

i introvert insights

When You Don't Get What You Need as an Introvert, You Pay

By Peter Vogt

Why should you give a damn about taking care of yourself each day in the context of your introversion, specifically?

Why should you bother making sure you get what you need **as an introvert**?

After all—don't you have enough to worry about in life?

Think about it. You already have to monitor and manage your physical health ... and your mental health ... and your emotional health ... and your spiritual health ... and your financial health ... and your relationship health ... and your career health ... and on and on.

Do you really need to add “your introvert health” to the list?

Yes.

In fact, it's dangerous not to.

When the Roof Is Unstable

Let's examine why by using an introvert life management model I've developed called *The 4 Pillars of Introvert Well-Being*. It looks like this:



Briefly, the roof of the structure represents your overall well-being as an introvert.

The four pillars—*Solitude*, *Reflection*, *Focus*, and *Depth*—are the four most critical things you need consistently in life to be healthy and happy as the introvert are.

And it all rests on a crucial foundation: you having a positive self-concept of yourself as an introvert.

What happens to you—what happens to the roof of the structure (i.e., your well-being)—if one or more or, God forbid, all of these elements are weak or, worse,

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TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Pausing—Intentionally—Can Help You Make Your Point(s)

Whether you're in a meeting at work, on a presentation stage, or in some other public forum, it can be hard to get the words out of your mouth when you're an introvert and you have something to say.

Somehow, your brain gets ahead of what your mouth is able to verbally produce, especially if you've had little or no time to prepare.

It's frustrating. But it's also something you can purposefully harness—as an **intentional** pause.

Author and speaker Rory Vaden calls it a *power pause* in his blog post entitled “How to Command Respect

Even If You're Introverted.”

“Pauses are powerful. People don't understand and really grasp just how powerful pauses are,” writes Vaden, an expert on the psychology of influence.

Try an experiment at your next meeting, Vaden challenges: Let the group know that you have something to share—then pause.

“It causes people to lean in on the edge of their seats and go, ‘Wait, why is it so quiet?’” Vaden says.

And that, in turn, “makes you seem more put together and less rushed and nervous,” Vaden notes.

Software developer and speaker Victoria Lo offers similar advice in her blog post entitled “Enhancing

Public Speaking Skills: A Guide by an Introvert.”

Lo describes a different sort of problem that introverts (and others) run into when they're trying to communicate: going too fast due to a battle with nerves.

Pausing, she writes, will help you emphasize your key points, create a bit of suspense, and engage your audience, all while giving you the chance to collect your thoughts and maintain your composure as well.

“After I started incorporating pauses into my talks and presentations,” Lo says, “many told me that I seem more confident—even if, in reality, I was sweating from nervousness during the whole talk.”

ON THE JOB

Weekly Briefing Can Cut Down on the Boss's “Check-in” Calls

Want to cut down on—or maybe even eliminate—those “quick check-in” phone calls from your boss that a) interrupt you, b) make you tense, or c) both?

You might want to try the tactic

Khe Hy writes about in his *Quartz* website article entitled “The 15-Minute Weekly Habit That Eased My Work Anxiety and Made My Boss Trust Me More.”

When Hy had a boss “who would send me a series of two-word emails throughout the day, each one bearing the same message: ‘call me,’” he

decided to set up his own “standardized, habitual communication” with the boss.

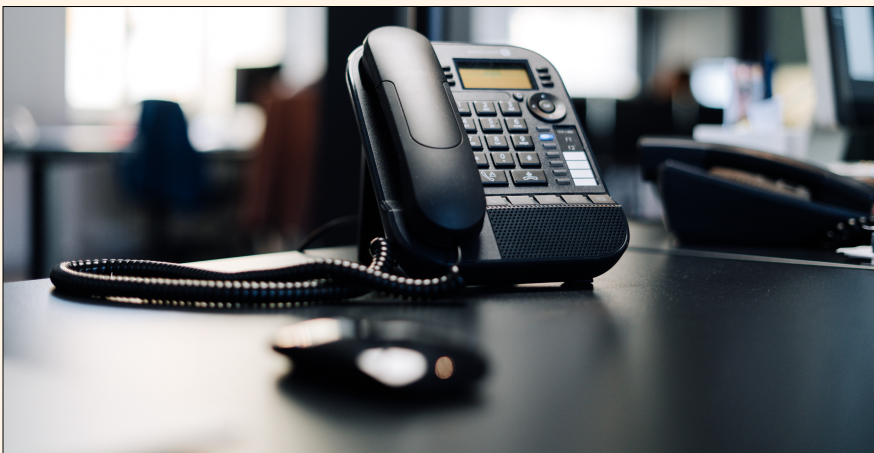
“The approach was simple,” writes Hy, now the founder and CEO of online education company Radreads.

Every Friday afternoon, Hy would send his boss an email with three categories: what he had completed that week, what he was working on, and what he was waiting on.

“My goal was to make sure that we would always be in sync,” Hy stresses, “and that [my boss] had an up-to-date understanding of all my projects—which meant that we could cut down on phone calls.”

It worked.

And it still does, Hy says, as he now encourages **his** direct reports to use the technique.



Make Alone Time—for All—a Part of the Daily Routine

It's tough enough to get your alone time as a parent when you have a parenting partner to share the load with.

It can be even harder when you're a single parent, especially when you feel bad for wanting some time to yourself.

"Often, one of the biggest blocks to getting alone time for single parents is feeling guilty for prioritizing their own needs," says marriage and family therapist Stephanie Macadaan, in a recent *Care* website article (by Liz Regalia) entitled "10 Smart, Simple Ways to Sneak in Alone Time as a Single Parent."

But "taking care of yourself is taking care of your kids," Macadaan stresses.

"Pushing yourself constantly is only going to cause emotions to boil over at some point, so consider prioritizing alone time as a part of good parenting."

Macadaan says you can actually collaborate **with your kids** on the project, helping them learn about boundaries—and the importance of alone time for everyone—in the process.

For example, Macadaan says, you can designate the time immediately after dinner as a period of alone time each night. For all.

"Make it required that everyone does their own thing, then come



back together afterward to talk about how it was," Macadaan says.

"It will teach [your kids] good habits while getting you the time you need."

MANAGING YOUR ENERGY

Counterintuitive, but True: You Can Plan for Your Spontaneity

Steve Waller has a clever way of articulating a counterintuitive phenomenon that you'll probably relate to as a fellow introvert:

He likes to plan for spontaneity.

Actually, he **needs** to plan for spontaneity in his life, he stresses in his *Tiny Buddha* website article entitled "The Introvert's Hate/Hate Relationship with Spontaneity."

"I need to be mentally ready so that I may jump into the river and let the current take me," says Waller, founder of the website *A Conscious Rethink*.

"If I'm not prepared, that river turns out to be less of a serene, meandering brook and more a surge of cascading torrents that pummel my senses until I'm half-drowned and ready to give up."

So how can you prepare for spon-

taneity? Waller suggests using the strategy he perfected in college, when virtually every night his dorm friends would ask if he wanted to go out with them.

He invariably didn't—not so much because he never went out (he did), but because he didn't want to go out on the spur of the moment.

So once Waller understood that

the knocks on his door would come nightly, he chose—ahead of time—which nights he'd say yes and made sure to recharge fully beforehand.

"Somehow, I had managed to appear fairly sociable and outgoing while avoiding anything unexpected," Waller says.

"I had planned my way out of spontaneity."



IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

You Can't Sustain the Energy It Takes to Be Someone You're Not

By Peter Vogt

When I finished my master's degree in counseling in 1998, I accepted a job as a personal counselor and AODA (alcohol and other drugs) specialist at Edgewood College in Madison, Wisconsin, in the same office where I had done my counseling internship the year before.

I was surrounded by wonderful people there, led by the director of counseling and career services, George Heideman.

The people—especially George—were the one and only reason I took the job. Because in my heart of hearts, I didn't want the job itself.

I had spent the previous year, and the rest of my graduate school years, doing energizing career counseling, not taxing personal counseling—and certainly not AODA counseling. I didn't even drink, so the AODA part of the job was especially ill-fitting.

I wanted to be a career counselor. This job wasn't that. But I took it anyway and tried to make it fit.

Bad idea.

Several weeks into the fall semester, my wife and I were sitting in our car in the grocery store parking lot when my world started spinning.

Literally.

Everything was spinning, the way it spins after you've spent too much time on the merry-go-round.

This went on for a week. Then another. I wasn't able to function, let alone do my job at Edgewood.

Finally, I went to the doctor. I was assigned to a young resident

(i.e., doctor in training) at the University of Wisconsin hospital, and he was my age if he was a day.

In other words, he didn't know jack—in my mind, at least.

Everything is spinning, I told him. And my heart is pounding. And my nerves are shot. And my back hurts like hell between my shoulder blades. And I can't get off the couch.

"Well," he began, "your blood pressure is 150 over 110." Then he decided to drive my numbers higher.

"Have you ever been treated for anxiety?" the young doctor asked.

What I thought—but didn't say:

"Listen, you young puke, I need a doctor here. Who do you think you are? I'm a counselor. I know what anxiety is! I'm telling you about physical symptoms and you're yapping on about anxiety?! Do I look like an anxious person to you? Do I? Do I?!"

What I really said: "No."

He then asked me if I'd ever considered medication for anxiety, and once again I said—nicely—no.

"But I really don't think anxiety is my problem," I added.

He played along.

And over the next week, thanks to a variety of tests that Dr. Smarty Pants ordered, I learned that all of my self-diagnoses were wrong. I was not having a heart attack. I was not having a stroke. I did not have colon cancer. I did not have a brain tumor.

But my world kept on spinning. And I kept not going to my job.

So two weeks after I first saw



him, I crawled back to Dr. Perhaps I Misjudged You and said: "You win. Maybe it's anxiety."

"It's depression, too," he added.

So I started taking medication for anxiety and depression. I started seeing a counselor for it all as well. And slowly, I got better.

But ... I had to quit my job at Edgewood. I couldn't do it—as I couldn't perform it and couldn't cram myself into the role again without getting the same result.

I felt so bad for letting George and my other colleagues down, especially after they had all been so good to me and so patient with me.

But George told me something that has since etched itself permanently in my brain—something that is now on my mind every day as I encourage introverts to stop fighting themselves and/or trying to change themselves and instead simply be who they really are.

"It takes tremendous energy to be someone you're not," George said.

"Too much energy."

He was—and still is—right.

No more defending your introverted ways.
No more pretending to be the extravert you're not.

It's line-in-the-sand time.

It's time to ...

BE YOU!

Online Course



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The Introvert's Way to a Healthy, Happy Life

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course.introvertinsights.com

PRACTICAL RESEARCH

Prolonged Social Media Use Decreases Sleep Quality

The longer you use social media each day, the more likely you are to suffer for it in terms of sleep quality, according to a recent study published in the journal *Australian Psychologist*.

The study involved 814 adults (ages 18 to 59) who completed 1) a survey about their daily social media usage; and 2) an assessment called the *Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index*, which calculates sleep quality using several subscales.

The study's key finding: Participants who reported using social media 3.5 to 5 hours a day had 2.5 times higher odds of reporting poor sleep quality as compared to people who reported using social media less than 2 hours a day.

And for participants who reported using social media more than 5 hours a day, the results were even worse: Those participants were 2.8 times more likely to report poor sleep quality.

"On the one hand, social media can be a source of enjoyment," the study's authors note, "yet on the other hand it can be the root of psychological distress and illness."

Your best bet, the researchers say, is to limit your social media usage to two hours a day.

That said: There's probably some nuance to be considered in terms of which social media **platform(s)** you use the most, and for what purpose.

Intriguing case in point: While Facebook Messenger users in the study were 70 percent more likely than non-users to report sleep quality

problems, WhatsApp users were 38 percent **less** likely than non-users to report sleep quality problems.

The researchers call that finding "puzzling." But they also note that Facebook Messenger is "commonly used for socializing or making new friends, while WhatsApp is used more for private communications with close friends or families."

"Therefore," the researchers conclude, "it could be that Facebook Messenger requires increased availability demand as well as higher cognitive engagement and arousal, which might affect sleep onset and outcomes."

Source: "Association Between Sleep Quality and Social Media Use in Australian Adults," *Australian Psychologist* (published online May 15, 2023).

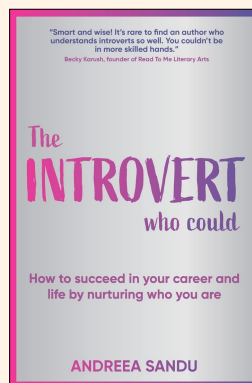
REFLECTIVE READS

The Introvert Who Could Examines Introverts' Thinking

If there's one word you could use to describe the essence—as well as the emphasis—of *The Introvert Who Could*, it would be *thinking*.

As author Andreea Sandu puts it in the book's introduction:

I wrote The Introvert Who Could to help you change the way you think about being an introvert. It's the book that should have been written before those that teach you HOW—how to interact with people, lead a team, speak in public, socialize or meet new humans.



"I bet you already know how to do those things," Sandu continues. "But are you doing them?"

If not, Sandu says, you may need to change the way you're **thinking**.

Sandu splits the book into three parts, covering *boundaries*, *emotional*

energy, and *social skills*.

The 21 chapters give an introverted context to a whole range of life concerns, from saying no without guilt to making authentic decisions to dealing with **overthinking**.

Throughout, Sandu stresses perhaps the most crucial thinking element of all where introverts are concerned: The idea that, as she puts it, "you are not broken."

"[Y]ou must know that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with you," Sandu stresses.

"At the same time, you can choose which parts of your identity serve you and you want to keep, and which you would like to upgrade."

Continued from page 1

essentially non-existent for you in your daily life?

Well, at best you struggle. The roof teeters, as does your well-being.

And at worst? The whole thing crumbles.

You crumble.

The Cost of Neglect

All you have to do is take a one-by-one tour of the elements of *The 4 Pillars* model—in their weakened/non-existent state—to see what I'm getting at.

Suppose, for example, that you get little or none of the *Solitude* you need as an introvert—the quiet time alone that helps you recharge your metaphorical batteries.

Before long, you have little or no energy to work with, for yourself or for others.

Suppose you get little or none of the *Reflection* time you need as an

introvert—the thinking time that helps you prepare for things before they happen, handle things as they happen, and process things after they've happened.

Before long, you're stressed virtually all the time about virtually everything.

Suppose you get little or none of the *Focus* you need—the ability to work without unending interruptions and distractions, and to zero in on one task at a time instead of trying to juggle a dozen.

Before long, you're frustrated beyond words—and overwhelmed and frazzled to boot.

Suppose you get little or none of the *Depth* you need—you can't sink your teeth into your favorite activities, and you don't get to have the deep conversations with people that you so crave.

Before long, you're left feeling like you're being cheated out of something—because you are.

And suppose, on top of everything else, that your self-concept as an introvert is shaky. You really, truly feel—you've been **made** to feel—that something is fundamentally wrong with you, simply and solely because you're an introvert.

Before long, your spirit is wounded. You think you need to be fixed—that you need to change yourself.

But you don't.

You need to **be** yourself.

Which brings us full circle—which in turn means you do indeed need to give a damn about taking care of yourself from an **introvert** perspective, along with all the other perspectives that are a part of your everyday existence.

If you don't, the cost is high.

Too high.

And when you factor in the other people in your life—the people you love and care about—you won't be paying that price alone.





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INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“The positives introverts can bring to the world and those around us are immense and well documented. We must cherish this nature in us.”

~ Alex Mathers

“Do not confuse silence with disinterest or lack of knowledge. Silence fosters awareness, careful consideration, and clearing of the mind, enabling a pathway to insight and ideas.”

~ Allison Abrams

“By embracing our introversion and finding ways to work with it, we can accomplish great things without sacrificing our authenticity.”

~ Fifi Mason

“Release the need to put on a persona of extraversion, as this takes an unnecessary amount of energy. Being conscious and true to yourself within social interactions will help preserve your energy when you do venture beyond your natural habitat.”

~ Yasmin Dadabhay