

i introvert insights

YouGov Survey Results Reflect Pervasiveness of *Extravert Ideal*

By Peter Vogt

One of the more revealing questions in a new YouGov survey of American adults asked: “*How often, if ever, do you wish you were more introverted?*” [emphasis mine].

Just 3 percent of the randomly selected respondents said “always” and 4 percent “often,” with 22 percent saying “sometimes”—for a total of 29 percent.

Thirty-one percent, on the other hand, said “rarely,” and 28 percent said “never”—for a total of 59 percent.

Respondents were also asked: “*How often, if ever, do you wish you were more extraverted?*” [again, emphasis mine].

The results were considerably different this time.

Four percent said “always,” 14 percent said “often,” and 34 percent said “sometimes”—for a total of 52 percent (i.e., more than half).

Meantime, just 21 percent said “rarely” and 15 percent “never”—for a total of a mere 36 percent.

Extraversion, the survey respon-

dents suggest, is an advantage in many aspects of life, while introversion carries with it not only perceived disadvantages but also what is seen by many as a less than desirable brand identity.

A look at the poll’s key findings underscores the continuing presence of what Susan Cain calls the *extravert ideal* in her bestselling book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking*.

Extravert Advantages

When asked which people—introverts or extraverts—have more advantages in various settings, the survey respondents weighed consistently and often heavily in favor of extraverts.

Thirty-eight percent said that extraverts have more advantages in the workplace, for example, while just 10 percent said that introverts do.

Similarly, 40 percent of the respondents said that extraverts have more advantages in school settings, whereas only 12 percent said that introverts do.

April 2023

INSIDE

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Tips, Tricks, and Tools | 2 |
| It’s an Introvert’s Life | 4 |
| Practical Research | 6 |
| Reflective Reads | 6 |
| Introvert Inspirations | 8 |

Continued on page 7

TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

MENTAL HEALTH

Is Your Job Burning You Out? This Mini-Quiz Can Tell You

In his book *How to Calm Your Mind* (see review on p. 6), author Chris Bailey shares the expertise of burnout expert Christina Maslach, whose research over several decades has revealed six core causes of *chronic stress* in the work setting:

- A workload that is too high
- Work that defies your values
- Lack of rewards from your work
- Lack of control over your work
- Being treated unfairly
- Lack of community at work

“The bottom line is this: The more chronic stress we face, no matter where it’s coming from, the closer we get to burning out,” Bailey writes in his recent *Harvard Business Review* website article entitled “A Two-Minute Burnout Checkup.”

How can you tell where **you** stand right now when it comes to potential job burnout?

Bailey suggests turning Maslach’s chronic stress sources into a quick mini-assessment: For each of the six core causes of chronic stress, rate yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being negligible stress and 10 being extreme.

“For example, if you’re finding it tough to connect with colleagues af-

ter a long period of working from home, you might score *community* an 8,” Bailey says.

“Conversely, you might rank *workload* a 2 if you have a good amount to do but find the number of tasks manageable.”

Your score, out of a potential of 60, will show you how well (or not) you’re doing at work from the perspective of burnout.

“While the total number of points is important, what’s more useful is your score in each of the six categories,” Bailey stresses.

“If you’re anything like me, this activity will probably show that you’re healthy in some dimensions and unhealthy in others.”

REFLECTION STRATEGIES

Yes, Unplug—but Then Add Analog Activities to Spur Ideas

Unplugging—getting away from social media, electronic devices, etc. so that you can think and regroup—is “one of those pieces of advice that has been reduced to a dreary bit of dogma,” says writer Mark Mann.

“We know we can’t argue with the idea of disconnecting,” Mann says, “but the suggestion is almost impossible to put into practice.”

What’s more realistic, and potentially more helpful? Unplugging combined with **replacing**, Mann says in his recent *BESIDE* website article entitled “How to Give Your-

self Time to Think.”

“You can’t stop taking mental breaks with social media and suddenly gain infinite intellectual stamina,” Mann argues.

So when you do unplug, he says, be intentional about finding things to do, with your hands and your eyes in particular.

“Buy some nice pens and beautiful paper and start doodling,” Mann suggests. “Try a 1,000-piece puzzle. ... Go outside and make an ephemeral sculpture out of rocks, twigs, and leaves.”

As you do these replacement activities, Mann says, “your unconscious mind will keep working.”

“[A]nd when you come back into focus mode, your synapses will be ready to fire in all sorts of interesting new shapes and patterns.”



Use Strategic Volunteering to Boost Your Visibility at Work

When you're an introvert, you may come off as invisible—out of sight, out of mind—to some of the people you work with.

Why?

"We don't chit chat about our accomplishments. We don't holler our knowledge in meetings. And we don't boast about working overtime to our higher-ups," says writer Boom Shikha, in her recent *Introvert, Dear* website article entitled "When Your Boss Says, 'You Don't Speak Up Enough.'"

What, then, can you do to boost your presence at work—in a way that doesn't go against your intro-

verted grain?

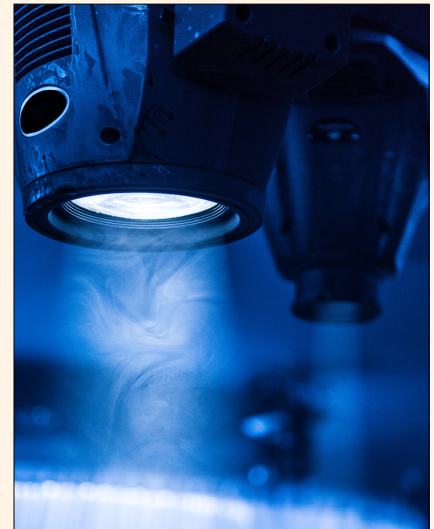
Try volunteering for assignments and projects that no one else wants to do, Shikha advises.

"In one of my roles, I was this person, and I noticed that my boss started relying on me more and more because I did the jobs that everyone else despised," says Shikha, who also hosts a podcast called "The INFJ Whisperer."

In one instance, for example, Shikha's organization needed to put together a dinner event for VIP guests in London.

"I was in Toronto at the time, and no one wanted to do it," Shikha says. "So I volunteered.

"Being a major foodie, looking through pictures of food and beauti-



ful, high-end restaurants in London ended up being fun for me—and it worked out for my colleagues who didn't like the craze of organizing such a large event."

PARENTING

Plan Your Days with the Worst Possible Scenarios in Mind

If you have young kids especially, the worst thing you can do is plan your day as though it's going to be the best day possible, says Jamie Martin, author of the book *Introverted Mom*.

On the contrary, your best bet is to plan it as though it will be the worst day possible, Martin writes in her recent blog post entitled "The Secret Behind a Schedule That Actually Works."

In other words, Martin says, you need to build in a margin of (almost inevitable) error.

"If, back in the day, I'd allowed 30 minutes for breakfast on my routine, then what would happen if Trishna spilled her water, Jonathan was determined to rush outside to 'check on the plants,' and Elijah started whining about the fact that

we're all out of Cheerios? (*All real-life examples, by the way!*)," Martin says.

"This would have caused my frustration levels to rise significantly. I would start seeing the children as interruptions to 'my' day—my plans, my important work."

Far better, then, in this case, to build in a full hour for breakfast,

Martin says, knowing that smooth sailing is a risky assumption in the world of kids and parenting.

"If you've been struggling to find success with a gentle plan for your days," Martin concludes, "imagine how long the regular parts of life **actually** take on the most challenging days around your home."



IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

We Control Only So Much—We Have to Be Able to Wing It Too

By Peter Vogt

We were at the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge near my hometown of Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. I was with my son Theo's class (he was a fourth-grader at the time), and we were discovering on this leg of the field trip how millions of birds die each year in the face of obvious and less than obvious mortal threats.

The kids were paying attention well enough on this perfect spring morning. But talk—as the instructor, a retired teacher named Dave, knew from decades of experience—only goes so far. Especially with squirrely 9- and 10-year-olds out in the sunshine after a long winter, sitting crisscross-applesauce in a clearing surrounded by pine trees, birdsong, and ... well, each other.

Movement, action, involvement: These are the strategies that make lessons stick when you're out in the sticks with a bunch of wild animals.

So Dave had the kids line up for an elaborate, eye-opening game.

They would be birds migrating from Florida back to Minnesota. Their task: To survive a series of potential death traps through a combination of their own efforts and fate.

At station one, Theo's teacher and her assistant held a jump rope representing a power line, moving it back and forth and up and down while each student tried to get past.

"If you touch the rope, you're dead," Dave deadpanned, reminding the kids that they had an unfair advantage over real birds—for they

were "flying" in broad daylight, not at night when the power lines are hidden hazards.

The kids who made it past the "power line" then faced one of their classmates wearing a cat puppet on his hand. They had to dart past the "cat," grab a colored plastic egg (pink, yellow, orange, blue, or green), and then evade the "cat" once again without getting caught.

"If the cat touches you, you're dead," Dave dutifully noted.

The kids who survived then lined up before three of their classmates who were representing buildings. Each "building"-child had two cards, one in each hand.

"If you pick the card that says 'window closed,' that means you just ran into a window while you were flying. You're dead," Dave said.

The handful of kids who got through this final challenge could then go and pick up one of three colored poker chips (blue, red, or white) representing food. Perhaps they were in the clear thanks to their superior skills and intellect.

Not so fast.

Dave then revealed that some of the survivors were actually dead already; they had picked the wrong-colored egg while dodging the cat—meaning that a cowbird had chosen to lay her eggs in their nest while they were still embryos growing inside their own mothers' eggs.

The cowbird's eggs had hatched first, and the young cowbird thugs had pushed the unlucky kid-birds out of the nest once they'd been born.



Still, a few of the kids remained alive in the game. But if they had chosen the wrong-colored chip as their food, they had unknowingly selected a meal laced with pesticides.

Dave's response: "You're dead."

The kids played the game five or six times, and only a handful survived each round. Those who did cheered for themselves, as kids are prone to do. But pure chance had played a significant role in giving them the gift of living on.

I'm confident I won't be eaten today, and I likely won't be electrocuted, crushed, poisoned, or bumped off either. But I'll face other threats and struggles, seen and unseen. So will you. So will we all.

Life is an unending cycle of being proactive to circumstance yet reactive to happenstance. Of advancing and adapting at the same time. We have to be able to do both, not only to survive but to thrive.

We control what we're capable of controlling; that's as it should be.

But as Theo and his classmates now vividly understand, thinking we can control it all is for the birds.

No more defending your introversion.
No more pretending to be the extravert you're not.
It's time to ...

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PRACTICAL RESEARCH

Workplaces Have a Ways to Go in Helping Introverts Thrive

The typical workplace has some work to do when it comes to giving introverts what they need to thrive, according to a recent article in the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*.

The article offers the authors' conclusions and recommendations based on their analysis of 21 published studies involving introversion in the work context.

The authors had three goals in their investigation:

To examine “the landscape of evidence defining and evaluating introversion.”

To “determine the prevalence of introversion across various groups.”

To propose “potential strategies to recognize and promote the inclusion of introversion” in the work setting.

What did the authors learn?

For starters, “[W]e identified trends in personality measures and author definitions of introversion that consistently leaned toward negative attributes,” they note.

“[E]xtraversion was represented by warmth, positivity, and assertiveness, while introversion was defined as the opposite and grouped with adjectives like timid, withdrawn, unadventurous, and reserved.”

Regarding their second study goal, the authors found “no relevant studies that provided robust or direct evidence on the prevalence of introverts across various groups.”

They ran into a similar problem with respect to their third goal: They found no studies that talked about strategies for recognizing introversion in the workplace.

“Nevertheless,” they conclude, “available literature suggests that employees who positively identify with modern definitions of introversion ... would benefit from the adaptation of workplace strategies to account for individual differences, such as flexible working environments, provision of social support where needed, and employer initiatives to increase personality diversity of teams.”

Source: “Personality Diversity in the Workplace: A Systematic Literature Review on Introversion,” *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, 38 (2) (April 2023), pp. 165-187.

REFLECTIVE READS

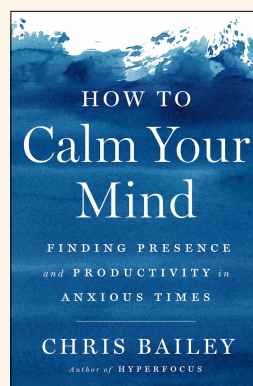
How to Calm Your Mind Looks at High Cost of Chronic Stress

If Chris Bailey hadn't himself made—and suffered for—so many of the mistakes he writes about in his eye-opening book *How to Calm Your Mind*, the book wouldn't exist at all.

“I did not intend to write this book,” Bailey acknowledges in the preface. He's a productivity expert, after all, so if anything he would be all about doing more and accumulating more and achieving more.

And he was.

Until he had a full-fledged anxiety attack onstage, right in the middle of a talk on ... productivity.



That experience set him on a path of exploring anxiety's opposite—calm—and how to achieve it in your life when the world pushes you so hard in the opposite direction.

Bailey is candid about his own misguided beliefs and actions, all of

which led to what he names as the key cause of anxiety: chronic stress.

We all have, and need, **some** stress in our lives, Bailey says, particularly the acute stress that propels us in the moment to flee the charging bear.

But the brain can't tell the difference between acute stress and chronic stress, Bailey writes. So when your stress becomes chronic, your body acts as though a bear is greeting you every hour of every day.

Bailey offers an array of concrete tools you can use to get yourself out of this loop and back on better footing, so that you can reclaim the calm that leads to health and happiness.

Continued from page 1

The results were perhaps most striking in the area of leadership. When asked who makes better leaders—introverts or extraverts—52 percent of the survey respondents said extraverts, while only 9 percent said introverts.

Brand Image

The survey respondents were also given a list of 20 words—adjectives, to be specific—and, in two separate questions, were asked to indicate all the words they associated with introverts and extraverts, respectively. (Note: The words were the same for each question and included the choices “none of these” and “not sure.”)

The top three words the respondents chose to describe extraverts: *talkative* (selected by 64 percent of the respondents), *outgoing* (61 percent), and *social* (59 percent).

When it came to introverts, on the other hand, 65 percent of the respondents described them as *quiet*, 62 percent as *shy*, and 60 percent as *reserved*.

And interestingly, while respondents associated extraverts and introverts with the word *respected* roughly equally (11 percent chose the word to describe extraverts and 13 percent chose it to describe introverts), only 12 percent associated introverts with the word *happy*—while 29 percent associated extraverts with the word *happy*.

The Rest of the Story

Among the survey’s other findings of note:

- Just 7 percent of respondents described themselves as “completely extroverted,” with another 15 percent describing themselves as “more extroverted than introverted.” Nine percent of respondents

described themselves as “completely introverted,” meanwhile, and 29 percent described themselves as “more introverted than extroverted.”

- Extraverts were seen as being a better fit than introverts in seven of the nine occupational titles the survey asked about. The two exceptions: artists and engineers.
- One-third of the respondents said that people are born with the traits of introversion or extraversion, while 44 percent said people develop the traits because of their environment and 24 percent said they weren’t sure.

The YouGov survey questioned 1,000 American adults who were selected from YouGov’s opt-in Internet panel, using sample matching.

A random sample (stratified by gender, age, race, education, geographic region, and voter registration) was generated for the survey.





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Introvert Insights is published monthly
by Introvert Insights, LLC, 1036 38th
Street South, Moorhead, MN 56560.

IntrovertInsights.com

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INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

"Expanding your comfort zone should go hand in hand with playing to your strengths. Don't let anyone tell you that you need to focus too much energy on something you're not wired for. Forcing a fish to learn to climb a tree is a huge waste of time when you could be coaching it to be the best swimmer it can be."

~ Annalisa Dockery

"Know what you need and know your strengths. ... There is power in saying, 'Let me have a moment to think this through.'"

~ Jessica Wallen

"[I]t's time to stop pretending that 'being quiet' is a deficiency. Introverts don't need to shout to be heard, and perhaps that is one of our greatest strengths—the ability to influence quietly."

~ Amy Huang

"While you may need to act more extraverted when the situation calls for it, you shouldn't try to become someone you're not."

~ Brita Long