



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

introvert insights

Yes, “Introvert” Is a Label—but What Matters Is How You Use It

By Peter Vogt

People get worked up about what they call “labels”—especially the so-called label *introvert*.

“By accepting the introvert label as an absolute, you may be creating self-imposed limitations in terms of your ability to interact with colleagues and industry leaders, which is vital for career growth,” writes career coach Ashley Stahl, in her *Forbes* website article entitled “Why Self-Identifying as an Introvert May Hurt Your Career Growth.”

“We are people full of contradictions, and we should not be confined to a label to define us,” adds author and English teacher Jenna Pratt, in her *Medium* website article entitled “The Introverted Extrovert and Why I Think Labels Are Nonsensical.”

Stahl, Pratt, and the many others who have written about the dangers-of-the-introvert-label issue over the years raise a valid point: You can’t, and shouldn’t, use your introversion as a crutch by saying, in effect, “I’m an introvert—so I cannot/will not/don’t need to _____.”

But what if you identify as an *introvert* not as a way to **hide** yourself in life, but as a way to **guide** yourself?

And what if you see the label *introvert* not as “an absolute” or as something that “defines” you, but as something that **aligns** you?

The way you view the “label” *introvert*—and the way you apply the resulting mindset in your life—is what matters. Not the label per se.

As Sophia Dembling, author of the enlightening book *The Introvert’s Way*, puts it in the subheading of her *Psychology Today* website article “Be Introverted, Not an Introvert”:

Labels can hurt or help, depending on how you use them [emphasis added].

Think Handedness

Let’s look at another word I use to label myself. You probably use it too, as do about 90 percent of people worldwide, statistically speaking:

Right-handed.

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TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

MENTAL HEALTH

Try Turning Your Negative Thoughts into *Neutral* Ones

It can be challenging—especially when you’re a frequently-in-your-head introvert—to combat your negative thoughts, especially when people give you fuzzy advice like “just think positive.”

Thinking positively **is** a good goal to strive for. But author and resilience expert Anne Grady says it’s often more realistic to first work on shifting your negative thoughts toward **neutral**.

“Rather than leaping from a negative situation to positive self-talk, which will feel too challenging, we can try to move ourselves to a neu-

tral zone, where we are more likely to feel that we are at least OK in the moment,” says Grady, in a recent article (by Ammar Kalia) in *The Guardian* newspaper entitled “The Psychological Immune System: Four Ways to Bolster Yours—and Have a Happier, Calmer Life.”

“The psychological immune system is an incredible buffer against the inevitable stresses of life,” says Grady, author of the book *Mind Over Moment: Harness the Power of Resilience*.

“It doesn’t prevent bad things from happening to us, but if we can learn to develop it we can put our brain back in control and monitor our responses.”

One relatively easy way to do that, Grady says, is to first aim for neutral when you’re wrestling with negative thoughts.

How?

“You have to find what works for you,” Grady says, “then create resources you can access when you’re in situations of heightened stress.”

For example: In a negative moment, you might silently tell yourself what you’re grateful for in life ... or take several deep breaths ... or remind yourself that you’ve handled similar struggles in the past.

Grady’s method: reading the sticky notes she has placed around her house, all of which say “It is what it is.”

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Set, and Pursue, Your Goals One “Semester” at a Time

The semesters (or maybe it was quarters) you had in high school and/or college offered a consistent structure if nothing else, along with clear starting and ending points.

Why not harness that concept

now when it comes to pursuing your personal and professional goals, suggests senior reporter Allie Volpe, in her recent *Vox* website article entitled “Why You Should Divide Your Life into Semesters, Even When You’re Not in School.”

“Just as students tackle specific courses while working toward a de-

gree or certification, you can apply that same focus on targeted aims for clearly defined periods of time, inching you closer to your larger goal in the process,” says Volpe.

The idea is to reduce the intimidation (and perhaps procrastination) associated with goal setting and pursuit, Volpe notes.

“Maybe you want to practice speaking up in meetings for a few months in service of your larger goal of bolstering your confidence,” Volpe writes.

“Or you could dedicate the next ‘semester’ to saving \$100 a month to put toward a vacation fund.”

The semester concept creates deadlines for specific actions and “spurs motivation,” Volpe stresses.

It also offers you a potential fresh start every 15 to 17 weeks.



Find Quiet Spaces to Work—Both Inside *and* Outside

If you're an introvert and you're just starting a new job with a new organization, take the first day or two to study the physical landscape of your office setting, says career and executive coach Patricia Ezechie, in a recent *Stylist* website article (by Caroline Butterwick) entitled "A Career Coach Explains How to Thrive at Work as an Introvert."

What are you looking for, exactly? The calm, quiet areas, Ezechie says. The places where you can steal away when you want/need to in order to do your best work as an introvert, away from all the interruptions and distractions.

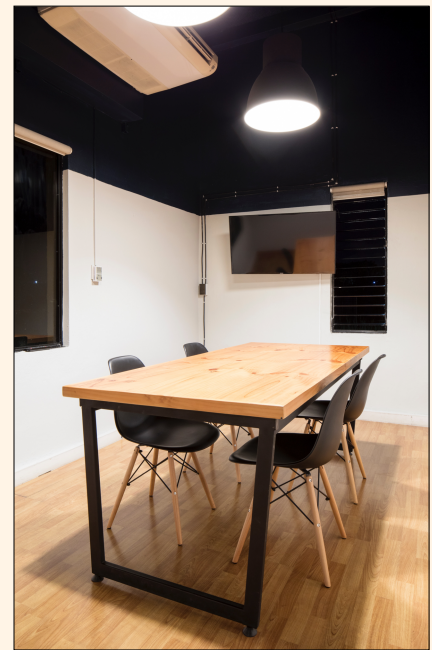
"The flip side of modern open-plan working spaces is that office designers have usually also created smaller 'thinking' and 'being' spaces," Ezechie notes.

"In some companies, this might be designated meditation and prayer rooms for quiet contemplation, or just smaller, more private spaces or meeting rooms."

Find these spaces in your new workplace—the sooner the better—and use them, Ezechie advises.

And don't limit your search to the inside of your workplace complex. Look for places outside as well, where you can work and/or take breaks when you need them.

"If you are lucky enough to have a green space nearby," Ezechie



points out, "use that to re-energize and rebalance."

NETWORKING TIPS

Enlist Extraverts to Introduce You to People of Interest

In NASCAR auto racing it's called *drafting*—following the competitor right in front of you mere inches behind his/her back bumper.

It's a tactic that dramatically reduces wind resistance for you in your vehicle and thus makes your ride more fuel-efficient—and more likely to succeed in the end.

Attorney Patrick Monroe says that when you're an introvert (as he is), you can use this same kind of thinking when it comes to your professional networking activities.

How?

By enlisting already-talkative extraverts to introduce you to people you want to meet.

"[I]n any given social environment, there are always a few very extraverted individuals—people who are always talking, shaking hands,

and making introductions," Monroe writes in his recent LinkedIn article entitled "Building Relationships (as an Introvert)."

These people are often leaders in the organization or group behind whatever event you're attending, Monroe points out.

And they "will break the ice, cut a path for you" toward meeting other people, Monroe says—if you simply let them.

"The point," Monroe emphasizes, "is not to know everyone but to know the few individuals who know everyone."



IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

Let Common Interests Be the Catalyst for New Relationships

By Peter Vogt

When my first wife Lois and I moved into our house in Bloomington, Minnesota in 2001, I spent most evenings sitting in a plastic chair on the front lawn, taking in the sights and sounds so that I could get a feel for the people and happenings in our quiet new neighborhood.

Just a few days after Lois and I had fully settled in, following months of stress in a then-frenzied housing market—and with Lois just weeks away from delivering our first child—I met Becky as she was walking past our driveway.

It was love at first sight.

Becky was beautiful. Friendly, outgoing, a ray of sunshine. I was drawn to her immediately. She so reminded me of a happy relationship from my past.

The feeling was clearly mutual. Whenever I saw Becky in the days that followed, she always seemed as happy to see me as I was to see her.

Get your mind out of the gutter.

Becky was a young and spirited black labrador retriever.

And I loved her because she was a physical and behavioral clone of my old dog Skipper, the black lab we had growing up.

I also loved her because she helped me get to know her two owners—eventually.

I say “eventually” because, in true form that only a dog-loving introvert like me could demonstrate, I asked what Becky’s name was on that very first night she was walking

by, with her owners—but it would take me a year before I asked the owners what **their** names were.

(Linda and Dave, as it turns out. Before that, I simply referred to them as “Becky’s mom” and “Becky’s dad.”)

Linda and Dave became our first and closest friends in the neighborhood. In the years ahead, in fact, they would become rocks in our lives—an extra set of parents, really—as Lois battled metastatic melanoma. (She died of the disease in 2012.)

All during Lois’s long cancer fight, my beautiful Becky would happen by at just the right time, lifting my mood and—especially—snapping me back to the here and now, if only briefly, giving me respite from the dark future I was constantly imagining. And dreading.

For me, dogs are not only relationship builders; they’re the crucial relationship starters I need.

We introverts are pretty good at cultivating existing relationships, after all, especially in one-on-one situations.

It’s **beginning** relationships—taking a chance on a first encounter with someone new—that often proves so difficult, often stopping us from making the attempt at all.

How can we—you—make that initial interaction easier, and thus more likely to occur?

Leverage something you have in common with your new counterpart, whether you stumble upon it (as I



stumbled upon Becky) or seek it out (as when you join a local professional group or special-interest group).

Dogs—namely, other people’s dogs—work great for me.

In fact, I used my dog strategy again just a few weeks ago, during a glorious 90 minutes my family and I spent on the eastern side of Lake Tahoe in Nevada, where we had stopped before driving on to San Francisco to drop our son Theo off at college.

Yes, the lake itself was stunning. So were the surrounding mountains. And the trees. And all the rest.

But you know what else made our day at Tahoe so memorable, for me at least?

The dogs upon dogs upon dogs people had there, a few of which sparked cordial conversations—including one with a man from San Francisco who reassured Theo about the wisdom of his college choice.

When you’re an introvert, your best connecting catalyst is the common interest—the mutual passion you share with someone else.

What is that for **you**?

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



BE THE INTROVERT YOU ARE!

The Introvert's Way to a Healthy, Happy Life

Run your own life, your own way. Learn more and enroll at:

course.introvertinsights.com

PRACTICAL RESEARCH

Limiting Social Media Usage May Boost Your Well-Being

Limiting your social media usage to 30 minutes a day may be a good way to “improve psychological well-being on multiple dimensions,” suggests a recent article in the journal *Technology, Mind, and Behavior*.

The article describes an Iowa State University study that involved 230 students. Half were asked to limit their social media activities to 30 minutes a day (they received automated reminders to help them do so), while the rest were told to use social media as they always do.

Before the study began and again after two weeks of the experiment, the study’s authors assessed the students on overall psychological well-being as well as several individual

measures: anxiety, depression, loneliness, fear of missing out (FoMO), and positive and negative affect.

The study’s key findings:

- 1) Limiting social media usage via self-monitoring boosted participants’ psychological well-being.
- 2) The self-monitoring also lowered participants’ anxiety, depression, FoMO, loneliness, and negative affect, and it increased their positive affect.

“These results indicate that self-monitoring limited social media usage can be a practical intervention for improving psychological well-being,” the study authors write.

The authors also point out that sticking to **exactly** 30 minutes a day

(or less) of social media usage “is not the critical aspect of this experiment.” Sometimes, the researchers acknowledge, students in the limited-usage group went slightly beyond 30 minutes.

As lead researcher Ella Faulhaber notes in an ISU news release: “The lesson here is, it’s not about being perfect but putting in effort, which makes a difference.”

“I think self-limiting and paying attention are the secret ingredients,” Faulhaber stresses, “more so than the 30-minute benchmark.”

Sources: “The Effect of Self-Monitoring Limited Social Media Use on Psychological Well-Being,” *Technology, Mind, and Behavior*, (4)2 (Summer 2023), pp. 1-10; Iowa State University news release, June 14, 2023.

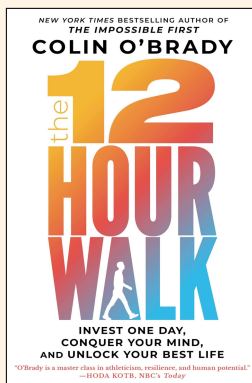
REFLECTIVE READS

The 12-Hour Walk outlines a way to really clear your head

You likely won’t relate to the grueling journeys Colin O’Brady normally pursues—activities like pulling a 375-pound sled across Antarctica, for example, or climbing to the high points of all 50 U.S. states in a span of 21 days, 9 hours, and 48 minutes.

But a daylong walk O’Brady took during the COVID lockdown days might very well speak to you—and impact you as much as it impacted O’Brady.

In *The 12-Hour Walk*, O’Brady talks about how a strange blend of



boredom and previous expedition memories combined on a cold Oregon day in May 2020 to push him outside to walk all day, his phone set intentionally to airplane mode.

Interestingly, despite his previous adventures all over the world, the

walk made O’Brady uneasy at first.

When he was in Antarctica, for example, “I had no choice but to be with myself in silence,” he writes.

“Here on this gray May morning, I was intentionally seeking solitude to contemplate life, again with no distractions.”

It turned out to be a wise and powerful decision, O’Brady says. He returned from his walk feeling better than he had in months, thanks to the mega head-clearing his mega walk offered.

Now, O’Brady says, it’s your—our—turn.

“Invest one day, conquer your mind, and unlock your best life.”

Continued from page 1

Do I “hide” behind being right-handed?

No. Being right-handed doesn't keep me from attempting anything (with the possible exception of trying out to be a left-handed pitcher in the local fastpitch softball league).

Do I see my being right-handed, and treat it, as “an absolute”?

No. I use my left hand too, all the time—sometimes by choice, more often by necessity. During my daily workouts, for example, I promise you that I'm lifting the weights with both hands. (Ask my sore hands, with an “s.”)

Do I allow my being right-handed to “define” me?

No. Calling myself *right-handed* doesn't prohibit me from using my left hand when I want or need to.

Just last night, for example, when I was trying to get the hood latch unstuck on my kid's decrepit old Hon-

da Civic, I promise you that both of my hands were getting scraped up as I reached underneath the front of the hood and tried to coax the damn thing to open. (Once again: Ask **both** of my sore hands.)

All of this being said: Do I label myself *right-handed* and use my right hand most of the time, often without even consciously thinking about it?

Yes.

And does this generally work to my advantage vs. my disadvantage?

Of course.

And so, when something really matters especially, am I naturally—and understandably—going to turn to my right hand first, not my left?

Why wouldn't I?

The label *introvert* plays out the same way in daily life—if, of course, you do indeed apply it the right way.

“Introvert” Is Shorthand

Look closely again at the title of Sophia Dembling's *Psychology Today*

website article: “Be Introverted, Not an Introvert.”

Isn't she, too, arguing against using the “label” *introvert*?

Not exactly—even though she says “I don't argue with the people who object to labels.”

I don't either.

But remember: The word *introvert* is and always will be a form of shorthand and nothing more.

It's just a quicker and more convenient way of saying “person who tends toward introversion.”

It isn't meant to function like a confining box or a jail cell, something that paints you into a corner.

It's more like a lighthouse.

It reminds you where home (or your other destination) is, and it helps you get there whenever you want to without crashing into the rocks and sinking.

But it doesn't hinder you from taking sidetrips whenever and wherever you want. Unless you let it.





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INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“Spread your wings for the world; in this time of crisis, it needs
the true you more than ever.”

~ Susanna Wu-Pong Calvert

“I wish for a world where introversion isn't misunderstood but
just accepted without prejudice. ... Because if we acknowledge
and embrace our introverted strengths, we can unlock incredible
potential in ourselves.”

~ Lesley Tait

“It is exhausting to be someone else. It's untenable. And it's
never going to get you to the person you're meant to be.”

~ Laura Gassner Otting

“In a world that celebrates the loudest voices, remember that
your worth is not measured by your volume but by the depth of
your character and the sincerity of your contributions. Embrace
your quiet power, and let your qualities bloom.”

~ Fiona Fletcher Reid