



ii introvert insights

An Often Overlooked Aspect of Introvert Well-Being: *Depth*

By Peter Vogt

At least once a week back in the days when I lived in Madison, Wisconsin, I would take a long, invigorating power walk with my friend and mentor Bob Magnan.

The two of us never had a formal agenda for these excursions, which we came to refer to as “Bob Walks.” But we would typically end up trekking three or four miles and having a meaningful, focused, intense conversation about something unfailingly substantive: a political matter, a religious question, a work-related project, an episode of “The Wonder Years,” or virtually anything that involved psychology and people’s motivations.

I was fully aware at the time of just how much I loved these walks and how much I thrived on them. But the question of why never occurred to me back then. I just knew I couldn’t get enough of these experiences, and that time flew as they were happening; an hour went by in a minute. It was like we had been transported to another dimension.

It wasn’t uncommon for me to send Bob an email (this was long before smartphones and texting) and say, “I need a Bob Walk!” It always seemed like he needed one too, as he rarely turned down the invitation.

So we would meet at the park and, if it was summer, Bob would shed his tennis shoes and his black socks. Then he’d walk barefoot on the hot pavement, somehow not burning his feet to smithereens, and share his wisdom with me while I strode beside him—shoes firmly on—and soaked it all in.

I would contribute a little twentysomething wisdom of my own when I could, and I’d share my ideas about the matters under discussion, too; it wasn’t a one-sided lecture by any means. The dynamic was, in the very best sense, teacher-student: caring, willing-to-share-the-stage teacher with hungry, wanting-to-learn-everything-possible student.

It was magic.

But why? I do ask that question now, and as I look back on it all, I’m able to see what made my walks

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TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

STRESS MANAGEMENT

“Control What You Can” to Perform Well Under Stress

Maybe it’s an upcoming presentation at work. Perhaps it’s a job interview, or a date, or some other situation that’s a little (or more than a little) outside your comfort zone.

As an introvert, one of the best things you can do to prepare for a bound-to-be stressful activity is “take the time to control what you can” about it, according to writer Brady Bourassa, author of the recent *IntrovertDear.com* article entitled “Introverts: How to Make the Uncomfortable, Comfortable.”

Bourassa, an introvert himself, follows his own advice when preparing for the frequent video calls he conducts with his clients.

First, 30 minutes prior, “I set up my workspace to receive the call: Clean my desk, arrange the wall behind me, wash my face ... those kinda things,” he writes.

He then checks the video and audio settings on his computer, making sure he can see and hear—and be



seen and heard.

Finally, once he connects with his client, he double-checks one last time to make sure the two of them can communicate without technical difficulties or other distractions.

“If you can eliminate worries and potential problems from occurring, then you can set your mind at ease and focus on what you need to do,” Bourassa says. “You’re probably worrying enough, after all!”

“If the thought of giving a presen-

tation has you quivering, but you still have to do it, then figure out what you can control,” he stresses. “Go to the presentation room beforehand and see what the area looks like, make sure all your slides and videos are displayed properly, and rehearse what you are going to say.”

The more you can anticipate potential headaches and “put solutions in place to handle them,” Bourassa says, the better you’ll feel—and the better you’ll perform.

PARENTING STRATEGIES

If the Question Repeats Itself, Put the Answer in Writing

Writer and journalist Hilary Achauer is a card-carrying introvert. Her 11-year-old son, Gabriel, is, in her words, “one of the most extroverted humans I’ve ever met.”

“Some days he doesn’t stop talking from the moment his eyes open until his head hits the pillow,” Achauer writes in “An Introvert’s

Guide to Parenting an Extroverted Child,” her recent article on the website of *The Week* magazine.

On one recent Saturday, the Achauers had guests coming over for dinner, and Gabriel kept asking Hilary when they would arrive.

“I tell him 6 p.m.,” Hilary writes. “Then 45 minutes later, ‘Mommy! How long until they come over?’”

Soon, Hilary found herself irritated, albeit with the knowledge that

Gabriel was merely being himself.

Desperate, she eventually came up with a creative fix: She grabbed a dry-erase marker and wrote “Guests arrive at 6 p.m.” on the whiteboard on the side of the fridge.

“For the rest of the day,” Hilary says, “[Gabriel would] creep up to the fridge, look at the arrival time, then the oven clock, and mutter to himself, ‘Three more hours.’”

Problem solved.

Commenting: A Natural Social Media Strategy for Introverts

If you want to harness the power of social media to build your visibility among prospective employers or clients or customers, you've got to post, post, post—right?

Well, says Internet marketing expert Veronica Pullen, that's one way to proceed, especially if you're an extravert and you take to heart the advice of extraverted social media gurus.

But if you're an introvert, Pullen says, you might well be overlooking an equally effective strategy: commenting on the posts of others.

Whereas extraverts instinctively initiate in life, introverts tend to respond—which, in the context of social media, means commenting, Pullen writes in her recent blog post “Take Off Your Invisibility Cloak and You Will Be Seen on Facebook.”

Pullen, an introvert herself who is known as “The Mile-Deep Marketing Queen,” says you always have a

choice as you go through the posts on your social media feed: Scroll on, in full consumption-only mode; or comment and be seen “by everyone else who reads the post,” any one of whom might lead you to your next opportunity.

Recently, Pullen commented on a Facebook post from one of her friends. Soon after, someone saw that comment and took a closer look at her profile.

“We're now connected and will

be speaking soon,” she writes.

“It wasn't me forcing myself to post x times a day every day that put me on this person's radar,” she goes on. “It was my comment.”

Commenting is something introverts are “hard-wired” to do, Pullen says. Why not simply tap into that natural inclination, she stresses.

“Please stop trying to force yourself to follow the strategy of extravert marketers who are not like you.”



WELL-BEING

“No” to What You Don't Want Is “Yes” to What You Do Want

Like many of us, Ingrid Fetell Lee has spent much of her life struggling to say “no”—and then paying for it afterwards in a host of ways.

“I grew up associating the word ‘no’ with rejection,” she writes in her recent blog post “One Word That Can Help You Live a More Joyful Life.”

Saying “no” can hurt someone's feelings or let them down, says Lee, author of the book *Joyful: The Surpris-*

ing Power of Ordinary Things to Create Extraordinary Happiness.

But in recent years, Lee has gotten more comfortable with the concept of “no,” thanks to an illuminating idea she picked up in *The Power of a Positive No*, a book by negotiation expert William Ury.

Ury “points out something that is so simple yet had never occurred to me: Every ‘no’ has a ‘yes’ underneath it,” Lee writes.

“When we say ‘no’ to a night out on the town, we're also saying ‘yes’ to a night in with a great book and a

bubble bath.

“When we say ‘no’ to a too-tight deadline, we say ‘yes’ to time with family and the ability to do our work in a healthy way.

“Because we have finite amounts of time and energy, every ‘no’ to one thing is always a ‘yes’ to something else.”

So, Lee stresses, the next time you want to say “no” to something and that little voice in your head tries to convince you to do the opposite, figure out what you'll be saying “yes” to in the process.

IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

We All Have Our Weaknesses; Introversion Isn't One of Them

By Peter Vogt

Whenever I go to volunteer at the elementary school where my wife teaches kindergarten, I hear staff members speaking a fascinating language that wasn't yet invented when I was a kid.

While it's not exactly Yoda-speak ("Teachers we are"; "Children we teach"), it is similarly notable for what it chooses to emphasize, and why.

Suppose a kid is running down the hallway. The teacher who sees it doesn't scream "Don't run!" or "No running!" like my teachers would have done. Instead, she calmly says "Walking feet" or "Walk in the hallways, please." (Note: The "please" is its own astonishing addition to the disciplinary lexicon, but that's another article.)

If a child up and starts smacking the kid next to him in the lunch line, the supervisor doesn't yell "Don't hit him!" or "No hitting!" She says "Hands to yourself."

If a child is noisy when he isn't supposed to be, the teacher doesn't say "Stop making noise!" He says "Use your inside voice."

There's a method to this dialect, a purpose based on a scientific fact that any educator—or parent—can readily verify: Unless money is involved ("Don't lose the \$20 bill I'm about to give you for candy"), children cannot hear words like "don't" and "no" and "stop."

Thus, to, say, a first-grader, "Don't run in the hall!" is under-

stood to mean "Run in the hall!" "No hitting!" becomes "Hit!" And, of course, "Stop making noise!" translates to "Make (even more) noise!" It's as though the essential words have been dubbed out.

The solution to this childhood deafness problem, then, is to not use "not"; don't use "don't." Instead, you tap into the power of emphasis in language and you stress to the children what you **want** them to do, not what you **don't want** them to do.

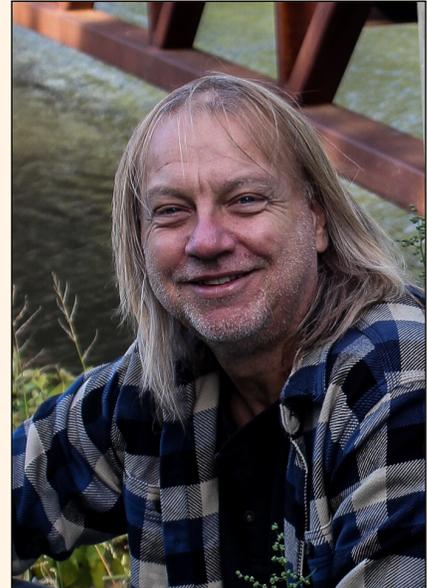
I suppose that from this perspective, my junior high math teacher, Mr. Bowman, was technically quite progressive, indeed decades ahead of his time, when he routinely thundered at us, in his booming bass voice, to "BEEE QUIIETTT!" and "SHUUUT UUUP!" He was even good enough to boost his volume so that the kids in other classrooms could benefit too.

But I think he was missing the true spirit of the concept.

As an introvert, you've undoubtedly had your times in life when you've been told about all the things you're allegedly not, or that you're allegedly not enough of: not sociable (enough); not talkative (enough); not open (enough); not (enough of) a team player; and on and on.

One of the many voices in this cacophony, sadly, might well be your own. The messages come from all sides, without and within.

You can't do much about what the other people in your life focus on where you're concerned. But you can be good to yourself.



And you should. In fact, you must. It's only fair.

Because every supposed "weakness" you have as an introvert can be looked at, and then re-expressed, as a corresponding strength.

Just change the emphasis.

If you're viewed as "not talkative (enough)," for example, isn't it plausible that you **are** a good listener, and that you **are** someone who thinks carefully before you speak?

If you're seen as "not (enough of) a team player," isn't it quite likely that you **are** someone who kicks butt working independently—someone who stays focused and undistracted until the job is done and done right?

If you're tagged as being "not open (enough)," isn't it reasonable to think that you in fact **are** someone who can be trusted with, say, a colleague's confidential problem?

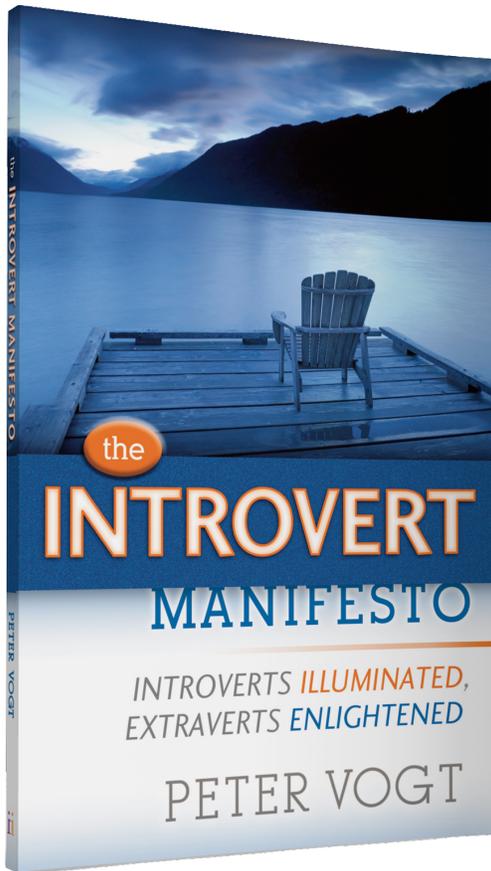
We all have our real, true weaknesses; no one's disputing that. But don't treat your introversion as one of them.

Oops.

Treat your introversion as the strength it really is.

At long last...

CLARITY



“*The Introvert Manifesto* is the manual [on introverts] that should have come in the box.”

Nancy Ancowitz, author of *Self-Promotion for Introverts* and producer of the “Self-Promotion for Introverts” blog for *Psychology Today*

Read extensive excerpts and order your paperback copy now at:

IntrovertManifesto.com

PRACTICAL RESEARCH

Study: Aim for a Balanced Diet of Socializing and Alone Time

To thrive in life, you need to maintain a balanced diet of “social nutrition” that includes both meaningful interactions with others and time by yourself, according to a recent study in the journal *Human Communication Research*.

In the study, researchers Jeffrey Hall of the University of Kansas and Andy Merolla of the University of California-Santa Barbara introduce a concept they call the *social biome*: the mix of socializing and alone time we all experience each day.

“We’re working to identify the patterns of interactions that reflect a well-functioning social system,” Hall notes in a University of Kansas news release on the study.

Hall and Merolla recruited nearly 400 participants from across the United States for the study, each of whom documented their daily “social diet,” along with their subjective feelings of well-being, for 28 consecutive days.

In all, Hall and Merolla gathered more than 10,000 diary snapshots of the participants’ socializing patterns and feelings about social engagement as well as solitude.

The data revealed that, in general, more social interactions throughout the day are associated with both well-being and life satisfaction.

But “it’s not that we have to rearrange our entire lives so we sit and commune with the closest people around us all day long,” Hall says.

“The results support the idea that we need a couple of high-quality in-

teractions in a day, which can range from serious discussions to catching up and joking around.”

Moreover, the study found that contentment with solitude is also an essential component of a healthy social diet.

“You need to be quiet, meditate, nap, chill, whatever you do,” Hall says. “It’s alone time, but it’s about having a balanced system.”

“It’s not just that more social time is always better. It’s about ratios. It’s about proportionality.”

Sources: University of Kansas news release, December 9, 2019; PsychologyToday.com website, December 25, 2019; “Connecting Everyday Talk and Time Alone to Global Well-Being,” *Human Communication Research*, 46(1) (January 2020), pp. 86-111.

REFLECTIVE READS

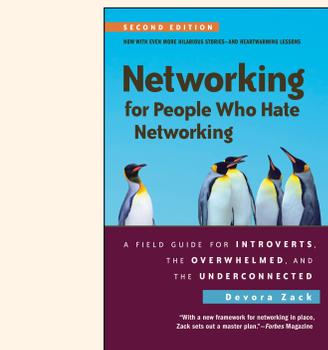
Book Offers Networking Tips That Tap Introverts’ Strengths

If you’re an introvert and you try to apply the extravert-centric strategies in a typical book on networking and those strategies inevitably fail you, are you just a lousy networker?

Much more seriously, is something wrong with **you**?

No, emphatically, on both counts, says Devora Zack, author of the recently published second edition of her bestselling book *Networking for People Who Hate Networking*.

There’s nothing wrong with the book you’ve been reading either, Zack stresses. There is simply a mis-



match between the type of networking advice **you** need as an introvert and the type offered in most guides on the subject.

“Saying ‘I’m a bad networker’ becomes the equivalent of ‘I am a bad extravert.’ That makes about as much sense as ‘I am bad at writing

with my right hand’ when I am left-handed,” Zack says.

Why not instead focus on your natural style and inherent strengths as an introvert, she argues.

She then goes on to illustrate how you can do just that, peppering her advice with a wide range of real-world examples and, most refreshing of all in a book on networking, her clever sense of humor; it isn’t often that a book on networking is actually fun to read.

But beyond the laughs, Zack offers authentic networking strategies throughout—the kind of advice that an introvert like her, and you, will readily use and benefit from.

Continued from page 1

with Bob so energizing.

For me at least, it was because the Bob Walks, like my entire relationship with Bob himself, were built on an allure that virtually every introvert like me lives for, even if we don't often specifically understand it or articulate it:

We introverts thrive on **depth**.

We need depth in our lives, just as we need more commonly discussed necessities like having our alone time or getting the chance to think before we speak or act.

Depth, too, is critical to introvert well-being.

When Depth Is Lacking

Often, it's hard to know what you really need in life until you're feeling lousy because you don't have it, or enough of it.

So it is for introverts and depth, in several respects.

You will start to feel antsy when, for example, you're not having enough one-on-one, uninterrupted, thought-provoking, **deep** conversations with the key people in your life: your spouse, your children, your parents, your friends. You'll be frustrated and cranky when most or all of your conversations are transactional or gossipy or, worst of all, nothing more than mere small talk.

You may notice a depth shortage in the experiential parts of your life as well. You may find, for instance, that you somehow just don't end up with the time or the energy to dig deeply into a topic or an activity or a project that is begging you to sink your teeth into it.

Perhaps you buy yourself a new camera for your birthday, and you even splurge for a couple of additional lenses, all in hopes of going out into the woods as autumn un-



fold and shooting some amazing pictures of the fall foliage. You envision yourself becoming one with both the camera and the scenery, losing yourself in the moment and the vivid colors.

Then you open your closet door months later and see your camera still languishing in the box as a blizzard howls outside your window.

Goodbye, depth experience.

And hello disappointment—unless you commit to pursuing, and protecting, depth in your life the same way you respect your other introvert-related needs.

Here's how.

Have Deep Conversations

Compared to extraverts, we introverts really do benefit from depth and quality in our social interactions, according to a recent study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (see a summary of the study in the November 2019 issue of *Introvert Insights*, p. 6).

So set yourself up for deep conversations. Arrange one-on-one or small-group meetings with the people you want to talk to, or attend lectures and similar events where such conversations are bound to occur.

Look for people with whom sub-

stantive conversations just seem to flow naturally. And pick meaningful topics of conversation so that you can exercise your introvert muscles of reflection and analysis, too.

Pursue Activities in Depth

We all have some interest, some hobby, some something we've wanted to pursue more diligently but somehow haven't.

Pursue it now, and let yourself pursue it the introvert's way: with depth and purpose.

If you're the one with that new camera in your closet, buy a photography book or two. Take a class to learn about lighting and composition. Participate in some photography-related chats on social media.

Then go start shooting. A lot.

Block Interruptions, Too

Interruptions kill both deep conversations and deep pursuits. So control them to the degree possible.

Find quiet, distraction-free places for your activities. Lose the cell phone and the Internet. Tell people you're unavailable for a few hours unless it's an emergency.

Because if you keep missing out on depth in your life, you'll be the one who ends up paying.



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INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“Introverts living in an extravert world represent an untapped wellspring of ideas and innovation. When we learn to champion our ideas, strengths, and value, everyone stands to benefit.”

~ Angela Schenk

“If you are introverted and have been made to feel that you're not good enough, embrace introversion as a strength and don't try to be something that you're not.”

~ Carol Stewart

“An introvert can capitalize on the power of the mind to think, understand, and use logic to arrive at decisions. This general lack of haste, paired with integrity, is critically needed today.”

~ John O'Connor

“It's easy to sound like everyone else. The way you differentiate yourself without all the marketing hype and selfies is to be your authentic self.”

~ Tim Denning