



introvert insights

Say Yes to Saying No—It’s Not Only Doable, It’s Indispensable

By Peter Vogt

“No” is one of the shorter words in the English language, but it may be **the** hardest word to say—especially if you’re an introvert.

Maybe it’s because many of us introverts just aren’t into any kind of confrontation—which is a nice way of saying that we (tend to) avoid it.

Maybe it’s because many of us have spent a lifetime having to explain or justify or defend or even apologize for the no’s we do manage to muster.

Maybe the guilt we tend to feel—which is often thrust upon us by the person(s) we say no to—is just too much to deal with.

Maybe it’s because, sometimes at least, offering a manufactured yes and going along to get along is just easier, and far less draining, than delivering the true no we would like to deliver.

Maybe it’s all of these things and more. I don’t know.

But I do know this: If we introverts were to be the recipients of a

grade-school-like report card for our lives, many of us would receive an “NI” on the “willingness and ability to say ‘no’” line:

Needs Improvement.

Sometimes, of course, you realistically **can’t** say no, particularly when it comes to work-related demands and, ahem, “requests.”

But often—far more often than we might believe—saying no is not only **an** option, it is **the** option we should choose in order to maintain our well-being: physical, mental, and emotional.

The question is ... how?

Are there some good strategies that will help you say no more readily and effectively as the introvert you are? Yes.

Here are the best three I know.

Explain, Repeat

Suppose, late on a Friday afternoon, one of your work colleagues invites you out for coffee the next morning. You like your colleague—but it’s been a long week, and you don’t want to hang out this weekend

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TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

MANAGING YOUR ENERGY

Time Your Social Interactions So That You're at Your Best

Timing—and planning—are everything when it comes to whether you'll enjoy, and do well at, social events and other interpersonal activities, says London-based freelance writer Vanessa Gibbs.

“Depending on how introverted you are and your individual personality traits, you might feel burned out when too many social events happen too close together. But when they're spread out, you can perform much better in them,” Gibbs writes in her recent *Blinkist Magazine* article entitled “12 Tips for Introverts in the Workplace.”

Similarly, Gibbs notes, “you may feel bubbly in the mornings but drained come 4 p.m.”

So take that self-knowledge and use it, Gibbs says: Plan your social week accordingly.

Example: “If you have a weekly team meeting every Thursday that you want to start speaking up in more, consider making Wednesday after work a sacred quiet evening when you spend time alone,” Gibbs suggests.

“When planning meetings, spread them over the week rather than trying to group them all together. Make sure each workday has a nice balance of social interaction and alone time.

“And try to avoid scheduling important meetings towards the end of the day, when your social batteries may be running low.”



VOLUNTEERING

Look for Behind-the-Scenes Ways to Volunteer Politically

If you'd like to get involved in political volunteering but, understandably, you're not exactly in love with calling prospective voters on the phone or visiting with them door to

door, think outside the box—and behind the often gritty day-to-day campaign scenes—says writer and political organizer Taylor Behnke.

In her recent Chegg.com website article entitled “5 Ways Introverts Can Get Involved in Politics,” Behnke talks in particular about the

idea of “adopting” a local political organizing office as your own.

“In popular media, campaign offices often look like sleek, glamorous startups,” Behnke says.

“In reality, they're usually just some nondescript strip mall storefront cluttered with card tables and folding chairs.”

And inside, Behnke stresses, are tired campaign workers who put in long hours on small budgets.

“So they'll always appreciate some help to make sure they're comfortable while doing their work,” Behnke says.

“If you love cooking or baking, volunteer to bring in some snacks once a week, or make runs to pick up water bottles, office supplies, or other necessities ... when staffers don't have time.”



“Event Triumvirate” Strategy Tames Networking Activities

If you want to make your next networking meeting (or similar business gathering) a little more manageable—and productive—when it comes to your introverted strengths and preferences, consider employing the “event triumvirate” strategy described by communications consultant Susan McPherson in her book *The Lost Art of Connecting: The Gather, Ask, Do Method for Building Meaningful Business Relationships*.

The event triumvirate is a set of three specific, readily achievable networking goals, McPherson says:

Meet three people.

Learn three new ideas.

Share three things.

It’s a way to give yourself a clear purpose for a networking event, McPherson says, and to “know the value you will get from the event.”

In a recent episode of the “WorkWell” podcast hosted by Deloitte Chief Well-Being Officer Jen Fisher, McPherson stressed that pre-event research can be a big help in successfully executing the event triumvirate strategy.

“Oftentimes you can find out who’s going to be in the room . . . , whether it’s an online room or a real

honest-to-goodness room,” McPherson noted.

“To me,” McPherson told Fisher during the podcast, the event triumvirate approach is “a fair way to tackle what could seem like the worst thing in the world.”

“[B]y sharing three things, you’re being vulnerable. By learning three things, the others are being vulnerable, right? By intentionally seeking out three people, you’re thinking about what are three people that potentially could help me meet my goals, and how can I help them.

“And again, it’s not walking around and shaking hands with everyone.”

PARENTING

Be Clear About Your Needs as an Introverted Parent

Sometimes, you’ve got to be exceedingly explicit with your parenting partner.

Not **that** kind of explicit, says journalist Katie Arnold-Ratliff, in her recent *Scary Mommy* website article entitled “4 Things to Normalize ASAP If You’re an Introverted Parent Raising an Extrovert.”

Rather, Arnold-Ratliff says, you need to tell your partner about your must-haves as an introvert in a “this is what I need and you have to help me get it or I will lose my mind” sort of way.

“In other words,” Arnold-Ratliff writes, “there is great power in saying aloud that which you think is obvious but might not have gone acknowledged: ‘Hey, honey? I’m an introvert, our kid is an extrovert, and as a result, there may be times when I must go in the other room and not look at any of you.’”

Arnold-Ratliff goes on to suggest that you and your partner might want to start using a specific code word of some sort that you can invoke whenever “the noise and whining and asking and fussing becomes too much, and you need to bail.”

“The point is that speaking your needs goes a long way toward get-

ting them met,” Arnold-Ratliff stresses.

Ultimately, you will not only be a better parent for your child(ren); you’ll be a better companion and teammate for your partner, too.

“So tell your partner what would help,” Arnold-Ratliff says, “and let them support you.”



IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

This Tire Repair Place Helped Us Recharge Our Batteries, Too

By Peter Vogt

When I woke up last Saturday morning, I was nestled in an introvert sanctuary. And I was headed for full-fledged introvert paradise later in the day.

My family and I were on a much-needed two-day getaway to Grand Rapids, Minnesota, about 80 miles northwest of the city of Duluth.

Duluth, in turn, is on beautiful Lake Superior, and serves as the southern end of the lake's North Shore, a stunning area of forests and smaller lakes and rivers and waterfalls—and **the** place to be in these parts in late October, when the leaves on the trees turn their brilliant oranges, reds, yellows, and browns.

We were staying in a small lake home in Grand Rapids, the kind you might see in the opening scene of a movie—think dock, glass-like water, a grove of reeds to the left, an empty boat slip on the right ... and loons in the distance, singing their songs.

It was perfect. Perfect recharge and respite.

And it was only going to get better. Because the big plan last Saturday morning was to drive to Duluth and hike. And then drive partway up the North Shore and hike some more. And then ... who knows, but it involved being outside in a gorgeous place.

It would be the battery recharge of all battery recharges.

I was sitting on the couch that morning, sipping my coffee and doing the *New York Times* crossword at

about 8:45, when the plan went completely to hell.

My wife, Adrienne, and our son Kian had just returned from a short walk—only to find that the back left tire on our van was flat.

"<String of overly naughty words>," I said.

Adrienne and I went outside, dragged out the spare and the jack, and took the tire off. It did not take a mechanical genius to diagnose the problem: the hunk of metal sticking out of the inner sidewall.

Ugh.

It seemed like everything had suddenly turned against us. I had already looked up tire places in Grand Rapids, and of the four that existed, only one—Acheson Tire—was open on Saturdays, and only until noon.

I had no appointment. I had no history with the place. It would be busy. And it was now 9:20.

"Hon," I told Adrienne as we put the spare on, "you should mentally prepare not to go to Duluth today."

"Let's just see," she replied.

I tossed the flat in the back of the van and made the short trip to Acheson's where, sure enough, a crowd of other customers was already waiting in the lobby.

I grabbed my flat tire and literally wandered in with it, into the garage area where the technicians were working. I set the tire down and went to find the guy who appeared to be running the service desk.

I was bracing for what you already know was going to happen: the dog and pony show. Sing along,



you know the words ...

"No, we can't fix this tire. The puncture is too close to the sidewall. We can sell you two new ones. But we can't install them til Wednesday."

But I was wrong (so were you!).

"Let me see what I can do," the man said.

Forty minutes later, he and his co-worker had repaired the tire.

"You're done," he told me as he strode back into the waiting area.

Then he wrote up the bill: \$25.

"I'm stunned," I told him. "Nobody does this anymore."

And as I shook his hand to thank him, I asked him his name.

"John," he replied.

"John Acheson."

John Acheson—grandson of the founder, who started the family business in 1916.

Is it any wonder Acheson Tire has been around so long?

So ... thanks, John Acheson and staff, for saving our tire and our Duluth hiking excursion.

In the process, you helped us get our batteries recharged, too.

TIRED?

Online Course



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PRACTICAL RESEARCH

When You Step Away from a Problem, Really Step Away

You've probably experienced one of those moments when you've "magically" solved a problem while you were in the middle of doing something completely unrelated to it—while you were taking a shower, perhaps, or doing the dishes.

Well, there wasn't any magic involved. But there is a piece of critical nuance to understand and then leverage in your everyday life, according to a recent article in the *Journal of Advertising*.

Specifically, the mere fact that you were involved in an **unrelated** task likely made all the difference in you solving the problem at hand, the article's authors suggest.

The article summarizes a pair of

studies involving marketing students who were asked to complete two types of creative tasks: either a *selection* task (e.g., "list as many functions as possible for a paper clip") or a more open-ended *configuration* task (e.g., "come up with as many different, creative television commercials as possible for this paper clip.")

In some cases, the participants worked straight through on their assigned task for 20 minutes. In others, however, they got a 10-minute "incubation" break, during which they completed either a selection task (doing a sudoku puzzle) or a configuration task (reading a comic book).

The students generated more, and better, ideas whenever the type of creative task they'd been assigned was different from the type of incubation break they were given.

For example: When the students were asked to "list as many functions as possible for a paper clip" (selection task), they performed best after receiving a configuration-oriented incubation break (i.e., reading a comic book).

The key takeaway: If you're trying to solve a problem or come up with a new idea, yes, it helps to step away from it—but only if you truly think about, or do, something else.

"If the incubation task is similar in nature to the focal creative problem," the study's authors write, "it is unlikely to produce better subsequent performance."

Source: "Take a Break, but Make It Different! Moderating Effects of Incubation Task Specificity on Advertising Idea Generation," *Journal of Advertising*, July 6, 2022 (online).

REFLECTIVE READS

Atlas of the Heart: Connection Requires Emotional Precision

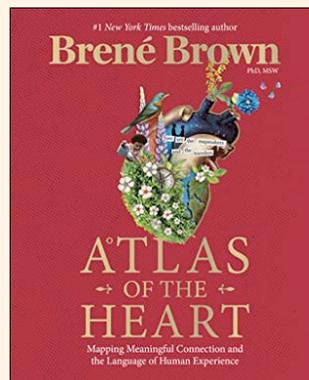
At its core, Brené Brown's *Atlas of the Heart* is about belonging.

That's **belonging**, as opposed to what she calls the opposite:

Fitting in.

Here's how she differentiated the concepts in a video a few years back:

Fitting in is assessing and acclimating: "Here's what I should say, be. Here's what I shouldn't say. Here's what I should avoid talking about." ... True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are. It requires you to be who you are.



Belonging, of course, involves the intertwined concept of deeply and authentically **connecting**—with yourself, especially, but with others in your life as well.

Atlas of the Heart is Brown's way of helping you do just that.

Drawing from Brown's more than two decades of research on what makes us who we are, *Atlas of the Heart* details 87 specific emotions and experiences we have as humans.

The goal: To help you precisely identify the often complex feeling(s) you're experiencing at any given moment so that you can communicate what you need—if only to yourself—and then seek it out and get it.

"To form meaningful connections with others," Brown stresses, "we must first connect with ourselves, but to do either we must first establish a common understanding of the language of emotion and human experience."

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with **anyone** who is even remotely connected to your job.

What now?

You say no accompanied by a straightforward explanation: “I’m just really tapped out,” you might say. “I appreciate the invite, but maybe another time.”

Simple enough, particularly since it makes use of an “I” statement that is hard for the other person to dispute or disregard.

But wait a minute ...

Sometimes the person doing the asking **does** dispute or disregard your response, right? Example: “Awww, c’mon! It’ll be fun!”

Now what?

I have found that the solution is deceptively easy: Simply repeat your initial response, basically verbatim.

The other person then seems to (finally) get that you mean it.

Buy Time to Reply Later

Another effective way of saying no is to stall for time in the moment so that you can respond later—ideally via your preferred **written** communications medium.

In our “let’s-have-some-coffee-tomorrow-morning” scenario, for example, you could say something like this.

“Hmm ... I’m not sure what to say right at this moment, as I’m pretty wiped out from the week. Let me think about it while I’m making dinner. I’ll let you know one way or the other this evening.”

You generally won’t get any immediate pushback when you use this strategy, and it really does buy you time to think about the request and decide how you’d like to respond.

If your answer is ultimately no, you can simply say so in a follow-up text or email.

Channel Anne Lamott

One of my favorite writers is Anne Lamott, perhaps best known for her 1995 book *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*.

Lamott once offered this punchy and powerful insight on saying no:

“No’ is a complete sentence.”

In other words, Lamott says, when you want (need?) to say no, just say no and stop: “No.” (Or if you’re like me: “No, thanks.”)

Amazingly, it works—perhaps **because** it is so simple and direct, and **because** it doesn’t require (or offer up) any explanations or hints that you even need to explain.

Its self-assuredness seems to ensure its success.

So let me leave you with Lamott’s full quote:

“No’ is a complete sentence. Saying no is a right we all have. Use it.”





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INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“Put well-being first. When we make well-being our goal, it allows us to really listen to what we need and in turn design a work and life that suits us.”

~ Aoife Lenox

“Those of us who land more on the introverted side of the spectrum don't need another concert, another sports event, another shopping trip, another girls' night out, or another weekend away to get pleasure in our lives. We can feel happy in a life with loads of white space on the calendar and white space on our walls.”

~ Erica Layne

“Learn how to use what you're already good at, your preferences and your style to develop habits, ways of working and communicating that will help put your best foot forward.”

~ Lily Woi

“Long-term success is built on a foundation of self-knowledge and self-acceptance, not white-knuckle misery.”

~ Jessica Stillman