



The Newsletter That Helps You Thrive as an Introvert—Your Way!

introvert insights

You Can't Always Work Alone— Teamwork Tips for Introverts

By Peter Vogt

In his 2006 autobiography *iWoz*, Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak—an introvert if there ever was one—offers some unorthodox advice about working on a team ...

Don't.

"Work alone," Wozniak writes.

"You're going to be best able to design revolutionary products and features if you're working on your own. Not on a committee. Not on a team."

Whether Wozniak's take is true or not is, of course, the subject of intense and ongoing debate.

But what's indisputable is something Wozniak doesn't touch upon: Virtually all of us—introverts, extroverts, everyone—end up being part of a team at some point, either on the job or in some other capacity.

You don't always **get** to work alone. Even Wozniak himself has surely been part of a team or three in his long and storied career.

Teamwork is part of life when life is made up of people. So you're going to have times as an introvert

when you **are** part of a team, either by choice or by fiat.

You don't have to settle for simply "handling" such experiences, though, or "surviving" them.

You can make them be positive (or at least not negative!) by managing your mindset, playing to your introverted strengths, and taking good care of yourself along the way.

Wipe the (Old) Slate Clean

If you've had less-than-stellar experiences working on teams in the past, it's easy—albeit understandable—to go into a new team situation expecting the worst.

To the degree possible, fight that tendency. Because it's in your own best interest to do so.

In what way?

Past experience doesn't define future experience. If you fall into the trap of thinking it does, you'll be setting yourself up for the potential self-fulfilling prophecy of a repeat negative team experience.

So go in assuming a **good** experi-

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TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

STAYING FOCUSED

Claim a “Sequester Space” to Reduce Work Distractions

Whether you work from home, in a company office, or—these days—a little of both, interruptions and distractions are all around you.

To combat them, claim a *sequester space* in your work environment(s), says freelance writer and blogger Robin Madell, in her Flexjobs.com website article entitled “How to Stop Interruptions at Work: 3 Tips.”

In an on-site setting, for example, your sequester space might be an empty conference room, a coworker’s doored office, or even a bench or table outside on company property, Madell says.

At home, your sequester space could be the corner of a bedroom, a patio, or a spot in your backyard set up with a table and chair.

But securing the spot (and perhaps the equipment) for your sequester space isn’t necessarily enough on its own, Madell stresses.

“The key to success for your sequester space is to ensure that you’ve informed your colleagues and/or those you live with about your plan, so that there are no surprises,” Madell says.

“If coworkers and family members know about your sequester space, then they can help support you by respecting the area you’ve commandeered.”



NETWORKING TIPS

“Ditch the Pitch”—and Just Connect Authentically Instead

Tasia Cerezo says that when it comes to professional networking as the introvert she is, she “prefer[s] relationship building to speed dating.”

“While so many professionals, young and seasoned alike, prescribe

to the idea that they need to meet as many people as possible, introverted networkers are content with identifying one or two individuals and making the connection, not a pitch,” Cerezo writes in her recent blog post entitled “The Art of Networking: An Introvert’s Guide.”

Cerezo—co-founder and CEO of

Meryl’s Safe Haven, a Worcester, Massachusetts-based shelter for homeless families—says it’s too easy to think that you have to say the same thing to every networking contact you encounter, and fast.

But no matter the setting, Cerezo writes, “if someone wants to give you the time of day, they will.”

So “stop trying to figure out how quickly you can say the same things you said to the person before,” Cerezo says. Instead, just be genuine about who you are and what you (and/or your organization) do.

“Ditch the pitch,” she stresses, “and be ready to speak from experience with the understanding that even if you don’t walk away with a check, hopefully you’ll walk away with a new associate you can contact later.”



Tapping into Your Extraverted Side Often Benefits Your Kids

It depends on the person, of course, and the strength of one's introversion, but you may not always love the idea of engaging your extraverted side, especially with people you don't know very well.

But when you're a parent (or a grandparent, aunt/uncle, etc.), your extraverting activities can help your child(ren) considerably, says freelance wellness journalist Steve Calechman, in his recent *Fatherly.com* website article entitled "No, You Don't Have to Tell Others You're an Introvert."

It doesn't mean a "total reinvention" of your introverted personality,

Calechman stresses, but rather "pushing the edges of your comfort zone when the moment calls for it."

"It starts with knowing the moment," Calechman says, "and then what to do to make it palatable."

One approach, Calechman notes, is to identify the larger purpose in your extraverting activities as they relate to your child(ren).

"Your life might be fine," he says, "but [your kids] need help making plans and developing friendships.

"You need to know what's going on and who could be in their social circles."

That information "doesn't mystically present itself," Calechman points out.

"It comes from watching but also



meeting other parents in order to know them and be known.

"It can lead to playdates, finding out what people do for the summer, and how to sign up for the basketball leagues that seemingly have no website."

SOLITUDE STRATEGIES

Go on Long Hikes to Get the True Solitude You Seek

On the one hand, hiking is a great way to get some of the solitude you want—and need—as an introvert.

On the other hand, you're often not the only one with that idea! So you can end up in situations where there are simply too many people around for your liking.

Yes, it helps sometimes to hike early in the morning or later in the evening, when there are fewer other people out and about.

But northern California hiker Dina DeLeon has an even better idea for you: Take **long** hikes.

Why?

"You come to realize that the deeper you go into the wilderness, the fewer people you see, which also includes popular trails," DeLeon writes in her blog post "6 Tips to Find Solitude When Hiking."

"I enjoy hiking for longer periods of time, and those tend to be the hikes where I feel the most relaxed and at peace."

Of course, "long" can mean different things to different people. DeLeon defines it as a **day** hike (vs. a hike of several days or longer) that runs seven to 12 miles.

"Hiking longer miles in a day is

the most doable throughout the year," DeLeon stresses, "and requires less preparation than thru-hiking or backpacking."

Just pack a few essentials, including plenty of water, and go, says DeLeon, who began hiking 14 years ago "because it helps me clear my mind and brings me so much peace from everyday life."



IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

Happiness Depends on Who's *Defining* the Concept—and How

By Peter Vogt

Over the last several decades, researchers have established an apparently clear link between higher levels of extraversion and greater levels of happiness.

The more extraverted you are, the conclusion goes, the happier you are in life.

And thus the less extraverted you are—i.e., the more introverted you are—the less happy you are in life, which in turn potentially sets you up for more struggles, psychological and otherwise.

Of course, we're talking about huge generalities here; everyone is different, after all.

But my question with this admittedly fascinating body of research has always been:

“Happier” according to whom, and according to what criteria?

Turns out I'm not the only one asking such things.

In 2011, University of Calgary applied psychology student Laura Thomas conducted extensive interviews of nine self-identified introverts for her enlightening master's degree thesis entitled “Introverted Perspectives on Happiness: A Phenomenological Inquiry.”

All nine of the study participants scored higher than 17 out of 21 on the extraversion-introversion scale of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), confirming, Thomas notes,

their “clear preference on the scale for introversion.”

Thomas set out to address two research questions in her study, one of them being:

“How does an introverted individual define happiness or well-being?”

After thorough analysis of the transcribed interviews, Thomas found that the participants' views of what constitutes happiness fell into five intriguing themes:

1) Happiness as peace and contentment—“maintaining a peaceful emotional state,” Thomas notes, “rather than effusive emotional expression.”

2) Happiness as independence—making one's own decisions, and having “freedom from external expectations” where one's introversion is concerned.

3) Happiness as close relationships—valuing quality over quantity in one's relationships.

4) Happiness as self-acceptance—having “a strengths-based perspective” on one's introversion.

5) Happiness as thriving despite extraverted pressure—finding one's own ways to feel good as an introvert, given “social challenges to be more extraverted.”



I can't, and won't, speak for all introverts, and Thomas herself cautions against making blanket statements based on her study's relatively small number of participants.

But ... these findings—these definitions of happiness—make utter and complete sense to me.

For most of my 56 years now, I've wondered not so much about my own definition of happiness but rather my own concept of the closely related idea of fun.

What constitutes *fun*?

Well, it hasn't been too hard to figure out that what's fun to me—taking a solo walk in the woods ... holing up in my bedroom listening to Pink Floyd's “Dark Side of the Moon” album ... reading a 12-year-old, unpublished master's thesis and highlighting the hell out of it—isn't generally (extraverted) society's notion of fun.

I find it comforting, and inspiring, to now see that both fun and happiness are relative.

So have fun—and be happy—your own way, fellow introvert.

Fellow introvert, you need what you need in life.
And you deserve to get it—every day.

You can. And you will.

ENROLL NOW!

Online Course



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course.introvertinsights.com

PRACTICAL RESEARCH

Social Connection Matters to Extraverts and Introverts

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that you can live without much social connection as an introvert, suggests a recent study in the journal *Health Psychology Open*.

On the contrary, the study found, introverts "are not immune and may, in fact, be quite sensitive to feelings of disconnection or lack of support."

The study involved 949 Canadian residents who were recruited online during the third wave of the COVID pandemic (between April and June of 2021).

The participants completed a survey of subjective happiness, a brief measure of their introversion-extraversion, and assessments on

perceived social support, loneliness, and social connection.

The study's two key findings:

Social support from friends and family, as well as having more close friends, were more strongly correlated with subjective happiness for introverts in the study.

The correlation between social loneliness and happiness was also higher for the study's introverts.

"Taken together, these results challenge the common narrative that people with higher introversion need or want less social connection, or that they benefit less from having a healthy social life," researchers Kiffer Card and Shayna Skakoon-Sparling conclude.

"[The findings] demonstrate that misconceptions about the social needs of people with higher introversion are potentially harmful; people with higher introversion who do not take care of their social connection needs may be putting themselves at risk, as are those who make assumptions about the social needs of their friends and family members who seem to be more introverted."

The researchers also note that their findings contradict the idea that introverts are "specially equipped" to handle pandemic-related social restrictions.

Source: "Are Social Support, Loneliness, and Social Connection Differentially Associated with Happiness Across Levels of Introversion-Extraversion?", *Health Psychology Open*, January-June 2023, pp. 1-14.

REFLECTIVE READS

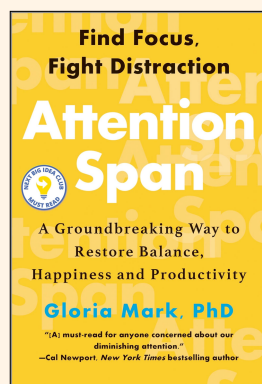
Attention Span: We Can Beat Distraction and Regain Focus

Think of all the mental input you deal with each day, particularly from your various electronic devices.

Think, too, about how the onslaught virtually never ends.

Now, says *Attention Span* author Gloria Mark, imagine this same phenomenon governing a physical activity you pursue—like lifting weights, for example.

"We can't be experiencing continual mental challenge nonstop all day using cognitive resources in the same way we can't be challenged to lift weights nonstop all day using our



physical resources," writes Mark, a University of California-Irvine professor of informatics who has studied attention for more than 20 years.

The caveman brain just wasn't designed for the amount of information we now have to manage each

day, Mark says. Nor can that brain deal well with interruptions, distractions, and multitasking.

"Without top-down control of our attention," Mark argues, "we open ourselves up to stimuli that steer our attention for us."

"Our mind becomes like a pinball, propelled from lever to lever by text chimes, social media notifications, and targeted ads."

But there's hope, Mark says: We can implement realistic, research-based strategies—which she discusses—"to use our personal devices in a way that does not induce stress, where we feel positive, psychologically balanced, and productive."

Continued from page 1

ence with good (though not perfect) people—especially if those people aren't the same ones you've teamed up with before.

Play to Your Introversions

Teams are made up of individual people working on individual pieces of the project at hand.

That caters to your strengths, and preferences, as an introvert.

Yes, you'll have to participate in large-group meetings, on-the-fly brainstorming sessions, and other extravert-oriented activities.

But you can also find ways to do work **individually** for, and as part of, the team.

For example: Offer to be the note-taker at team meetings, and the person who then goes off—alone!—to write up a detailed summary of what was discussed, what was decided, and what next steps are to come.

Bonus: You'll get the opportunity to reflect deeply on the meeting when you have more time to think, which in turn gives you the chance to add your (additional) thoughts and recommendations in the meeting summary you write.

Focus on the Potential

It's easy—and, again, quite understandable—to dwell on what working on a team might cost you as an introvert.

But give equal time to the experience's positive potential, too.

You might learn something: a new skill, a new software program, a new creative strategy or process.

You might also end up becoming part of a significant achievement, one you could never have accomplished on your own.

And don't forget the personal side: You may develop a close working relationship, even a deep friendship, with someone on your team.

Dial Up Your Self-Care

When you're on a team, you end up doing more "extravert stuff" than you otherwise might.

So while it's always important to take care of your needs as an introvert, it's all the more so when you're a member of an active team—because you're going to get overcooked at times.

Take breaks when you need them, even if they're short.

Tell people you need to work alone sometimes so that you can think and focus without distraction.

And whenever and wherever you can, plan—so that you don't have to pay the additional energy costs of being caught off guard.

You may never **prefer** working on a team, but you'll almost certainly **have to** (if you're not already).

Just remember: You have much to contribute—and you can do it in your own introverted style.





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INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“[C]onfident introverts aren't interested in becoming someone they're not. They're already comfortable with who they are.”

~ Lachlan Brown

“Remember, the essence of networking lies not in the quantity of the connections but in the quality.”

~ Gabriel Diaz

“Unless you give yourself some quiet time, you will never be able to spend time with yourself. And we know that to know someone better, you have to spend time with them!”

~ Akanksha Narang

“When we stop viewing extraverted behavior as ‘better’ or as something to strive towards, and when we start to view introverted behavior as having its own merits, we create families, schools, and workplaces that are a lot more inclusive, and we finally allow the more introverted half of the people on the planet to flourish and thrive as well. To the benefit of everyone.”

~ Kevin Zoeteman