



# i introvert insights

## Looking for *Deep Conversation*? Set Up the Best Conditions for It

By Peter Vogt

Most nights after dinner, my lovely wife Adrienne and I take a two- or sometimes three-mile walk to stretch our legs.

And talk.

Our way.

She's an introvert. I'm an introvert. So on these rejuvenating outings, as we stroll around the nearby ponds watching the geese as well as the occasional crane on the water's edge, we have the kind of conversations introverts crave.

**Deep** conversations.

Substantive discussions about, for example, what Adrienne is doing and learning in her work, or what I'm doing and learning in mine. Or about our kids and their lives. Or about some pressing issue in the world around us, whether close to home or seemingly far away.

These types of conversations don't spring forth with just anyone in any old situation, of course. It's one reason why introverts often get pegged as anti-social (or worse).

Introverts know that deep conversa-

tions—our kind of socializing—and, for example, being in a crowded bar cannot and do not go together.

Extroverts (may) call this attitude anti-social. But introverts refer to it as yielding to a simple reality: that a real conversation just can't take place when, and where, screaming to be heard is involved.

No, deep conversations—the ones you, too, likely seek out if you're an introvert—require that a certain set of conditions be met.

### The Right Person

If you want to have a deep conversation with someone, that someone has to be both willing and able to **go** deep in the first place.

Not everyone is, as I'm sure you already know. Indeed, some people seem put off by the whole idea.

If you're anything like me, you have perhaps 10 people in your life who fit the bill for deep conversation. Many of them (though certainly not all of them) are likely fellow introverts.

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# TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

## RELATIONSHIPS

### Dating Apps Can Help You Connect with People *Your Way*

Dating can be—and often is—stressful enough, especially (though not exclusively!) for introverts.

The idea of using an **online** dating platform often conjures up even more hesitance and anxiety, says online dating coach Erika Ettin, founder of A Little Nudge.

But using an online dating service may well be right up your alley as an introvert, Ettin writes in her recent Tribune News Service article entitled “Does Online Dating Work Better for Introverts?”

“[O]nline dating might actually be the best route for introverts to dip

their toes into the dating pool,” says Ettin.

“Instead of approaching a random stranger at the bar, you actually have a chance to chat and get to know a little about each other before deciding if there’s a potential connection.”

Ettin says that niche dating apps, which “cater to specific lifestyles or interests,” are a particularly good resource if you’re an introvert.

“Farmers Only,” she writes, “is often pointed to as an example (often as a joke), but if you have an interest in agriculture, it’s actually a great place to start and find someone who already has something in common with you.”

The same goes for similar niche sites, Ettin says, like MilitaryCupid (for military members and those who want to date them) and Trek Passions (for people who are into science fiction).

You can also focus on online dating sites/apps that have detailed questionnaires for users to fill out, Ettin stresses, instead of bios.

“Online dating can sound scary, I know,” Ettin acknowledges.

“But it actually provides a unique opportunity for introverts to navigate dating on their own terms and in their own time. Instead of trying too hard to put yourself out there, you can be yourself and find a like-minded match.”

## ON THE JOB

### Use Follow-Up as a Way to Meet New Work Colleagues

When you’re in a new job in a new organization, one of the challenges—particularly if you’re an introvert—is getting to know the new people you’ll be working with.

One easy way to begin doing that, says University of Texas at Austin psychology professor Art Markman, is “to use another event as a catalyst for a conversation”—i.e., to tap in to the art of following up with people as a connecting strategy.

“When you’re new at work, you probably see lots of unfamiliar faces in meetings and presentations,” Markman writes in his recent *Fast Company* website article entitled “An Introvert’s Guide to the First Week at a New Job.”

“When somebody says something interesting, use that as an opportunity to follow up with them,” says Markman, author of the book *Bring Your Brain to Work*.

“Ideally, you can set up a time to meet, but even sending an email to introduce yourself and ask a follow-up question is a good start. If you

develop an email relationship with someone, it becomes easier to strike up a conversation the next time you see the person.”

The sooner you start implementing the follow-up technique, the better, Markman adds, as “most people like to be nice to the new person.”



## Pick Your Accommodations with Your Introversion in Mind

Next time you're going to be traveling somewhere—particularly if you'll be doing so alone—choose where to stay with your introversion top of mind, suggests a recent article on the website [TouristSecrets.com](https://www.touristsecrets.com).

“Your choice of accommodations sets the tone for your solo travel experience,” notes the article, entitled “How to Travel Solo as an Introvert (8 Essential Tips).”

“By selecting lodging options that cater to introverts,” the article stresses, “you can create a peaceful and comforting haven where you can recharge and fully embrace your introverted nature.”

Instead of staying at a large, busy resort or a crowded hostel, for example, think about booking at a small boutique hotel, the article says—or even arranging to stay in a private room or guesthouse, or in a more intimate bed and breakfast setting.

“If you prefer even more seclusion, you might want to explore the option of vacation rentals or self-catering apartments,” the article says.

“These accommodations provide you with a home-away-from-home feel, giving you the freedom to create your own personal retreat.”

Make sure as well to look for introvert-friendly amenities that are “conducive to relaxation and solitude,” the article emphasizes.



“This can include features such as a serene garden, a cozy library, or a rooftop terrace where you can retreat to and enjoy some quiet time.”

## SELF-CARE

### Design Tweaks Can Make Your Home More Serene

It doesn't take much energy—or time or money, for that matter—to create revitalizing, introvert-friendly spaces in your home, says Oregon writer Jackie Waters, in her recent *WestSound* magazine website article entitled “Recharge and Reconnect with Yourself: An Introvert's Self-Care Guide.”

Simple changes can make a big difference, Waters says.

Case in point: rearranging your existing furniture.

“Consider moving your favorite reading chair closer to the window, or positioning your desk to face a calming artwork,” Waters suggests.

“These changes, however minor they might seem, can significantly impact your mood and productivity.”

You can make tweaks to a space's lighting to achieve a similar effect,

Waters says, since light (or lack thereof) plays an important role in influencing both mood and energy level.

“Opt for warm, soft lights in areas where you relax or read; while cooler, brighter lights might be better for workspaces,” Waters says.

All of these efforts boil down to “carving out peaceful, comfortable spaces and routines within your own home,” Waters concludes.

“Remember,” she stresses, “it's all about creating an environment that caters to your comfort and well-being.”



# IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

## Introversion Is Often Seen as a Problem. You Can Push Back

By Peter Vogt

At first I thought I had accidentally printed an article from *The Onion*, the satirical, fake-news website that too many people (especially, for some reason, politicians) have in the past cited as their source of—ahem—information.

But no.

I really did have in my hands an article from the legitimate news and information website *Slate*.

It was actually a letter from a mom to Nicole Chung, who writes *Slate*'s "Care and Feeding" parenting advice column.

In the letter, the mother expressed her concern that her teenage daughter a) is an introvert, and b) needs straightening out somehow.

Chung offered a response to the letter—and a memorable one at that—in her column.

You can't really blame me for thinking of *The Onion* at first, given the resulting article's headline:

***I Want My Teen Daughter to Stop Being Such an Introverted Robot Person***

But what followed in the piece itself was far from funny.

It was tragic.

And it is all too common where introverts are concerned.

Let's start at the beginning.

Here's what Mom had to say in her letter. I'm including only parts of it here, but you'll get the idea:

*"I have had numerous talks with [my daughter] about getting out of her comfort zone. I've tried everything, from yelling at her to reasoning with her, but nothing seems to work.*

*"All I want is for her to show that she is a human, not a machine.*

*"For some reason, me saying this seems to bother her, because (as she told me) she does not think of herself as a robot who is devoid of emotion, and she's sick of people like me saying that she is." ...*

*"How can I get her to change her personality, so she opens up more easily, and enjoys social interaction and gatherings more?"*

Wow.

Chung's response matched mine exactly.

"Wow," she wrote in the prelude to her full reply.

Then she let loose:

*"I'm amazed that yelling at your child, calling her a machine, and telling her she needs to become an entirely different person hasn't worked out the way you'd hoped!*

*"I don't understand why you think her personality is a problem that needs fixing. It's no wonder she is shutting down during your conversations."*

Chung went on to tell Mom that



instead of focusing so much of her energy—and contempt—on her daughter, perhaps she should instead take a long, hard look in the mirror.

"You're the one who needs to change here," Chung concluded:

*"[Y]ou need to work on seeing and appreciating the kid you have, instead of wasting more time and energy telling her that her natural inclinations are wrong."*

Amen, Nicole Chung. On behalf of introverts everywhere: thank you.

Now, I think—or at least I would hope—that this is an extreme case of the extravert ideal, mixed with the complementary phenomenon of seeing introversion as some sort of disorder that needs to be fixed or cured.

But this kind of thing happens to introverts far too often—usually more subtly, I'll concede. It might even have happened to you. It might **still** be happening to you.

Be aware of its power to diminish you—and of your own power to push back against it. Hard.

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

You can. And you will.

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# PRACTICAL RESEARCH

## Solitude in Nature Boosts Well-Being in Several Ways

Being in nature is “integral” to making solitude a positive experience, as natural environments boost your chances for rest, rejuvenation, relief from stress, and reflection, according to a recent study in the journal *Sustainability*.

The study involved in-depth, one-on-one interviews with 60 volunteer participants from 20 different countries. The interviews were conducted online or by phone over the course of about a year, beginning just as the global pandemic began taking full hold in May 2020.

Interestingly, the semi-structured interviews did not specifically ask participants about anything nature-related. The researchers went into

the study intending to simply explore participants’ experiences of solitude in general.

“However,” the researchers say, “during the initial analysis of the data, we noted strong themes having to do with the natural world when participants discussed their **positive solitude**” [emphasis added].

The key theme the researchers uncovered: “being in nature enriches solitude.”

“This theme reflected the sentiment that positive solitude was closely intertwined with natural spaces, and that nature gave comfort and calm during moments of solitude,” the researchers note.

“[A]ccess to nature,” the researchers add, “[is] an important, if not critical, part of positive versus lonely solitude,” particularly—

though probably not exclusively—during times of crisis (i.e., a global pandemic that upends normal life).

The study revealed several other broad themes as well. Among them:

That “being in their local natural spaces also allowed participants to more spontaneously shift from solitude to social connection, supporting a sense of balance between these two states of being.”

That being in nature increases *species solidarity*—“the awareness that humans are part of an ecosystem shared with other species.”

**Source:** “Access to Nature Fosters Well-Being in Solitude,” *Sustainability*, 15(6) (published online March 20, 2023).

# REFLECTIVE READS

## Excellent Advice for Living: A Dad’s Wisdom for His Kids

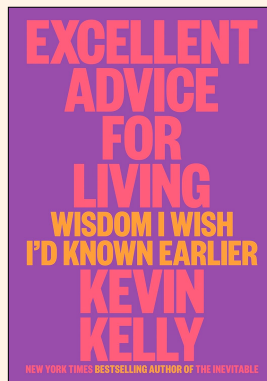
On the day Kevin Kelly turned 68, he began jotting down what he thought would be 68 little snippets of advice for his young-adult children.

His simple goal: to capture some of the wisdom he had gained over the years so he could pass it along to his kids.

“To my surprise,” he writes now, “I had more to say than I thought.”

The result is his delightful book *Excellent Advice for Living: Wisdom I Wish I’d Known Earlier*.

You can read the book in about an hour. But you will be **thinking**



about Kelly’s insights for much longer than that.

Kelly concedes that some of the advice he offers isn’t his own, and indeed that’s true. We’ve heard tips like “Don’t measure your life with someone else’s ruler” before.

Kelly also devotes some of his energy to mundane (though not unimportant!) lessons like “Don’t grocery shop while hungry” and “Don’t purchase extra insurance if you are renting a car with a credit card.”

But most of what Kelly offers is original, brilliantly said, and—best of all—empowering.

Prime example:

*“If you loan someone \$20 and you never see them again because they are avoiding paying you back, that makes it worth \$20.”*

Genius. I can hear my own dad saying it. You likely will too.

Continued from page 1

**These** are the people you need to turn to when you're in the mood for a deep interaction with someone.

Perhaps it's your spouse or significant other. Maybe it's your best friend from college. Maybe it's a grandparent.

Pick the right person for the job.

## The Right Setting

That crowded, noisy bar I mentioned earlier—why is that such a bad setting for deep conversation?

Let's cover the obvious first: It's crowded and noisy!

It's also likely to be overstimulating in terms of your senses, which will make it hard for you to think, let alone speak and be spoken to.

What you need for deep conversation is a place that is calm, quiet, and relatively sparse in terms of people in your immediate vicinity.

Every year in November, Adri-

anne's extended family has an event called "Lefse Weekend," which involves the making of several tons (I'm exaggerating ... a bit) of lefse over the course of an entire Saturday morning and afternoon.

I typically don't—and can't—talk much to anyone during the event itself; there's simply too much going on.

But in the evening—in that very same setting but under much more low-key conditions—I often have great talks, with my mother-in-law as well as others.

## The Right Atmosphere

Even if you're in the calmest, quietest room and there are few if any other people around, you can still find yourself battling the atmosphere when it comes to connecting deeply with your conversation partner.

The prime enemy: the phone—yours and the other person's.

You can try to have a deep con-

versation with someone if one or both of you are constantly checking your phones. You can even believe you're successfully having a deep conversation with someone if one or both of you are constantly checking your phones.

But you are not really having a deep conversation with someone when one or both of you are constantly checking your phones.

Because conversations require focus and attention. And deep conversations require unbroken focus and attention.

So ... put your phone on silent, and ask your companion to do the same. Then put your phone away and out of sight, and ask your companion to do the same.

The atmosphere you create in doing so will let the two of you breathe.

And you'll (finally) be able to get lost in the kind of enlightening, invigorating, memorable conversation you live for as an introvert.





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## INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“I offer this advice to fellow introverts: Your quiet voice is important. Find a place and people that appreciate the personality you are and recognize it for its leadership potential.”

~ Brett Alexander

“In a world that often applauds the loudest voices, remember that your quiet strength is a force to be reckoned with.”

~ Hamaria Crockett

“It is important to be able to know who you are at your core, and honor that in situations and relationships that you engage in.”

~ Leslie Dobson

“Advocate for a world where introverted behaviors are just as accepted and adored as extroverted behaviors are currently. Advocate for your underrepresented introverted peers. Advocate for yourself and your right to lead from the introverted end of the personality type spectrum.”

~ David Boroughs