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# INTROVERT MANIFESTO

*INTROVERTS ILLUMINATED,  
EXTRAVERTS ENLIGHTENED*

PETER VOGT

**ii**  
introvert  
insights

EDEN PRAIRIE, MINNESOTA

THE INTROVERT MANIFESTO

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Book design by TLC Graphics, *www.TLCGraphics.com*

Cover: Tamara Dever, Interior: Erin Stark

ISBN: 978-0-9898889-0-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014907461

Printed in the United States of America

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*Dear Lois,*

*Shortly before you died, you looked at me from your bed and whispered, "I wish people would learn something from what's happening to me."*

*I've learned that life really is short, and that we are fools to assume that tomorrow will arrive for sure when today really could be our last day on Earth. I've learned that the time to act—the time to write, in my case—is now. Otherwise we risk dying with our music still in us, as Oliver Wendell Holmes once put it.*

*So this book is not only for you, Lois; it's because of you. I have learned something from what happened to you—and I will keep absorbing the many lessons, sharing them with others until the day I die.*

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# INTROVERT

## THE STEREOTYPE

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Shy, antisocial loner who lacks confidence, doesn't particularly like people or interaction, and has little inclination to participate in the enjoyable activities of life. Reserved recluse who lives in total isolation. Label frequently assigned to serial killers or mass murderers on television newscasts.

### DESCRIPTORS:

Weird, standoffish, stuck-up, arrogant, secretive, isolated, mysterious, fearful, boring.

### BOTTOM LINE:

Someone who is somehow *lacking* compared with an extravert.



# INTROVERT

## THE TRUTH

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Contemplative, highly focused thinker who is no more likely to be shy or to lack confidence than anyone else. Lives for one-on-one, substantive conversations, purposeful activities, and meaningful relationships. Is revitalized and re-energized by quiet time alone to think and plan.

### DESCRIPTORS:

Deep, thorough, deliberate, patient, committed, reflective, focused, independent.

### BOTTOM LINE:

Someone who, contrary to stereotype, is *equal* to an extravert—just *different* from extraverts in fundamental ways.



**THE  
BACK STORY**

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# There's Nothing Wrong with Me; I'm Just an Introvert



FOR THE FIRST QUARTER-CENTURY OF MY life, I knew something was wrong with me—seriously wrong. The evidence was everywhere.

When I was four and my mom would say, “Let’s go visit Aunt So-And-So and Uncle What’s-His-Name and the kids after church,” I would think to myself, “Hey, I have an idea: Let’s not! Let’s go home instead. Church is enough for one day.” When we would inevitably go on the visit anyway, I’d be upset. Not crying about it, but wound up inside. I just hid my feelings—most of the time.

When I was in second grade, what was forced upon ... er, presented to me as the opportunity of a theatrical lifetime—starring as Santa Claus in the Christmas play (a role complete with both speaking lines and the kissing of an actual girl)—felt instead like being pushed out in front of a firing squad. I felt the same way when I was forced ... er, asked to sing a solo in the fifth-grade choir concert—despite my love for music in general.

As I continued through my grade-school years, I began to notice that I operated differently from most of the kids I knew. I devoured books; I practically lived at the public library in my hometown of Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. I was a regular—a library mouse, the literary equivalent of a gym rat. I checked out hundreds of books, so many that the librarian—a gentle,

grandma-like woman straight out of central casting—came to know me not only by my name but also by my library card number. (It was 197, for the record. I still have my card.)

If I wasn't reading during those years, I was almost always doing only one other thing: playing some sort of sport—all alone in many cases. Whether it was baseball or football or hockey or basketball or soccer, I found a way to play it by myself. I frequently even “broadcast” the games aloud, ala radio and TV sportscasters, complete with hip intro music and slow-motion replays of close calls at the plate and the like. The neighbors thought I was cute—or weird. Probably both. I felt the same way—just a little less on the cute and significantly more on the weird.

In junior high and, especially, in high school, the wild weekend parties everyone raved about held no appeal for me whatsoever. They actually repelled me. I just couldn't muster up any excitement or desire to take part, and to be honest I didn't particularly try. I didn't see the “fun” in, for example, passing out in one's own vomit in the boys' bathroom stall. I wasn't against partying; I just couldn't figure out how—or why—to be for it.

Even the tame high school dances were way too much for me. When a girl named Shelly invited me—me!—to the MORP (“prom” spelled backwards) dance, I said no, not because I didn't like her or didn't want to be with her, but because the idea of going to a dance was just too overwhelming. (Thanks for trying, Shelly.) And when I finally yielded to the pressure and went to a dance after one of my high school basketball games—following enormous amounts of arm-twisting by my friends, who came to view it as a quest—I lasted a grand total of nine minutes. I had attempted to dance with a girl named

Ranae and what I'd felt with the lights and the music (and Ranae) was not enjoyment but something more akin to the fight-or-flight response of a trapped animal. I ultimately slunk out of the lunchroom and headed straight home. (Thanks for trying, Ranae.). There, my father, even more introverted than I am, just patted me on the back knowingly and didn't say a word about my quivering voice or the tears in my eyes. (Thanks, Dad.)

In college, "fun" was defined by the culture around me in much the same way it was in high school, only on steroids. "Fun" was alcohol-fueled parties in the dorms. That was it. Vomit was still a key element of it all, only then it was usually on the floor or even in the shower stall of our communal bathrooms. Keeping others up at night with booze-soaked shenanigans was not only not discouraged, it was seen by many as a badge of honor—the ultimate sign of a good time, not a bad one. As usual, I just didn't get it—and I felt very alone.

Then I met Lois—the woman who would eventually become my beloved wife of nearly 20 years. We never actually "dated." We simply talked ... and talked ... and talked ... and talked ... and talked. Our "dates" consisted of sitting on the floor of her dorm room, me with my arm around her, talking. We talked about things that really mattered—deep things, inspiring things, dreams, fears. Before long we were inseparable because we had become best friends. Yet I still believed that Lois had fallen in love with me not because of who I was, but in spite of it. I figured she must have been willing to overlook my ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

That wasn't true—but I didn't finally and fully understand until I was 27 years old and I was pursuing a master's degree in counseling. It was there, and then, that I was exposed for the

first time to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® personality assessment. It revealed to me—and it truly was a revelation, worthy of being accompanied by the “sudden insight” music used in cheesy movies—that what I had always regarded as an affliction to be overcome was instead a normal, healthy personality trait that had many strengths and benefits as well as an actual name: *introversion* (whispered in a hushed, reverent tone).

I remember the exact moment of my realization: It was during Career Planning Group training at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in August 1994. It was so validating to tell myself: “Oh, my God! There’s nothing wrong with me—I’m just an introvert!” I actually felt lighter, like a great mystery had been solved at long last.

In the years since, I have been learning all I can about introversion and its many *useful qualities*. I’ve also been unlearning 27 years of negative feedback combined with personal and cultural ignorance and obliviousness where introverts and introversion are concerned.

I’m making progress, and I’m confident I’ll continue to make progress. I know now that introversion exists and, much more critical, that it’s not something to face, it’s something to *embrace*.

Unfortunately, though, we’re still largely blind as a culture, particularly in the United States. Blind. Not on purpose, but out of sheer habit. We simply don’t see the damage that ignorance about introverts and introversion causes, to introverts especially but to extraverts too. We don’t come close to realizing just how many ways the problem infiltrates our lives.

We need to open our eyes—because people are getting hurt.

# A Real Problem, with Tragic Consequences

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THE “PLIGHT OF THE INTROVERT,” TO LABEL it simply, is a real problem. Underappreciated by most people, to be sure, but it’s a real problem nonetheless.

Make that two real problems, with myriad tragic consequences:

1. It’s a real problem when introverts fail to understand—and appreciate—*themselves*.
2. It’s a real problem when extraverts fail to understand—and appreciate—the introverts in their lives.

Let me address the second problem first.

Show me a marriage in which one partner is a stimulation-seeking extravert and the other partner is a solitude-craving introvert and I’ll show you a marriage that is at risk of failing if the two don’t understand and accept each other—a failure that hurts not only the partners themselves but also any children they have.

Show me an extraverted parent who, perhaps unconsciously, expects her introverted son to be just like her—and who, implicitly or explicitly, fears for his future if he doesn’t “come out of his shell”—and I’ll show you a relationship that is likely to be strained and even ugly, particularly during the teen years. (I’ll



also show you a child who's bound to wrestle with an inevitable and troubling question: "What's wrong with me?")

Show me an extraverted teacher who pushes too hard and too fast to get one of his introverted students talking more in school and I'll show you a student who swallows her potential contributions and works instead at finding foolproof ways not to be noticed during classroom discussions.

The first problem is even more potentially heartbreaking.

How many introverts see themselves as somehow so flawed from birth that they never identify and acknowledge their own treasure trove of natural gifts, and thus never share those gifts with the rest of the world?

How many introverts suffer in silence, literally and figuratively, as they desperately try to fit in while fearing that they cannot or realizing they'd rather not, given the extravert mold they think they're trying to fit in *to*?

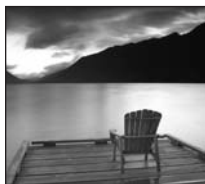
How many introverts would be happier if they only understood the simple things they can do to take better care of themselves and thus feel better physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually?

Someone needs to do something. Someone needs to tell the world how introverts really tick, and why—concisely, clearly, even forcefully at times so that the point will get across.

That someone is me. Not because I have all the answers (I don't), but because if not me, then who?

# I Am Peter Vogt. I Speak for the Introverts.

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I WAS A JOURNALISM MAJOR IN COLLEGE, and in journalism one rule is beaten into you above all others: Stay out of the story you're covering.

Be totally objective. Don't get personally involved. Don't share your own observations about what you're seeing and hearing. Instead, gather the views of others—through interviews as well as extensive research—and share *those* observations, along with relevant facts, in the story you ultimately package for your readers/viewers/listeners.

So when I first contemplated writing *The Introvert Manifesto*, I figured I'd approach it wearing my usual hat: JOURNALIST. I would be objective. I wouldn't get personally involved. I would gather the views of others—through interviews as well as extensive research—and share those observations, along with relevant facts, in the story I ultimately packaged for you.

But I just couldn't do it that way. I just couldn't.

Manifestos aren't written by journalists. They're written by people who are passionate about an issue or concern—people who have something they not only want to say, but need to say.

You can't write a manifesto unless and until you're willing to share your *own* stories and observations—and feelings—about the topic that's driving you to write. You have to write from the heart as well as the head. And you have to take the

risk of being criticized for what you say, the way you say it, and to whom.

Now, I'll admit it's ironic: We introverts aren't naturally prone to sharing our own stories. In fact, we usually prefer to hear the stories of others; it takes less of our own energy, for starters, and it saves us from having to reveal more than we'd like to reveal—to say nothing of the potential for facing criticism.

But as Parker Palmer puts it in his insightful book *Let Your Life Speak*, where he writes eloquently and honestly about his struggles with clinical depression:

The story of my journey is no more or less important than anyone else's. It is simply the best source of data I have on a subject where generalizations often fail but truth may be found in the details.

I, too, am my own best source of data—pulling from 47 years of firsthand, in-the-trenches experience as an introvert in a very extraverted society. So the stories and examples you'll find in these pages are my own. But I've chosen them carefully enough and written them broadly enough so that they'll resonate with all introverts.

When it comes to “letting my life speak” in *The Introvert Manifesto*, I'm thinking far beyond myself. I don't claim to speak here for all introverts in all situations; that's too ego-centric for my nature and a foolish, completely unrealistic goal. But I'm confident—very confident—that I speak for most introverts in most situations, trusting in the wisdom of Julia Cameron, author of *The Right to Write*:

It is a great paradox that the more personal, focused, and specific your writing becomes, the more universally it communicates.

I can't think of a way to be more personal, focused, and specific than to use the first-person voice (e.g., "I do this") rather than the third-person (e.g., "Introverts do this") or even the second-person (e.g., "You do this"). So that's what I've done. As I've written *The Introvert Manifesto*, I've imagined myself in a room full of people who have given me a couple of hours to explain introverts and introversion as accurately and directly as I can. So the "I" in this book isn't just me; it's "I" as in all introverts.

In an ahead-of-its-time environmental book called *The Lorax*, Dr. Seuss—one of my favorite authors—gives the main character a catchphrase that has always stayed with me:

I am The Lorax. I speak for the trees.

For better or worse, rightly or wrongly, I've taken a similar attitude in writing *The Introvert Manifesto*:

I am Peter Vogt. I speak for the introverts.

If you are an introvert, I want *The Introvert Manifesto* to speak both to you and for you—"to you" in the sense that the book resonates with you on a deeply personal level, and "for you" in the sense that you can pass it along to the extraverts in your life and say, "Here's the real scoop on me."

But *The Introvert Manifesto* isn't *only* for us introverts. It's for the extraverts in our lives as well. My hope is that they will also read what I've written here, with our encouragement perhaps, and say to themselves: "I did not know that." And my prayer is that you, fellow introvert, will find in me a kindred spirit whose words make you want to shout: "Finally! Someone *is* doing something! Someone *is* telling the world how introverts tick, and why—concisely, clearly, and even forcefully at times so that the point *is* getting across."

**ABOUT  
THIS BOOK**

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# Blissfully Brief and Blissfully Blunt

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## I FEEL SORRY FOR ALEX GONZALEZ.

Alex is our family's financial advisor. He's a gem in every way: caring, thorough, genuine—the best financial advisor you could ever ask for.

Too bad he has to work with me.

You see, Alex is *really into* financial matters. He loves talking about the nuts and bolts, the nuances, the many possibilities of investing and financial planning.

Me? Not so much. I try to get revved up about money stuff like he is, but typically my efforts are futile. I'm a lost cause.

At one of our semi-annual check-in meetings, when Alex hauled out the obligatory colorful pie charts showing how our mutual fund IRAs were performing, he noticed that both my wife and I were glazing over, with drool coming out of our mouths.

"How are we doing so far?" he innocently asked.

"I'm feigning interest," I couldn't help but reply.

We all had a good laugh. But that incident has stayed with me ever since, and it plays a key role in how I've planned and written this book.

If it isn't obvious by now, I'm *really passionate* about teaching the world how introverts truly tick. I see it as one of my callings. I can't get enough of it.

But I'm guessing that introverts and introversion aren't quite that high on your list of life's big issues. Yes, you're interested in the topic—perhaps even very interested. But I suspect that you don't wake up every morning thinking, "I wonder what I can learn about introverts and introversion today!"

I get it.

That's why I've taken several steps to make this book as inviting—yet still eye-opening—as possible:

**It's short.** The book is only 112 pages, so it meets what I call The Flight Test—you can easily read the whole thing on a two-hour airplane flight.

**It's accessible.** You can jump into this book anywhere you'd like; there's no need to read the pieces in order, nor do you have to read them all at once.

**It's compact.** Each key topic is covered in full on a two-page spread.

Though it is unclear whether he really said it or not, Mark Twain is often credited with making this profound statement in a correspondence with a friend: "If I'd had more time, I'd have written you a shorter letter." I interpret that to mean: I would have respected you enough to gobble up less of your time and energy—and in so doing I would have produced a better manuscript.

That's why I've worked to make this book compelling, yet concise—to be "blissfully brief," as a *Wall Street Journal* book reviewer once put it. Moreover, I've done my utmost to be direct here—blissfully blunt, you might say—but without the junior-high-level mean-spiritedness that too often infiltrates Internet discussions between introverts and extraverts. I don't

find any benefits, for introverts or extraverts, in offering up my own version of *The Sneetches* (I told you I love Dr. Seuss!), pitting the Star-Belly Sneetches whose bellies have stars against the Plain-Belly Sneetches who have none upon thars.

So as I've written this book over these many months, I've adopted a simple mantra—for you and me both:

Less is more. And direct is best.



# What's in a Name? Three Very Carefully Chosen Words

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LET ME BRIEFLY BREAK DOWN THE FULL name of this book, *The Introvert Manifesto: Introverts Illuminated, Extraverts Enlightened*, for there's a deliberate strategy behind the three key words in the title: *Manifesto*, *Illuminated*, and *Enlightened*.

In the beginning, I was actually afraid to use the word “manifesto.” The Unabomber wrote a manifesto, after all. So did Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. And Adolph Hitler. Not exactly names a guy would like to be associated with, if only mistakenly and/or subconsciously.

But I couldn't let “manifesto” go, because to me it simply means something very important to say, something I feel the world needs to hear. Indeed, if you look at the various dictionary definitions of “manifesto,” one in particular stands out:

*Manifesto*—A written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives, or views of its issuer.

So I've evolved from being afraid to use the word “manifesto” to being afraid not to use it.

As for “illuminated” ... well, that word too was a bit of a wrestling match for me. At first I chose “validated.” But as much as I want this book to serve as validation for me and the

other introverts of the world, I also don't want to imply that introverts *need* to be validated.

So I kept looking for a better word, until I had a “Eureka!” moment when I hit on “illuminate” in the dictionary and read one of its definitions:

*Illuminate*—To make clear.

Perfect! I simply want to make introverts clear—to themselves and, as importantly, to the extraverts in their lives.

The choice of “illuminate” led me to the last of the three key words of the title:

*Enlighten*—To make aware.

I want extraverts to simply become more aware of how the introverts in their lives really tick, and why—and of introversion itself as a healthy, normal personality trait. That's all I ask.

One nice bonus with the words “illuminated” and “enlightened”: they're based on light. So I'm shining a light on introverts and introversion. Introverts are too often seen as dark and mysterious. (Have you ever noticed how the perpetrators of mass shootings are frequently described as quiet loners who kept to themselves—and never as gregarious social butterflies?) I'm happy to put introverts in our true light and, in the process, light the way for the extraverts in our lives.

# One Last Thing: There's No Such Thing as an Introvert—or an Extrovert



**CRITICAL CLARIFICATION: I CALL MYSELF** an *introvert*. But that's not really accurate, for two important reasons.

First of all, the personality traits of introversion and extraversion lie on a continuum.

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INTROVERSION

EXTRAVERSION

None of us is purely introverted or purely extroverted. Carl Jung once said that “such a [person] would be in the lunatic asylum.” Rather, we're each a mixture of both traits—and even that mixture fluctuates to some degree depending on our circumstances. If, for example, I'm very passionate about something, I tend to become more extroverted. Conversely, if I'm exhausted after a particularly trying day, I usually become even more introverted than I already am.

Either way, I'm never 100 percent introverted. And therefore I am not—and cannot be—*an introvert*. No one can.

The second reason the terms “introvert” and “extrovert” aren't accurate is just as important. The developers of the popular and extensively researched Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) instrument—the most widely used personality assess-

ment in the world—note that an “introvert” is more accurately described as “a person who *prefers introversion*” or “a person who *tends toward introversion* most of the time.” (Similarly, an “extravert” is more accurately described as “a person who *prefers extraversion*” or “a person who *tends toward extraversion* most of the time.”)

Why does this distinction matter? Well, it matters because I use the terms “introvert” and “extravert” as a form of shorthand throughout this book. It’s a little difficult—not to mention annoying—to write a book about introverts while constantly referring to them as “people who prefer introversion” or “people who tend toward introversion most of the time.” And *The Introvert Manifesto* rolls off the tongue a lot better than *The Manifesto of the Person Who Prefers Introversion Most of the Time*, don’t you think?

If you’re someone who thrives on solitude, needs to think before you speak and/or act, craves depth and substance in your relationships and activities, and longs to focus intently on one thing or person at a time rather than constantly multitasking, you’re probably someone who prefers introversion or tends toward introversion most of the time. I’m going to refer to you as an *introvert*, although you and I know full well that you’re not the exact same person as I or any other introvert out there, thanks to your individual experiences and genetics and dozens of other variables that make you unique.

So with that, let’s begin. Welcome to *The Introvert Manifesto: Introverts Illuminated, Extraverts Enlightened*.

the  
INTROVERT  
MANIFESTO

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Setting the Scenario for  
*The Introvert Manifesto*

*I'm in a room filled with a large group of people who have invited me to explain introverts and introversion once and for all—accurately and decisively. I have their undivided attention for only two hours, so I must carefully balance being concise with speaking my truth straight from the heart.*

*Given this scenario, and pulling from my own personal experiences as well as the extensive research I've done on introverts and introversion, this is what I'd say to our extraverted world—in the first-person voice, and speaking to, for, and on behalf of introverts everywhere.*

# There's Nothing Wrong with Me; I'm Just an Introvert



INTROVERSION IS NOT A DISEASE OR A disorder or a disability. It's not a condition that needs to be cured or overcome. It's a personality trait—no more, no less—just like extraversion, although very different.

But you wouldn't know that considering the ways people talk about introversion in America. Here's just a sampling of the references to introverts/introversion that you'll find, with very little effort, in the media (the *emphases* being mine):

- “Johnny Carson was an *admitted* introvert...”
- “Stress [to the introverted teenager] how *breaking free* from *the grips of introversion* will be challenging...”
- “...quiet and smart, *but* introverted”
- ““Most people don't know that I'm an introvert. I hear this *confession* from *surprisingly* many successful executives.”
- “You might be *suffering from* the *curse of the introvert.*”
- “Numerous politicians, entertainers, and CEOs have earned public acclaim *despite* having an introverted personality.”
- “*Crack* your introversion *shell* ...”
- “There are, however, ways for introverts to *overcome* their natural tendencies ...”

- 
- “I have a *handicap*. ... My *handicap* is being an introvert.”

And my personal favorite:

- “Oh, my God! I’m an introvert!?”

These statements too frequently are viewed as normal and accurate—par for the proverbial course. But what if you took a few of these snippets and substituted the word “extravert/extraversion” for the word “introvert/introversion”? To wit:

- “Johnny Carson was an *admitted* **extravert**...”
- “*Even if* you are an **extravert**, you can boost your business...”
- “Stress [to the extraverted teenager] how *breaking free* from *the grips of* **extraversion** will be challenging...”
- “*Crack* your **extraversion** *shell*...”

And, of course:

- “Oh, my God! I’m an **extravert**!?”

Suddenly, the statements are all ridiculous. You don’t “admit to” being an extravert. There’s no such thing as “the grips of extraversion.” Your “extraversion shell”? C’mon.

Well, the original statements are just as ridiculous.

So let’s lose the “suffer from” already. Enough with the “overcome.”

There’s nothing wrong with me; I’m just an introvert.

Well, actually, there’s plenty wrong with me. We all have our faults. But my introversion isn’t one of them.

No one’s is.

# I've Spent Too Much of My Life Thinking Something *Must Be Wrong with Me*



WHY AM I SO RILED UP ABOUT THIS ISSUE of understanding introverts and introversion? Why does it even matter? Simple: Western culture, particularly in America, has an extravert bias that has had a profound impact on me and introverts in general.

Here in the United States, as well as in much of the rest of the Western world, extraversion is the ideal personality trait—the way of being that brings accolades and respect—while introversion is the “other”—the disquieting way of being that generates unfounded but utterly unmistakable concern.

In our culture, extraversion is the personality trait of choice. It’s the default temperament—the gold standard. Introversion is not only the wrong way to be; it’s something to repair if at all possible. There’s no such thing as an extraversion intervention—but introversion interventions happen every day.

The words we use to describe extraversion and introversion are a dead giveaway as to where our culture comes down on this issue. To wit:



### COMMON SYNONYMS FOR “EXTRAVERTED”

<i>Outgoing</i>	<i>Gregarious</i>	<i>Affable</i>	<i>Open</i>
<i>Congenial</i>	<i>Personable</i>	<i>Effervescent</i>	<i>Demonstrative</i>
<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Sociable</i>	<i>Generous</i>	<i>Warm</i>

### COMMON SYNONYMS FOR “INTROVERTED”

<i>Reserved</i>	<i>Alienated</i>	<i>Secretive</i>	<i>Standoffish</i>
<i>Bashful</i>	<i>Reclusive</i>	<i>Remote</i>	<i>Aloof</i>
<i>Unfriendly</i>	<i>Antisocial</i>	<i>Misanthropic</i>	<i>Cold/Cool</i>

Extraversion is our culture’s baseline. There’s extraverted and there’s everything that’s *not* extraverted. No one thinks in terms of introverted and not introverted, because extraversion is always our starting place. Extraversion is normal, desirable. Introversion—well, not so much.

I’m tired of being the “other.” I demand equal time—and equal respect.

# 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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

# I May or May Not Be Shy



INTROVERSION IS NOT THE SAME AS SHYNESS. Introversion has nothing to do with fear. Shyness *is* fear.

Suppose that when I attend the annual conference of my professional association this year, someone asks me if I'll be going to the networking social after the event is over. My answer is likely to be "no." Is it because I'm *afraid* of talking to all those people, many of whom I may not know? Not at all. I just know that I'll be tapped out by the time the daylong event is over. So I won't want to invest what little energy I have left in attending a networking social. I'd rather go recharge—my way.

Fear plays no part in my decision. I'm just choosing to recharge my mental batteries instead of draining them further. I'm making a straightforward, rational, emotion-free *decision* about how to use my depleted energy.

That's introversion.

Contrast this scenario with, say, my first day of the seventh grade, when I instantaneously fall in love from afar with a gorgeous girl—a girl I see practically every school day from then until graduation. For the next six years, I long to have an actual conversation with this girl—and to ultimately ask her out. But I can't. I'm terrified of how stupid I'll look in her eyes as I babble and stammer—and of how crushing it will be when

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my crush inevitably sends me packing in utter embarrassment and defeat.

As my date-seeking fantasy plays out, I'm not matter-of-factly thinking, "I just don't want to invest my energy in this task." No way. What I'm really thinking is:

If I ask this girl out, I'm going to go up to her and freeze and not know what to say and then I'll start talking and sound like a fool and then what a dumb ass I'll be and then she'll see what a dumb ass I am and then she'll reject me and then I'll just keel over and die right there in front of her and then everyone will laugh because I died trying to ask a girl out.

That's shyness—social anxiety running amok.

Shyness is something anyone—introvert or extravert—can struggle with. But only some introverts are shy. I may *or may not* be one of them.

# The 4 Pillars of Introvert Well-Being



AFTER YEARS OF THINKING ABOUT IT—and experiencing it—I now finally know what’s happening to me when I’m feeling my absolute worst: when I’m exhausted, crabby, impatient, biting sarcasm, frustrated, overwhelmed .... you get the idea.

Broadly speaking, it boils down to 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.

When I’m at my worst:

- I’m not getting enough time to—and for—myself.
- I have no time to think.
- I’m being pulled in way too many directions at once.
- I’m involved in too many surface-level, trivial activities—and too few significant ones.

Thankfully, knowing these symptoms about myself points directly to my cure for “worsitis.” It’s a simple model I call *The 4 Pillars of Introvert Well-Being*.

To be my psychological, emotional, spiritual, and even physical best, here’s what I need in my life—in order of priority:

- *Solitude*—Quiet time alone each day to decompress from the day’s activities and then recharge my mental and emotional batteries.

- *Reflection*—The chance each day to carefully and thoroughly think about what I’m doing, what I’m going to be doing, and what I’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.
- *Depth*—True substance in my daily conversations, interactions, and activities.

These four “pillars” hold up the “roof” that is my well-being as an introvert, like this:



If I don’t tend to these critical needs each day, I’m at real risk of losing my balance or even collapsing. That’s what’s already happened when I’m at my worst—and so I need to rebuild my pillars to restrengthen myself, and thus become stable and secure once again.

# I Don't Just Want My Alone Time; I Need It



SOLITUDE IS THE CORNERSTONE—THE *cornerstone*—of my mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. I need solitude in my life like I need food and water and shelter in my life. It's not optional; it's required.

And I know it.

So I will go to great lengths to have the place to myself. In my world, “give me some space” is a directive to be taken literally as well as figuratively. I need a physical place to call my own—an office with a door, a cozy den, an under-the-radar walking trail or coffee shop—as well as physical distance away from other people, where I won't feel smothered. I need emotional air.

If, by sheer happenstance, some alone time falls out of the sky and into my lap, I do a little happy dance ... for real. But usually I'm not that lucky. Usually I need to be actively strategic about getting my alone time. It takes careful planning and, often, a bit of creativity mixed with a pinch of sacrifice.

If I'm going out of town for a professional meeting, for instance, I'll gladly pay twice as much for my own hotel room rather than share a room—especially if I'm dealing with a known extravert! At college, I'll go to the library on Friday or Saturday evening precisely *because* most everyone else is out partying—not *in spite* of it. At home I'll stay up 'til 3 a.m.—or



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wake up at 3 a.m.—if, in return, I’m rewarded with even just 30 minutes of blissful solitude. If I have to choose between alone time and sleep, I’ll take the alone time, thank you very much. I can sleep when I’m dead.

I plan for my alone time. I plot for my alone time. I finagle and juggle for my alone time, the same way extraverts look for activity and social interaction. I all but put alone time on my calendar—because if it’s not a part of my life, well, then I don’t have much of a life.

And I’m not alone.

# Alone Isn't the Same as Lonely



I GENUINELY ENJOY BEING BY MYSELF for significant periods of time. I look forward to it. I purposefully seek out alone time each day. It's a gift I give myself, not a predicament that I struggle to escape. It's something I need more of, not less.

Alone, you see, isn't the same as *lonely*. Alone time isn't the same as *loneliness*.

I can and frequently do *choose* to be alone. And I'm able to move into and out of my alone time basically as I please. It's largely under my control, even if I'm in a public place like a coffee shop or a library. (Sometimes I want to be alone with a few other people around!)

Loneliness, on the other hand, is something no one would choose. Loneliness carries with it a built-in desire for—but lack of—companionship. No one prays for loneliness. But each day, I do indeed pray that I'll be able to carve out even just a little alone time ... somehow.

So if my prayer is answered and I'm clearly basking in some concentrated, peaceful time by myself, please—*please*—don't “rescue” me from it. Rescuing is for crises, not pursuits; it's saving from a bad thing, not depriving of a good thing. I know you mean well. But I'm not lonely, I assure you. I'm just opting

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for some revitalizing time away from everything and everyone, away from emotional noise and mental distraction.

Say nothing. Do nothing.

If you must rescue me, rescue me from yourself—and from anyone and everyone else who might, with the best of intentions, unknowingly take this precious recharging time away from me. Rescue me too from the phone ... and the television ... and the computer ... and the doorbell ... and every other disruption that might ring, ping, or ding.

Let me be. I'm not lonely; I'm just being alone.

# My Wanting to Be Alone Has Nothing to Do with You



*"IT'S NOT YOU; IT'S ME."*

Ever had a relationship end, maybe even before it began, on that devastating little statement? When you're hit with it, you can't help but feel personally rejected. You're bound to believe the exact opposite of the line you've just been fed. "Hell," you naturally conclude, "it *must* be me." And who knows? Maybe you're right.

It hurts. I get it.

But it's not the same thing if I politely decline your invitation to go out for a drink after the workshop ends, or to get together with the guys for nine holes of golf after work, or to have a cookout at your place to celebrate the long weekend, or to ... well, do whatever it is you have in mind. Why? Because it really is not you; it's me.

I'm likely turning you down for a totally innocuous reason. As the introvert I am, I just need some alone time.

Translation: It's not that I don't want to spend time with *you specifically* right now; it's that I don't want to spend time with *anyone* right now. When I need to be alone to think and recharge, I need to be away from all of humanity—seven billion and counting.

You could be my best friend. You could be my future spouse. You could be my son or my daughter. It wouldn't matter. If

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you catch me at a time when I'm in dire need of some revitalizing solitude, I'm going to make a bolt for that solitude.

I don't think of it as running *away* from *you*; I think of it, truly, as running *toward* silence and calm—leaving *everyone* behind for now but certainly not forever.

It's not personal rejection of you. It's personal protection of me.

# If I Don't Take Time to Recharge in Relative Solitude, I Get Cranky ... with You and Me Both



I PAY A REAL, TANGIBLE PRICE WHEN I don't get enough quiet alone time. Solitude allows me to tidy up and put away all the accumulated emotional and mental clutter in my life. If I don't get to do that, I'm constantly distracted by all that clutter. And before I know it, I'm cranky and irritable and generally miserable to be around.

It's as though my internal circuits are hopelessly overloaded with stimuli. I respond by frying—by lashing out in anger and frustration. I find myself in dire need of a human CTRL-ALT-DEL.

(I'm not proud of this, by the way, nor am I ashamed. I'm just telling the difficult truth.)

Unfortunately, I'm prone to directing a good chunk of my aggravation toward the other people in my life. They can all tell you—and remind me—when I haven't had enough solitude. It's when it seems they can do nothing right in my eyes. It's when the usually harmless “Dad, can I ask you a question?” or “Honey, can you put the laundry in?” or “I want to watch ‘Dora the Explorer’” or even “Meow, meow, meow” (“Please pet me now”) from the cat sends me into the stratosphere—and, too often, the people I care about are collateral damage.

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It's just that I can't take one more living creature wanting something from me.

You know what's truly eye-opening, though? The person I'm really annoyed at in these situations isn't someone else.

It's me.

Because I know better.

I understand full well that, as an introvert, if I don't naturally stumble upon the good fortune of some quiet alone time each day, I need to *create* it somehow. Whenever I fail in that regard, I can only look in the mirror and say, "Dummy, you know you can't survive without solitude."

So if I get bent out of shape about guarding or pursuing my alone time, please try to understand me. My motives are pure: I'm just trying to preserve the atmosphere—for everyone.

# I Do My Best Work Alone



## TEAMWORK IS OVERRATED.

Don't get me wrong, Teamwork is crucial, even essential, in some situations. But so too is working independently. On a scale of 1 to 10, I'd give teamwork an importance rating of only 6 or 7. Soloing, on the other hand, is 9 or 10 in my world.

The truth—my truth—is that I almost always do my best, most satisfying work not when I'm collaborating with someone but, rather, when I'm handling things myself. I focus better, I think better, I execute better, and I ultimately perform better. I start better and I finish better. Both the journey and the destination are more satisfying. I'm simply more confident and competent when the team consists of me, myself, and I.

It's not that I *can't* work and play well with others (to borrow a phrase from my third-grade report card). It's not even that I don't like to work and play well with others, because I often do. It's just that, given a choice—a real, no-pressure-or-hidden-expectations choice—I'll usually want to go it alone. It just works better for me.

So if final exams are coming up, it's nothing personal: I just don't want to sit with three or four or ten other people at the library and study via conversations and back-and-forth



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quizzing. I want—and in some ways need—to hunker down somewhere quiet and master the material by myself, my way.

On the job, I almost certainly won't come up with my best ideas at a meeting or during a group brainstorming session. Instead, I'll bring some possibilities *to* the gathering, having worked them out on my own ahead of time. Or, even more likely, my best ideas—and therefore my best possible contributions—will gel in my mind after the gathering ends, once I've had time, alone, to reflect on the discussions and carefully integrate the group's thinking with my own.

It's a less common way of operating, particularly in our team-oriented educational and occupational settings, not to mention the broader culture. But it's not an inferior way of operating, nor is it an ineffective one. It's quite the opposite, in fact—something I can easily prove ... by myself.

# I Need Time—Often Lots of It—to Piece My Thoughts Together



THINK OF THE LAST 1,000-PIECE JIGSAW puzzle you did. First, you dumped the pieces out of the box and onto a table. You then had before you a pile of disorganized cardboard chunks—chunks with the potential for becoming something, of course, but disorganized chunks just the same.

You were confident that, with time and patience, the mess would slowly develop into the beautiful picture on the front of the box. So you began turning all the pieces right-side up. Then you found all the pieces with straight edges so that you could put together the outside frame. Next, you made rough guesses—judging by color, perhaps, or by a sliver of photograph—as to where the various pieces ought to fit. And finally, you worked painstakingly—perhaps for days or even weeks—to put each and every piece in its proper place in order to turn disorganized cardboard chunks into a complete picture.

My introverted brain works exactly the same way when it comes to handling anything beyond the most utterly straightforward, black-and-white situations of life.

My thoughts and reactions begin in a jumble, chaos. But I have a process. I start turning them over in my mind so I can identify the ones that make the most sense generally—the ones that will frame my coherent response to the issue in front

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of me. Next, I make some initial organizational decisions about which thoughts relate with which and where they all ought to fit into my analysis and synthesis. And finally, I work painstakingly—perhaps for days or even weeks—to put each and every piece of the data into its proper place so that my final conclusion(s) on the issue will be clear and complete, accurate and defensible.

I need time to think—often lots of it—before I speak or act. I won't usually make reflex decisions or offer quick solutions. But if you give me the time I need to piece my thoughts together carefully, I'll almost always give you good decisions and good solutions.

Get the picture?

# Just Because I'm Not Talking Doesn't Mean I'm Not Engaged



I TEND TO LISTEN FAR MORE THAN I TALK, especially with new people and in new situations. I also tend to listen for quite a long time before I do talk. And on occasion I just listen without talking at all.

It means I'm engaged—not *disengaged*.

Listening quietly, and letting my brain's gears process what's being said, isn't the same as not caring or not having anything to contribute. I do care. And I may very well have something to contribute ... eventually. That's precisely why I'm being so quiet—for now. I'm digesting.

When I'm silent, I'm tuning *in*—not out. I'm gathering information, sifting it and sorting through it in my head, and thoughtfully integrating it with my own knowledge, feelings, and experiences. It's a combination of data processing and idea/feedback formulation that takes not only time but quiet contemplation as well. And quiet contemplation and talking don't mix in my world. The contemplation comes first, and the talking—if I'll be doing any—follows naturally.

So if we're in a meeting at work and 45 minutes pass without my saying a word, don't be concerned or shocked or annoyed. I *am* participating. If only you could see and hear my mental gears turning during all the back-and-forth discussion. My contributions are likely to come near the end of the

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meeting, or perhaps even afterward in a well-thought-out written reflection.

If you're my spouse and you've been telling me about the difficult day you've had at work or with the kids, I'm more apt to nod my head and hold your hand instead of carrying on a running conversation with you or, worse, telling you what to do about your struggles. I'm demonstrating my love for you by keeping my mouth shut and my ears open, not the reverse.

So please know: When I'm not saying anything, it's not because I don't care. It's because I *do*.

# One at a Time, Please— That's My Focus



IN A PERFECT WORLD, I'D ALWAYS BE ABLE to talk with one person at a time so that she would hear me and I would hear her. I'd get to complete a discussion with one person before going on to a new discussion with the next. That way I'd have the chance to fully digest what Person A and I have talked about before proceeding to chat with Person B.

In a perfect world, I'd take on only one important task at a time, and I would be able to finish it before taking on another. I'd get to zero in completely on the job at hand, without distraction or interruption or undue haste, and thus with maximum concentration so that I'd do it well and do it efficiently. I'd have the chance to hit Deadline A before proceeding to Deadline B.

In a perfect world, I'd tackle only one dilemma at a time and resolve it before being thrown into the next one; I wouldn't be pulled in a dozen directions at once. At work, I'd get the new accounting software fully installed and working smoothly before having to move on to the networking software upgrade. At home, I'd finish helping my son with his homework conundrum before calling to figure out why the health insurance company took an extra 15 bucks for my pre-

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mium payment this month. I'd have the chance to fix Problem A before proceeding to Problem B.

I know the world *isn't* perfect, of course, so I do the best I can with what's thrown at me and when. But if I could choose—and increasingly I'm learning that I often *can* choose, despite our culture's obsession with multitasking—I'd choose one at a time over many at once. I'd choose singular focus over cognitive overload. I'd choose attention surplus over attention deficit.

Multitasking? Overrated. Careful focus? Underappreciated.

# I Hate Being Interrupted— Which Is Why I Also Hate Interrupting



WHEN YOU ASK ME, “AM I INTERRUPTING?”—well, you almost certainly are.

I tend to broadcast pretty obvious signals when I’m in the middle of something important and I’m trying to tap into The Zone—that heady place where my concentration is at its peak, my focus is at its most intense, and my thinking and therefore my productivity are at their best. I shut my office door. I put my phone on Do Not Disturb or turn it off completely. I ignore my email. I avoid eye contact with other people, or avoid people altogether. I essentially hide out and hunker down, alone, away from the world and its abundant distractions.

Why? Because I know how difficult it is—in terms of both the effort it takes and the environment it requires—for me to get into The Zone or The Flow or whatever you want to call it. And perhaps even more crucially, I know that it’s even more difficult, if not impossible, to recreate The Zone once it’s been snatched away from me by an often unnecessary intrusion that could have easily waited even just a few minutes—or that, better yet, could have been handled via a non-invasive tool like my very good friend email.

If the building’s on fire, OK: interrupt me. But if it can wait—and it usually can—will you please just leave me alone for the time being until I emerge from The Zone?



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In return, I won't interrupt *you* when *you're* in the middle of something. In fact, now you know *why* I won't interrupt you when it seems you're in the middle of something: I'm so averse to interruptions myself—even in something as simple as a typical conversation—that I naturally try not to inflict them upon the other people in my life and work.

So if your office door is shut, I won't knock. If I need to communicate something to you, I'll probably email you instead of calling you because an email is less likely to get on your nerves, in my mind at least. If you're talking to someone and I need to speak with you, I'll try again later instead of wedging myself into your conversation.

Unless, of course, the building's on fire.

# I'd Much Rather Be Thorough Than Fast



THERE ARE CERTAIN TIMES IN LIFE WHEN speed clearly matters. If I'm about to be hit by a Mack truck, for example, pondering the possibilities would be an inappropriate and ineffective response; it's the kind of response that would be my last. "Run!"—simultaneous thought and action—makes much more sense. There's no time to lose.

But most of the time, in my typical non-life-threatening activities, I prefer to take my time. With rare exceptions, I just don't understand what the big rush is, especially when I want to get it right—the first time. In my world, getting it right involves critical thinking, careful planning, and deliberate execution. "Careful" implies investing time, not mindlessly racing against it.

It's too strong a position for me to argue that speed kills. But it certainly undermines, especially if blindly pursued for its own sake. I usually don't want to—maybe even can't—be a part of it. In fact, I'm more likely to do what I can to avoid having to hurry. I'll start on a challenging task sooner, stay at it after hours, or both. I'll consider as many of the task's potential problems and pitfalls as I can well ahead of deadline so that I can have a thoughtful, comprehensive plan of action all ready to go. And if I'm faced with choosing between finished-yet-significantly-flawed vs. as-yet-incomplete-but-solid, I'll

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take the latter virtually every time—because to me, quality trumps not only quantity but also velocity.

Call me slow if you must; I call myself deliberate and thorough. With me, you'll always get all the i's dotted and all the t's crossed. My motto isn't "Slow and steady wins the race." It's "Why are we racing?"

Unless a Mack truck is roaring toward me.

# I Crave *Depth* in My Life— in Conversations, in Relationships, in Activities ... in Practically Everything



## I THRIVE ON *DEPTH*.

If I'm having a conversation with you, for example, I'd rather focus quietly on you—and you alone—for half an hour or an hour instead of 15 or 20 fleeting seconds ... and to have you focus on me—and me alone—for that length of time. I'd like to actually talk *with* you, not at you or through you or around you on my way to someone or somewhere else. I'd like our interaction to be fruitful. I long to discuss the things that really matter in life, with people who have the time and interest, patience and purpose, curiosity, and listening skills to do so. That's depth.

I'd rather have one incredibly close and trusting relationship than a dozen loose affiliations that are little more than acquaintanceships. If you're a budding friend, I want to really get to know you—and I want you to really get to know me. I want to develop a genuine bond with you, built over time and grounded in true understanding and earned trust. That's depth.

I'd rather be a committed, focused specialist in one field of interest than a dabbling generalist trying, probably unsuccessfully, to chase down eight or nine topics. I want to sink my teeth into whatever I do, to become an expert over the long

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haul for the long haul. I want to devote myself fully and completely to understanding my topic forward and backward and sideways and up and down. That's depth.

Depth excites me. Depth engages me. Depth empowers me. Depth *energizes* me.

# What Energizes You Drains Me—and Vice Versa



SUPPOSE YOU'RE AN EXTRAVERT. PICK ANY typical, everyday activity you can think of—anything at all. Chances are, if that activity energizes you as an extravert, it will drain me as an introvert. You'll like it; me, not so much. You'll think it's perfectly wonderful; I'll think it's perfectly awful.

Let me show you:

## YOU THE EXTRAVERTED ...

... will be jazzed by the idea of going to a party and mingling with other people—especially new people.

... will go on Facebook and tell all your “friends” that you’re wondering to yourself (ha!) why you ordered that triple-hot burrito for lunch.

## I THE INTROVERTED ...

... will only half-facetiously pray to be hit by a bus on the way to the party, thus saving my sanity.

... will wonder why you can think of nothing more substantive to do than go on Facebook and tell all your “friends” about your burrito-related decisions.

And, of course, things that I like to do probably won't interest you or seem normal:

### I THE INTROVERTED ...

... will view a weekend alone at a nearby retreat center as a gift that's almost too good to be true.

... will spend a half-hour crafting just the right words in an email.

### YOU THE EXTRAVERTED ...

... will view a weekend alone at a nearby retreat center as a short stretch in prison.

... will wonder why the hell I didn't just take two minutes and call.

We're temperamental opposites, you and I—er, E and I. But if we understand that about each other, oh, how our lives will change for the better!

If we're co-workers, I'll agree to call you with my questions if you agree to email me with yours. And I'll stop by your office each morning to catch up for a few minutes if you quit stopping by my office later in the day to say hi—for 20 long minutes—when I'm in the middle of something.

If we're married, you and I will go to some parties and say “no thanks” to others. Or, better yet, sometimes I'll stay home and you'll go to the party with my blessing—not to mention my thanks for leaving me at home, alone. Bye!

If we go to the same church, I'll let you pray aloud if you let me pray in silence.

Neither one of us—you the more extraverted nor I the more introverted—is “right” or “more normal.” We just have different—yet equally valuable—temperaments.

# I Don't Strive to Become More Extraverted



HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THE SUBTLE and not-so-subtle cues our culture gives us to strive toward extraversion—and thus away from the perceived personality albatross of introversion?

If it weren't so aggravating it would be laughable. One case in point, among hundreds I could cite, is a ridiculous article that begins like this:

## **FROM INTROVERT TO EXTRAVERT IN 4 EASY STEPS**

Being an introvert sure can complicate your life. Your performance in school, your job and career, your relationships with friends and co-workers—these can all suffer. Transformation, though, is easier than it sounds. Here are four easy steps to change from introvert to extravert.

The comment I wrote in the margin while reading this article was simply “AAAARRRRRRGGGGHHHH!” Why? Because, like too many other articles, it portrays extraversion as the correct, healthy way to be and introversion as the incorrect, unhealthy way to be. And, even worse, because it assumes that all of us introverts spend our days desperately searching for resources that will magically help us cure ourselves of our affliction and become the extraverts we long to be.



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News flash, world: I don't want to be an extravert. I want to be *understood* by extraverts, but I have no need or desire to be anyone but myself.

So stop with all the efforts to change me, unconscious or innocent as they may be. Stop trying to convince me to “come out of my shell.” I don't have a shell to come out of—and even if I did, who the hell are you to tell me how, or even if, I should come out of it? Who do you think you are?

I know who I am: I'm an introvert—and I like me.

# I Don't Ask You to Defend Your Extraversion, So Don't Ask Me to Defend My Introversion



## SCENE 1

*Extravert:* You're coming to the party tonight after work, aren't you?

*Introvert:* Oh, I don't know ....

*Extravert:* You've got to! Everyone's going to be there! C'mon! It'll be fun!

*Introvert:* I don't think so ....

*Extravert:* Why not?! You don't want to miss out on all the excitement, do you?

*Introvert:* I don't know. We'll see. [sigh]

## SCENE 2

*Introvert:* You're going to be doing some quiet alone time tonight after work, aren't you?

*Extravert:* Oh, I don't know ....

*Introvert:* You've got to! No one's going to be there! C'mon! It'll be fun!

*Extravert:* I don't think so ....

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*Introvert:* Why not?! You don't want to miss out on all the solitude, do you?

*Extravert:* I don't know. We'll see. [sigh]

Scene 1 unfolds, sometimes blatantly, sometimes more subtly, almost daily in my life as an introvert.

Scene 2 has never occurred a single time in the history of humanity. It's utterly ridiculous, to introverts and extraverts alike. In fact, Scene 2 in reality is more likely to consist of simply a single line:

*Introvert:* See you Monday. [exits]

If you're an extravert, do you have any idea how often I'm badgered—explicitly or, much more likely, implicitly—to defend my introversion and the choices I make because of it? You're probably not even aware of it happening. The pressure to explain myself is unrelenting—and too often, I've foolishly enabled it by going along with it.

I'm done.

My decisions are my decisions. That's it. Please respect them—no defense.

# My Introversion Fluctuates by Situation



AT TIMES I TURN INTO AN EXTRAVERT—OR so it must seem. I’m more chatty and sociable than usual. I have more energy in both my words and my behaviors, and I’m engaged more than normal with the people and/or activities around me.

What’s happened to the introvert you used to know, just when you thought you had me figured out?

Nothing. Don’t be fooled; it’s just that, perplexing as it might be, my tendency toward introversion fluctuates to some degree depending on the situation.

For example:

- I’m less introverted (more extraverted) among people I already know well and with whom I have something substantive. Family members and close friends come immediately to mind here, but they’re not the only people. I may not have seen my college roommate for years, but I’ll easily and happily slip into reminiscing with him about the high jinks of yesteryear. If the other parents at my daughter’s preschool are discussing a matter of grave concern—bedtime strategies, perhaps, or managing naturally curly hair—I’ll readily and comfortably join right in.
- I’m less introverted (more extraverted) when I’m involved in an activity or a discussion that is substantive in my eyes

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and therefore significant to me. In my mind, if I'm going to spend the considerable energy involved in doing or saying something, there had better be a worthy payoff. Appealing depth and opportunities for learning both fit the bill. Small talk and shallowness, not so much. So don't be surprised if, for instance, I raise my hand to ask a question of the author who's hosting a workshop on an intriguing topic. If my purpose is worth the extraverting, I'll do it.

- I'm less introverted (more extraverted) in calm, relatively quiet one-on-one interactions vs. free-for-all group interactions. If I can hear the other person speak—and I can hear myself think—then I'm engrossed. If I'm blinded by the lights and drowning in the loud music and noise, I'm toast.

I am and always will be an introvert at my core. But I do have an extraverted side—and like a deer at dusk, it emerges to reveal itself under the right conditions.

# When I'm Passionate About Something, I'll Out-Extravert Most Extraverts



PASSION WILL TURN ME INTO ONE ENTHUSIASTIC, persuasive, dare I say charismatic extravert—temporarily, at least.

If I really love something—or, more aptly, if I really believe in something—you're going to hear about it, and so will many others, in ways you wouldn't typically expect from an introvert and in unexpected settings.

Normally, for example, I'm not much for public speaking. But give me a subject that's near and dear to me and I not only want to talk about it, I almost need to. It could be with the family around the kitchen table at Thanksgiving, in a small staff meeting, or even in front of a large workshop. If I'm passionate about it, I'll transform into an extravert right before your very eyes. You'll be amazed.

Don't be.

Passion explains why I'm occasionally the last person sticking around after a conference keynote presentation, chattering away about some thought-provoking concept with other audience members or even the keynoter. Passion explains why—contrary to the popular myth about introverts—I can be a gifted and highly successful salesperson or seminar leader or business

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owner. Passion is what drives the introverted musician into the recording studio and the introverted actor onto the movie set—and it drives both of them to perform live in front of crowds of hundreds, thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of people.

Passion trumps introversion. Passion catalyzes traits like depth of understanding and careful thought and intense focus and thorough preparation—empowering me to share with the world what really matters, in a way that’s easily and understandably mistaken for extraversion.

But it’s not extraversion; it’s introversion with a passion turbocharge.

# Under Extreme Duress, I Become Even More Introverted Than Usual



WHEN I'M FACING SOMETHING THAT'S exceptionally stressful or scary, I find strength in my best, most reliable self. And that's my introverted self.

I make a beeline for quiet solitude and focused, deep reflection. Do I want to talk about what's going on? I highly, highly doubt it—at least not right away. I want to simply chew on it—by myself and at length—first and foremost. I may even shut you and everyone else out of my life for a time as I work through the stressor(s) as best I can.

Please understand: I'm not running away from you when this happens; I'm running toward me—my strongest me. I'm simply looking for a safe port where I can get out of the storm and begin the process—my process—of dealing with the issue(s) at hand.

You may inaccurately—and unfairly—label my approach as withdrawal. I call it regrouping, because in many ways I don't even know what to do or say, to you or anyone else, unless and until I unscramble my complicated thoughts and feelings and reactions. The stress rattles me. And the only way I know to get unrattled is to go inside myself to calmer waters.

So if my wife has been diagnosed with Stage IV cancer ... or my mother is staring Alzheimer's disease in the face ... or my son is struggling to make friends at school ... or my daughter is throwing up so much that her head starts spinning ... or



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I'm wrestling with what to do next in my life, look for me to go into full-on introvert mode. It's not even a conscious choice on my part; it's just what I do, automatically. It's all I know.

It's not forever, though. Eventually I'll undoubtedly want to talk with someone, maybe you, about what's going on. And chances are I'll find it very helpful when I do.

But the timing is up to me.

First, I need to *be* me—*for* me.

# My Idea of Fun Is Almost Nothing Like Your Idea of Fun— and It's Often Ridiculed



FUN IS PERSONAL; THERE IS NO UNIVERSAL, precise definition of the concept—or at least there shouldn't be.

Unfortunately, the Western world tends to think of fun in terms of extraverts: parties, gatherings, excitement, stimulation. If I say I'm not interested, the reaction is too often "You'll miss all the fun!"—even though I know I won't. Any activity or situation that doesn't involve people and sensory stimulation is, well, no fun.

People tell me, for example, that Disney World is fun and that I should practically be willing to raid my kids' college fund for the chance to party with Mickey and his friends. But if I won a vacation trip to Orlando, I'd much rather rent a car to drive 75 miles east or 100 miles west, so that I could park a lawn chair on an isolated beach and feel the ocean waves lapping at my feet—alone.

When friends and family members ask what I want for my birthday, I'm prone to saying, "A night by myself with a good book and no interruptions." And you know what? I really, truly mean it. I'm not being coy and subtly nudging them to throw me a surprise party. So if they throw the surprise party anyway and then wonder why I seem less thrilled about it

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than they had hoped, I wonder why they're the ones doing the wondering.

Fun, for me, is the bookstore ... or a walk around the lake with my beloved ... or the Sunday crossword puzzle in *The New York Times* ... or listening to Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon" on noise-reducing headphones ... or playing catch and catching up with a college buddy on a sunny summer day ... or having the golf course to myself for nine holes in the lengthening evening shadows ... or feeding the ducks at the park.

Roll your eyes if you must. Just know this: I don't make fun of your fun. Please don't make fun of mine.

# No Matter How Much Fun I'm Having, I'll Be Drained When It's Over



NO MATTER HOW MUCH FUN I MIGHT have during a stimulating activity of some sort—particularly a group interaction—I can guarantee you this: I'm going to be utterly shot when it's over. Not just tired.

Drained. Depleted. Used up. Exhausted. I'll have absolutely nothing left for anything or anyone else. I'll be all wrung out.

That's why I won't really want to go out for dinner after the movie. That's why I won't care to go to the networking social after the thought-provoking conference. That's why I'd just as soon not have an elaborate graduation party after the graduation ceremony. It's not disinterest on my part. It's the threat of disintegration.

(And this is how I react to *good* experiences! You can just imagine what I'll want to do—and, even more important, what I'll *not* want to do—after a *bad* experience.)

It's nothing personal. And I certainly don't intend to be annoying or mystifying. It's just that I can only be “on” for so long before I go completely dead. The energy bleeds right out of me as time goes by, even when I'm enjoying the activity. Managing all that stimulation takes a real mental and emotional toll on me.

Think of me as having a battery. Just as, for instance, a real-life computer battery drains whether you're playing games or

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doing your taxes, so too my internal battery drains whether I'm having a ball or beating my head on the wall. Interaction consumes my energy until my internal battery is dead or close to it. I need to recharge it before I can be of further use.

# Too Much Noise and Commotion Takes a Physical and Psychological Toll on Me—Especially When I Can't Control It



I CAN SING IN THE CAR WITH THE BEST OF them. You may find it contradictory, but it's not at all unusual for me to crank the car stereo and belt out, say, Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" to a screaming imaginary audience of ... one—me. I'm extraverting in a big way—but on my own terms and, especially, on my own timeline. It's all under control—my control.

The way I behave is usually just the opposite in *overstimulating* environments. Typically, noise—especially noise I can't limit or eliminate—hurts me. And I mean that literally as well as figuratively; it makes my brain hurt, whether I'm referring to my thoughts and feelings or to my brain matter itself.

That's why I rarely attended the parties in high school—and why, when I did, I was so miserable. It wasn't shyness, though it certainly could have played a role. I just couldn't take the physical and mental pounding from the deafening music and the relentless flashing lights and the alcohol-fueled verbal ramblings and outbursts.

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Now you know why, during professional gatherings, I often take temporary refuge in a restroom stall or on a walk completely off site—especially in the midst of the networking events or the vendor exhibits. I don't mind interacting for a little while; it can be fun and often quite productive. But it doesn't take long for me to reach my limit—and I've learned to know when to say when, to listen to that little voice that says, "Take a break now."

I make exceptions to my no-noise rule when I know the return on my energy investment will be worth it. If Journey ever reunites with former lead singer Steve Perry and then comes to my town, I'll be there—because now we're talking magical, musical genius, not noise. If my hockey team makes the Stanley Cup playoffs and a ticket to Game 7 somehow lands in my lap, you'd better believe I'll use it—because that's potentially history in the making, not noise.

Most of the time, though, I intentionally limit or even avoid noisy situations. What I get from them usually isn't worth what they take out of me.

# Surprises Drain Me



I TRY TO PREPARE FOR LIFE'S SURPRISES.

Seriously.

It's actually more accurate, I suppose, to say that I go through my days trying to avoid being surprised. Why? Because surprises zap my energy more than almost anything I can think of. Surprises—even seemingly good ones—really take the wind out of my psychological and emotional sails. And I'm very aware of the impact. Surprises throw me off for hours or even an entire day. So I naturally do what I can to sidestep them.

On the job, for example, I know I won't be at my best when I have to wing it. I can do it, if necessary; that's not the issue. But I'll perform exponentially better if I can prepare ahead of time. So I do—just in case of a possible surprise.

And part of that preparation likely involves a very simple question I will ask of you as, say, my colleague or my boss: “What can I do to prepare for this \_\_\_\_\_ (meeting, presentation, project, etc.)?” I'll be quite grateful if you respond with a few specifics. And I'll be doubly grateful—not to mention impressed—if you just start clueing me in on such things ahead of time, without my having to ask.

If you're my child, please don't wait until the very last second before you tell me you need a sketchbook for school *today*, when the morning bell rings in 37 minutes. I'll still handle the



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situation; I'm a parent, after all. But you could have saved me and my psychological battery a whole lot of juice depletion by telling me about this, oh, last night ... or, preferably, sooner.

If you're my spouse, I love you—but please don't throw a huge surprise party for my birthday. I know it might be fun—perhaps even more fun than I might expect. I may be, well, surprised by my reaction! But I would so much rather go out to dinner with you, alone, somewhere quiet and romantic. Being the center of attention at a party—especially when I'm not ready for it—drains me. I know it's not socially acceptable to not enjoy a surprise party. But it's the truth.

Surprise!

# I Don't Want the Spotlight—at Least Not for Its Own Sake



I TYPICALLY DON'T LIKE BEING THE CENTER of attention. The spotlight is unsettling for me. It doesn't make me feel special; it makes me feel unnecessarily and uncomfortably exposed. So I tend to avoid it when I can.

But there's an important exception to my usual policy: I *would* like to be known and recognized for my substantive ideas and accomplishments. I not only won't mind if you take a moment in our staff meeting to briefly laud something I've achieved; I'll welcome that short time in the sun, and I'll most definitely appreciate your sincerity in recognizing what I've done.

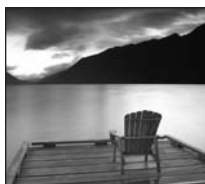
I'd much rather be known for what I contribute than for, say, the new sweater or haircut I'm wearing or the fact that it's my birthday.

Know, too, on a related front, that I'm highly unlikely to sing my own praises—either subtly or vocally—on much of anything. I'm not going to put out my own press release in any form (e.g., an email telling everyone what I've done, a Facebook posting touting my excellence). I'd much rather simply allow my activities and accomplishments to speak for themselves—and cause others to speak about them. I'll be grateful if you simply notice them and, if appropriate, offer me a quick pat on the back for them. That's spotlight enough for me.

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There's a difference, you see, between being the center of attention for the wrong reason(s) and being the center of attention for the right reason(s). There's also a difference between having the spotlight thrust upon me and having the ability to control when it's turned on ... and by whom ... and, especially, why. If and when the spotlight falls upon me, I want it to subtly highlight—not make me do a slow burn.

# I'm Not *Private*; I Just Have a Robust “Worth Sharing” Filter



THINKING OF ME AS A “PRIVATE” PERSON backhandedly suggests that I have a hidden trove of breaking news to share with the rest of the world—but that I intentionally hold back from broadcasting it because I’m naturally shy and perhaps even secretive ... mysterious ... guarded ... PRIVATE.

No. That’s not it at all.

I just have a different way of deciding what’s worth sharing and what’s not. My “worth sharing” filter is more robust—and it usually operates beyond my awareness.

Allow me to explain.

Some people in this world—though it’s the minority (thank goodness!)—have no “worth sharing” filter of any kind. These are the folks who tell me—and everyone else—about their itchy hemorrhoids and just about anything else that pops into their head. Their “worth sharing” filter is a hula hoop. Every thought, every feeling, every experience—it’s all public information. Nothing is screened out.

Many other people have a “worth sharing” filter that’s considerably more robust. You’ll find no hemorrhoid stories here. But plenty of stuff still passes through.

Then there’s me.

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I'm Mr. Coffee.

My dense filter ensures that only the stuff I sense (consciously or unconsciously) as “worth sharing” is available for widespread consumption—and that the coffee grounds of irrelevance don't detract from the final product.

The term “private” implies that I am proactively, purposefully hiding something from the other people in my life. Nonsense. Either I don't even think to share something with you (i.e., it never even occurs to me—which is exactly the case most of the time) or, when I do think about potentially sharing something, it goes by Mr. Coffee first. He determines what gets through—and what doesn't.

But he's not hiding coffee grounds; he's simply providing good coffee. Coffee worth sharing.

# I'm Not *Difficult* to Get to Know; I'm *Slow* to Get to Know



IT'S NOT HARD TO GET TO KNOW ME. NOT really. It just takes time.

*Difficult* and *slow* are not the same. More importantly, labeling me as “difficult to get to know”—probably unconsciously, I’ll acknowledge—effectively writes me off. It lets you off the hook; you don’t have to even try to get to know me at that point, and you probably won’t.

Getting to know me—the real, true me—involves a willingness to invest some time and energy over a period of weeks or months. It means making peace with the concept that, while we might someday be close friends, we almost certainly won’t be fast friends.

You’ll need to be a patient, focused listener if you want to truly know me. (That’s the slow part.) My responses to your observations and questions will probably be brief and surface-level at first because I haven’t built up rapport or trust with you yet. I may even seem a bit guarded at first. But I’m not guarding anything; truly, I have nothing to hide, nor any desire to try. I’m simply easing into the relationship—like I always do, with everyone.

If you’re willing to stick with me, you’ll begin to see—over time—more and more of me. I’ll let you in, because I will have learned by some point that it’s safe and worthwhile for me to do

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so. I'll know that you not only listen to what I have to say, but that you *hear* me too—that you genuinely understand me. And that's all I really want in life: to be understood, same as you.

You can't, and won't, understand me after only a few minutes or even a few hours together. Impossible, I say. But it's entirely possible to get to know me well over a period of time. You just have to want to.

Trust me: *I* sure want you to.

# There's More on My Mind, and in My Heart, Than I Let On



I MAY NOT SHOW MY DEEPEST EMOTIONS—not very often, at least—but I do have them, just like everyone else. It's just that, as an introvert, I tend not to show my thoughts and feelings as easily as extraverts (seem to) do.

I tend not to wear my feelings on my sleeve. In fact, I tend not to wear them at all. Instead, I typically keep my feelings inside instead of projecting them outward. I'm the quintessential iceberg: Whatever feelings I express are only a small fraction of what's really there.

This is not intentional on my part. I just don't often think of sharing my feelings with other people; it truly doesn't occur to me in most cases. And even when it does, I'll only really start sharing myself with people I know well and trust even more. Because in my mind, if I'm going to invest the psychological and emotional energy involved in revealing my innermost self, it had better be worth it.

We introverts are complex, at least in this way. We just don't tend to share ourselves naturally or easily.

It's a challenge for me to reveal my feelings, particularly via the spoken word. In fact, I'm much more likely to express my feelings through other means of communication. I may write about them (a journal entry, perhaps, or a poem or even a song). I may communicate them in photographs or paintings,



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or even in a handmade coffee table or an old car I'm lovingly restoring. If I can find some other method that gives me the time and space to more fully express my usually complicated emotions, I'll gravitate to that approach over talking.

So don't mistake me for Mr. Spock; I have plenty of feelings, and I'm not consciously trying to suppress them—although that's how it may generally seem to extraverts, who tend to express their feelings easily. As an introvert, I'm not hiding my feelings; I'm just not displaying them. They're merely out of sight and out of earshot, under the surface of still waters that run deep.

But they're still there.

# I Long to Be Really, Truly Heard—So Please: Really, Truly Listen



WHEN I'M READY TO TALK ABOUT SOMETHING and you suggest—explicitly or implicitly—that you're willing to listen, my hopes and expectations go up ... way up. I'm anticipating that I will really, truly be listened to—just as I would really, truly listen if the situation were reversed.

Too often, though, I end up disappointed and disillusioned. Why? Because I'm an introvert.

Because for me someone who is really, truly listening doesn't answer his/her cell phone during our conversation. (In fact, someone who is really, truly listening turns his/her cell phone off while we're talking, eliminating the possibility of disruptive calls and/or text messages.)

Someone who is really, truly listening doesn't start offering advice and suggestions 10 seconds into my delivery.

Someone who is really, truly listening allows me to take the time I need to communicate my thoughts and feelings accurately and thoroughly and doesn't give me the "hurry it up!" signal by glancing at his/her watch or fidgeting or trying to finish my sentences for me when I pause.

Someone who is really, truly listening hardly says a word until well into our discussion; he/she knows how to sit quietly

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and demonstrate attentiveness using solid eye contact and a posture that says, “I’m here for you.”

Someone who is really, truly listening doesn’t go off on a tangent about someone or something in his/her own life that has come to mind because of something I’ve said. (Extraverts may think they’re showing understanding and sympathy or empathy. To us introverts it seems like hijacking the conversation.)

And, most critically of all, someone who is really, truly listening is willing to dig for the deeper meaning behind my words—often because that’s what I myself have been unable to pinpoint.

It’s virtually always draining for me to talk about things in any circumstances. It’s nearly impossible after I’ve given it the old college try once or twice and been disappointed by the reaction of the other person.

I’ve been burned before, many times. It’s an all too common experience for introverts in general: Most people don’t meet our expectations when it comes to listening. So please, when you say you’re willing to listen, prove it—by really, truly listening. Otherwise don’t offer to listen at all.

I only want to be heard.



**THE  
LAST WORD**

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# I'm Not Anti-Extravert; I'm Pro-Introvert

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I'VE LEARNED A LOT FROM THE EXTRAVERTS in my life. I've gained from them and grown in countless ways because of my relationships with them.

I've grown from my own extraverting activities too, whether I've undertaken them by choice, by necessity, or by force. Extraverting can be good for me—"good for me" in the context of enjoying it while it's happening and "good for me" in the context of having somehow benefited from it upon later reflection, typical introvert that I am.

So I'm not asking for the teeter-totter of life to be tilted largely in the introvert's favor, even though it's tilted largely in the extravert's favor in our culture today. I'm only looking for a general balancing of the scales.

I most definitely don't need or want to be pitied. I only want acknowledgment—mere recognition that introversion is a real set of general preferences that are just as valid and just as common (it's estimated that we introverts constitute one-third to one-half of the population) and just as valuable as the set of general preferences that make up extraversion.

Years ago, when Stephen Covey wrote his bestselling book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, he articulated the potentially life-changing Habit No. 5:

*Seek first to understand, then to be understood.*

I've done my part in seeking first to understand the extraverts in my life and how they tick. I now seek to be understood *by* them too.

But I must also simply seek to understand *myself* as an introvert—to be crystal clear on how I tick, and why—and to celebrate my many natural strengths. None of this makes me an extravert basher. It merely makes me an introvert advocate.

So I'm not anti-extravert. No.

I'm pro-introvert.

It's all in the emphasis—and the mindset.

# The Introvert's Bill of Rights

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- **I HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT**—not because I've been accused of some crime, but because silence is no crime. Sometimes I just don't want to talk, or be talked to. Other times I'm simply listening silently, contemplating silently, or recharging silently. Silence doesn't hurt; it helps.
- **I HAVE THE RIGHT TO SEEK SOLITUDE**—to find or create the revitalizing alone time I need to stay psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, socially, and physically healthy in our frenzied, stressful world. My alone time isn't about rejecting anyone; it's about protecting myself.
- **I HAVE THE RIGHT TO CONTEMPLATE**—to take all the time I need to choose my words, weigh my decisions, and consider my actions—before I act (so I can prepare), after (so I can change course if necessary), or both. I am, therefore I think.
- **I HAVE THE RIGHT TO SEEK DEPTH**—genuine substance and significance in my conversations, my activities, and my relationships. Small talk, shallow pursuits, and superficial people leave me unsatisfied and wanting. I need real human beings with real talk and real pursuits.
- **I HAVE THE RIGHT TO FOCUS INTENTLY**—to avoid multi-tasking, interruptions, and haste so I can concentrate solely



on whatever or whoever is right in front of me. The next thing can wait.

- **I HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD**—to be truly listened to and understood—minus multitasking, interruptions, and haste—not because I’m more important or deserving than other people, but because I’m equally important and deserving.
- **I HAVE THE RIGHT TO SHARE WHAT I WANT, WHEN I WANT, HOW I WANT**—to decide for myself, without pressure or judgment, what to say, when to say it, and how to say it. My thoughts, feelings, and expressions are mine first—and last if I so choose.
- **I HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SEEN AS PERFECTLY NORMAL**—or at least as normal as the extraverts of the world. My introversion isn’t a character flaw or a malady to be cured, not any more than extraversion. It’s a healthy, natural part of who I am.
- **I HAVE THE RIGHT NOT TO DEFEND MYSELF**—to let my introversion stand without justification or apology. I don’t expect the extraverts of the world to explain how they tick; I don’t have to explain how I tick either.
- **I HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE DEFINED BY WHAT I AM, NOT WHAT I AM NOT**—by my many natural strengths, not by what others may perceive as shortcomings; by what I have to offer, not by what others think I lack or need to work on. I’m not an extravert wannabe. I’m an introvert.



**THE**  
**4 PILLARS OF**  
**INTROVERT**  
**WELL-BEING**

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# The 4 Pillars of Introvert Well-Being: The Introvert's Recipe for Happy, Healthy Living

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HOW DO YOU TAKE GOOD CARE OF yourself as an introvert—psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, even physically—when you live in a world that bombards you with extraverted environments, activities, situations, people, and attitudes virtually 24/7?

How can you mindfully bounce back to confidence and joy when you're having one of those days when you're at your worst—when you're exhausted, crabby, impatient, frustrated, overcooked? Better yet: How can you prevent yourself from experiencing such pain in the first place?

Here's a solution: An easy-to-understand, practical model called *The 4 Pillars of Introvert Well-Being*.

Fellow introvert: Your recipe for happy, healthy living has four essential ingredients. Here they are, in order of priority. Ignore them and you will pay the price; respect them and you will feel nice!

## SOLITUDE

*Are you getting quiet time alone to decompress  
and recharge your batteries?*

Yes     No

There are two key concepts to be aware of when it comes to solitude: alone time and quiet time.

**Alone time.** Sometimes you want to be alone, well, all alone—literally nobody but you in the room. Sometimes you may want to be alone with a few other people around! (For example, getting lost in your own thoughts at the coffee shop or the library.) Either way you need to be alone for at least a little while each day to maintain your sanity as the introvert you are.

Are you getting your alone time each day? If not, what can you do *to* get it?

**Quiet time.** When you're an introvert, even just five minutes of uninterrupted quiet can do wonders for your psyche. We're talking total silence here—pure nothingness that clears your head and your heart.

Are you getting your quiet time each day? If not, what can you do *to* get it?

## REFLECTION

*Are you getting the opportunity to think—really think?*

Yes     No

There are three key concepts to be aware of when it comes to reflection: thinking beforehand (i.e., preparing for something ahead of time), thinking during (i.e., processing something in

the moment), and thinking afterward (i.e., reflecting upon something once it has already happened).

**Thinking beforehand.** When you can think things through before something takes place—be it a meeting at work or a difficult conversation with your child—you feel prepared. And preparedness leads to both better performance and lower stress.

Are you getting time to think about the important things in your life before they happen? If not, what can you do *to* get this time?

**Thinking during.** When you have time to think about what's going on right in the moment—in real time—you can process your thoughts and feelings fully before having to react. You're not forced to respond instantly when you're not ready.

Are you getting time to think about the important things in your life while they're happening? If not, what can you do *to* get this time?

**Thinking afterward.** When you have time to think about what's already happened in your life, you can reflect upon it in depth, pinpoint what you've learned, and decide upon any changes you want to make in similar situations in the future (particularly if what you're reflecting upon involves a mistake).

Are you getting time to think about the important things in your life after they've happened? If not, what can you do *to* get this time?

## FOCUS

*Are you getting the chance to mindfully  
focus your energy and time?*

Yes     No

There are two key concepts to be aware of when it comes to focus: handling one thing at a time and working without interruption.

**Handling one thing at a time.** When you can focus on one thing at a time, you prevent the utterly draining and anxiety-producing feeling of being pulled in too many directions at once.

Are you getting time to focus on one person, one activity, one responsibility, one set of deadlines and pressures before having to move on immediately to the next? If not, what can you do *to* get this time?

**Working without interruption.** When you can get into that heady place known as “The Zone” or “flow,” the world around you disappears temporarily and you produce some of your best work and results—almost effortlessly.

Are you getting time to work without being interrupted constantly? If not, what can you do *to* get this time?

## DEPTH

*Are you getting the depth you crave in your life?*

Yes     No

There are two key concepts to be aware of when it comes to depth: depth in your relationships and depth in your activities.

**Depth in your relationships.** When you can go beyond surface-level interactions and small talk with the other people in your life, you build trusting, meaningful relationships that justify the investment of your limited time and energy.

Are you getting time to build—and maintain—deep relationships with the people around you? If not, what can you do *to* get this time?

**Depth in your activities.** When you can really sink your teeth into something you're doing, be it playing the guitar or studying a second language, you get the satisfaction of developing expertise vs. mere “working knowledge.”

Are you getting time to pursue activities passionately, intensely, in the depth you seek? If not, what can you do *to* get this time?

These four “pillars”—Solitude, Reflection, Focus, and Depth—hold up the “roof” that is your well-being as an introvert, like this:





Keep *The 4 Pillars of Introvert Well-Being* in your mind each and every day, consciously and intentionally. Put this picture of them on your wall if you have to, or carry it in miniature form in your pocket.

It's the recipe you can follow to be—or return to—your psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical best.

# Acknowledgments

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I COULD EASILY WRITE ANOTHER BOOK TO thank all the people in my life who have helped make *The Introvert Manifesto* a reality. But I will take the advice I gave myself earlier here and be blissfully brief:

Gail Fox: You introduced me to the concept of introversion and have taught me so much more about life ever since. Thank you for being my guide.

Pam Braun: You and I have discussed virtually all of the ideas in this book together, either at coffeeshops or at our workshops. Thank you for being my fellow introvert advocate.

Bob Magnan: You've held my feet to the fire as you've edited and questioned every word in this book, not to mention every thought in my head. Thank you for being my mentor—the guy who taught me how to think and why to think.

Tamara Dever and Erin Stark: You've brought this book to visual and physical life with your amazing artistic abilities. Tam: The cover is so gorgeous that I don't have words to express it; I fell in love with it instantly. Erin: When you first sent me a PDF of the inside design, I cried the tears that come with the joy of birth; I fell in love with it instantly too. You two are the best. Thanks for your friendship and talents.

Thanks, too, to all the people who have offered such helpful feedback on this book and the concepts it explores: Jenna Enderle, Jamie Johnson, Amy Johnson, Andrea Ruppert, Mike Vogt, Kathy Frost, Mary Anne Lofstrom, Shelli Kargela, Gail Fox, and Adrienne Lecuyer.

And speaking of you, my beautiful Adrienne: I fell in love with you all over again on the north shore of Lake Superior, as we sat on our hotel room floor together and carefully arranged the final, most sensible batting order for the pieces in this book. Thank you for believing in me—and helping me to believe in myself. I'm madly in love with you, and I'm so glad we found each other.

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**IntrovertInsights.com**

# About the Author

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I AM MANY THINGS IN LIFE—FATHER, friend, widower who has found new love, writer, Beatles fan. But for the purposes of *The Introvert Manifesto* I am one thing above all others ...

I'm an introvert.

I've walked in the introvert's shoes, day in and day out in this extraverted world of ours, for 47 years and counting. I don't merely empathize with the introvert's life; I live it.

I have plenty of *professional* qualifications too. I have a bachelor's degree in journalism, a master's degree in counseling. I've studied introverts and introversion extensively for more than a decade, writing about the topic for national publications and speaking about it before a wide range of audiences across the United States.

But what really matters is not what I've done. What really matters is who I am.

I'm an introvert.

That's where my credibility comes from. And my passion.

I'm an introvert—and I have something important to say that comes from both the knowledge in my head and the experiences in my heart.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter A. Voigt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.