts do, hoping and praying we can just sit there and learn. But in-

stead, we work in small groups to practice speaking French, writing French, conjugating French, identifying French nouns and adjectives.

The usual awkwardness only intensifies as we all attempt to use as much French as we can in our interactions—teacher's orders.

As the semester goes on, I find myself continually falling back on several tricks of the introvert trade when it comes to working in groups.

For starters, I have made peace with the idea that this is how things will be, and arguably should be, in French 111. You don't always get to choose the way you work, or with whom. Better, then, to simply prepare for some discomfort and energy

loss instead of fighting it.

Next, when the professor asks us to find a partner to work with, I look for someone who seems as uneasy about the idea as I generally am. Or, to borrow one of my wife Adrienne's tricks, I turn immediately to the person right next to me and ask if he/she would like to pair up.

Finally—and this one is the hardest to stomach!—I remind myself that invariably, the group-work experience ends up being a positive one for me, despite my initial reservations. Being stretched, it turns out, stretches the mind and the soul.

Every. Class. Session.

Whether I want to be stretched or not.

COMMUNICATING YOUR IDEAS

Use the Before and After to Make Meetings Work for You

It's ironic, but the very reason people have meetings—to share information and ideas together, in real time—is perhaps the primary reason why so many introverts struggle with meetings.

It's not that we introverts have nothing to say. Rather, in meetings of any kind (with a group or one on one), we are often so absorbed in observing and analyzing and reflecting that there is no brain space left to do anything else. Not in that moment.

But then, inevitably, five minutes or five hours or five days after the meeting breaks up, bingo: We do indeed have something to say, and it is crystal clear in both our own minds and in the words that come out of

our mouths or through our fingers (or both).

So the next time you know you'll be meeting with someone(s), take full advantage of the before and after so that you don't have to rely on the during to make your points.

Ask for a formal or informal agenda **before** the meeting so that you

can fully prepare for the topic(s) that will be under consideration. Bring findings of any pre-research you've done, along with pertinent notes.

After the meeting, meanwhile, follow up in writing or in person with people whose ideas resonated with you. Your reactions don't have to be immediate to be invaluable.



RESEARCH YOU CAN USE

When Work and Home Collide, Introverts Pay a Higher Price

As an introvert, you're likely paying more—and differently—than your extraverted colleagues when your work follows you home from the office, according to a recent study in the journal *Stress and Health*.

In the study, researchers Stacy Baer, Jade Jenkins, and Larissa Barber of Northern Illinois University surveyed more than 500 workers from across the United States, assessing their levels of introversion/extraversion and their recent experiences with *negative work-to-home conflict*—i.e., times when “the demands from the work domain intrude on the home domain.”

The participants were also surveyed about work-home balance, work-related burnout, and work engagement, among other variables.



The researchers found that, for all the study participants, more negative work-to-home conflict was related to less satisfaction with work-home balance, as well as both psychological and physical strain.

But “the relationship between work-home conflict and satisfaction with work-home balance, work burnout, and work engagement,” the researchers note, “was stronger

among introverts than extraverts.”

“Introverts tend to have more negative reactions to work spilling over into the home domain...,” the researchers stress.

Making it all the more important, they say, for introverts—and their employers—to “better manage the interface between work and home.”

Source: *Stress and Health*, (32) (2016), pp. 441-445.

REFLECTIVE READS

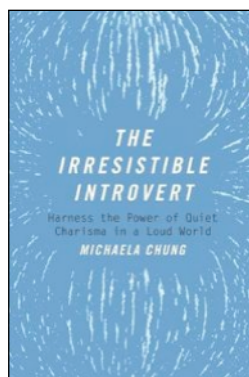
“Transformational Questions” Reveal Beauty of Introversion

Like many introverts, Michaela Chung grew up thinking something must be wrong with her—and that others in her life felt the same.

About her, not themselves.

Maybe that's why her book, *The Irresistible Introvert*, is so convincing. Chung knows what it's like to doubt yourself and to feel doubted by others. She also understands how sustained your efforts must be to digest the truth: that your introversion is an irresistible asset, not a liability.

Writing metaphorically throughout and with right-between-the-eyes



bluntness at times, Chung argues that we introverts “tend to defame our interior world with all sorts of nasty judgments.”

“We are the punk kids with spray cans,” she writes, “eager to vandalize our minds with bold criticisms.”

Changing that self-talk, she says, is the key to changing how we feel about ourselves and, by extension, how we operate in daily life.

Affirmations? Not so much, Chung notes. “Affirmations only work if we believe what we are saying,” she has the courage and wisdom to acknowledge.

Instead, Chung offers up the idea of asking ourselves *transformational questions* that turn our thinking around. One example:

What if my introversion is the key to my success? What would that look like?

What **would** that look like?

The Four Pillars of Introvert Well-Being: A Handy Checklist to Consult When You're at Your Worst

For the last few weeks I have been beating my head against the wall—actually, against my car's front bumper and fenders—trying to find the squeaky wheel.

Make that the noisy wheel, or whatever it is that is creating the irritating vibrations somewhere near the front driver's side of my 2003 Saturn Vue.

It is the worst kind of high-mileage car problem, the dreaded intermittent noise: the kind of ailment you have to self-diagnose because when you go to the mechanic about it, it magically disappears.

I don't know that much about cars when they're healthy, to say nothing of when they're not running their best. So I am doubly frustrated. I have a clear and continuing crime to investigate, but I can't even identify any plausible suspects.

My own day-to-day life often goes the same way. Sometimes I'm just not running my high-mileage best. I'm exhausted, crabby, impatient, overwhelmed. And I can't seem to snap out of it.

Until I remember—either on my own or with a nudge from my lovely wife, Adrienne—that I do know a lot about **myself** when I'm healthy, and I do know what's happening to **me** when I'm not running my best.

All I have to do is turn to the simple diagnostic and treatment tool I've created for myself as an introvert living in a very extraverted world. I call it *The Four Pillars of Introvert Well-Being*—and I invite you to use it, too.

When All Is Not Well

I think of *The Four Pillars of Introvert Well-Being* as a simple mental

checklist I can consult when I'm fried crispy, so that I can figure out why and do something about it.

The model came to me seemingly out of the blue one day—one of “those” days when I was feeling lousy. I sat down and tried to pinpoint what was going on, and I discovered I was dealing with four internal struggles (each of which can be potent on its own or, far worse, can aid and abet the others in cruel but not so unusual punishment):

I wasn't getting any time to, and for, myself.

I had no time to think.

I was being pulled in way too many directions at once.

I was involved in too many surface-level, trivial activities—and too few significant ones.

Can you say introvert nightmare?

You and I, then—in order to be our psychological, emotional, spiritual, and even physical best as intro-

verts living in a highly extraverted culture—need to pursue the four positive converses of the struggles I was having, i.e., *The Four Pillars of Introvert Well-Being*:

Solitude—Quiet time alone to decompress from the day's activities and recharge our mental batteries.

Reflection—The chance to think about what we're doing, what we're going to be doing, and what we've already done.

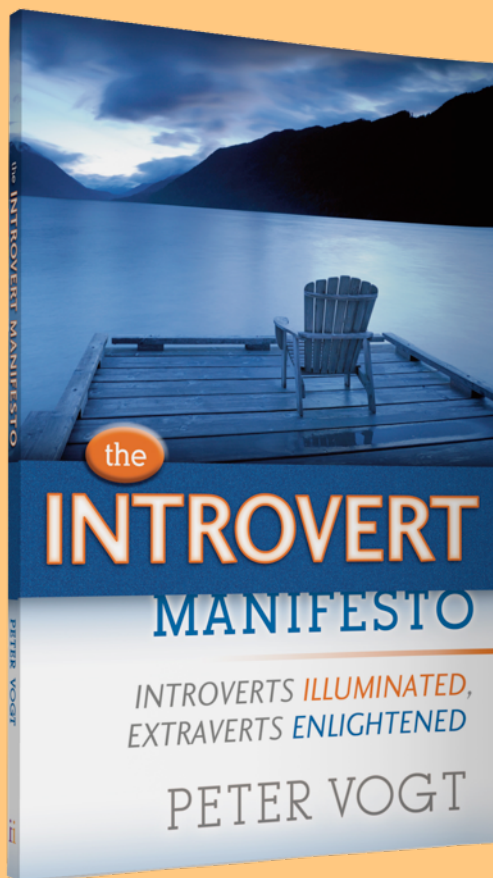
Focus—The opportunity to home in on one person, one activity, one responsibility, one set of deadlines and pressures at a time (to the degree possible).

Depth—True substance in our conversations, interactions, relationships, and activities.

These four pillars hold up the “roof” that is our well-being as introverts. But only if we build the structure right. And then maintain it—whatever the mileage.



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

Also available on Amazon

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Cheeks and several of his students came up with these categories (whose first letters happen to spell the acronym STAR) by conducting a survey involving about 500 adults between the ages of 18 and 70. The study questioned participants in depth about their introvert-related preferences and tendencies: solitude, reflection and daydreaming, perceived social skills, and more.

The other day I took an online assessment based on the STAR model. It's part of a detailed *Scientific American* article written by University of Pennsylvania researcher Scott Barry Kaufman. (You can access the article at blogs.scientificamerican.com/beautiful-minds/what-kind-of-introvert-are-you.)

I came out as “high” on three of the four subscales: Social Introversion, Thinking Introversion, and Restrained Introversion. Meantime I scored as “Average” on the Anxious Introversion dimension. You, of course, will have your own unique profile based on your experiences and the associated responses.

All of which leads to a natural question: So what?

Take Even Better Care of Yourself

I find that it is already empowering enough for me to know that I'm an introvert, and to be able to embrace that perfectly healthy reality instead of somehow trying (or having) to “face” it.

The STAR model only adds to my clarity and the resulting confidence boost. It can for you, too.

If you are able to figure out, for

instance, that Thinking Introversion is the strongest element within your unique introversion mix, then you will work all the more to give yourself time to ponder.

Similarly, if you take the STAR assessment and find out that you tend toward Anxious Introversion, you will begin to take especially good care of yourself before, during, and after social situations (since they may make you feel self-conscious and awkward, at least at times).

There will always be dissonance between labeling oneself an introvert (or a type of introvert!) and maintaining one's individuality. That's as it should be.

Just know that we introverts do indeed share certain tendencies—and that the better we understand them, the more illuminated and enlightened we will be.



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INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“If you know you are an introvert, then you know you are an introvert and that's that. You don't have to fight to prove it. Explain yourself if you want, but don't justify yourself.”

~ Sophia Dembling

“The quieter you become, the more you can hear.”

~ Ram Dass

“In the attitude of silence the soul finds the path in a clearer light, and what is elusive and deceptive resolves itself into crystal clearness.”

~ Mahatma Gandhi

“Introverts crave meaning, so party chitchat feels like sandpaper to our psyche.”

~ Diane Cameron

“End each day with a session of peace and quiet. Allow yourself to recharge your internal batteries without any sort of a guilt trip. ... Doing this is not a waste of time. It is a completely necessary form of self-care.”

~ Robyn Reisch