



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

introvert insights

We Need to See Introversions as the Unequivocal *Preference* It Is

By Peter Vogt

Quick game: Write your name—the way you'd sign a check—in the space below or on a piece of scratch paper.

Go ahead. Do it right now.

How was that for you?

I have a guess: It was easy, mindless, quick. Essentially automatic.

Now write your name again, in the space below or on your scratch paper. Only this time ... use your other hand.

Go ahead. Do it right now.

How was **that** for you?

Again, I have a guess: It was harder, slower. It took more thinking and effort. It was the antithesis of automatic.

Note—and this is crucial!—that you were still **able** to write your name with your non-dominant hand. But it wasn't pretty, and you

put in 10 times the energy and thought for one-tenth the result.

In fact, if you had to behave this way over the long term—for example, when you've broken your dominant hand and it's in a cast for six weeks—yes, you'd survive. But after a while you'd go quietly insane, too.

This is why, in your everyday life, you naturally and understandably write with your right hand if you're right-handed, and with your left hand if you're left-handed.

Why wouldn't you?

We refer to handedness as a *preference*. And—crucially once again—we don't say that one hand is better than the other. We don't coerce right-handers to write left-handed, and vice versa.

Which is to say that we don't put a value judgment on your handedness preference. We just acknowledge it and go with it, whatever it happens to be.

Unfortunately, in Western culture at least, the same can't be said for your introversion—even though

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TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

MENTAL HEALTH

Prepare a “Done List” to Rejuvenate Yourself for 2024

This is the time of year when your inner perfectionist can really beat you up—when it “can heap on extra stress when we look back and feel like we’ve failed on our New Year’s resolutions [for 2023],” says psychologist Nicole Byers.

That’s why Byers suggests a different strategy for 2024: writing a “done list” before **this** year is out, instead of coming up with New Year’s resolutions for next year.

Why?

Because when your brain sees what you **have** accomplished this year, it releases the neurotransmitter

dopamine, which in turn “stimulates the reward circuitry in your brain,” Byers writes in her recent *Psychology Today* website article entitled “Ditch New Year’s Resolutions and Write This List Instead.”

“Your brain says ‘wow, that felt awesome,’ and you’re much more likely to set that goal or a similar one again,” Byers notes.

Conversely, when we dwell on failure to reach our goals and other setbacks, our brains react by activating our chronic stress system, causing “a rebound effect [that] makes it even harder to achieve our goals,” Byers writes.

“Our brains like to focus on where we feel we’re not measuring

up, especially this time of year,” Byers says.

So how do you develop your “done list” for 2023? Simple, Byers says: Grab a pen and paper, pull up your 2023 calendar, and start writing down all your wins of the year.

“The things you accomplished. The projects you finished. The compliment you got from your colleague after you nailed a presentation. The special moments with your family. All the times you made a deadline.

“Write them down,” Byers says.

“A ‘done list’ refocuses that judgmental inner critic on your wins and successes,” Byers stresses, “so that you can start 2024 feeling refreshed, motivated, and confident.”

SOCIAL LIFE

Give Yourself a Job When You’re *Hosting* an Event Too

One of the more effective introvert socializing tricks is to take on some sort of job when you’re attending a professional or personal event.

You volunteer to be a greeter, for example, or to help with washing the dishes, the idea being to make the socializing a little less awkward.

Well, you can do the same thing when you’re an introvert and you’re the **host** of the event, says writer Sandra Peoples, in her recent blog post entitled “Hospitality Tips for the Introvert Wife with an Extrovert Husband.”

“I give myself a job or a purpose and invite guests to join me,” Peoples says.

When attendees arrive at her

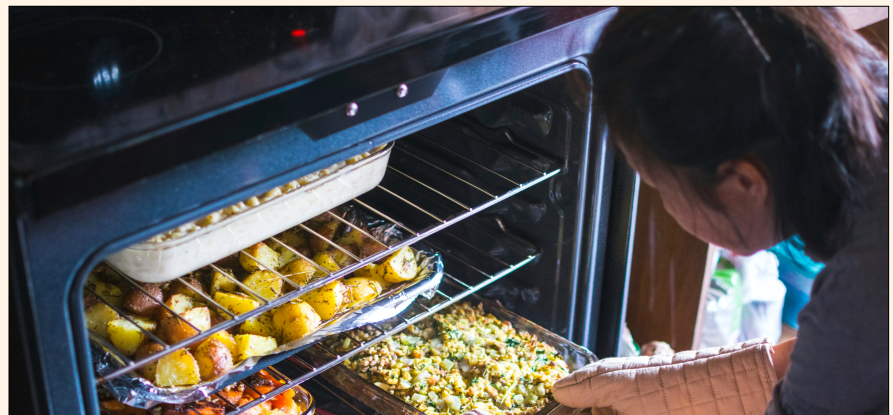
house for a gathering, for example, she makes sure she’s still pulling something out of the oven or setting the table so that she can ask the new arrivals to lend a hand.

That way, she says, “I don’t automatically have to jump into conversations and come up with small talk. I can invite people to help me do what I’m doing.”

The result?

“I feel more comfortable (and therefore make our guests feel more comfortable) if at first we aren’t face to face but rather side by side,” Peoples says.

“I like face to face when we get into deeper conversation and I’m ready to give my full attention to our guests.”



NETWORKING TIPS

Your Exit Strategy Doesn't Need to Be Complicated

It's easy to worry about how you will wrap up conversations when you attend networking events and similar functions—especially when it comes to those dreaded conversations that aren't going anywhere, the ones that make you think: “*Get me out of here!*”

Don't overthink things, says health journalist Mia Barnes, in her recent *Her Agenda* website article entitled “7 Networking Tips for Introverts to Authentically Connect.”

“Not all conversations go as planned,” Barnes acknowledges.

“Sometimes [the interaction] can be awkward or go in directions you

don't want it to.”

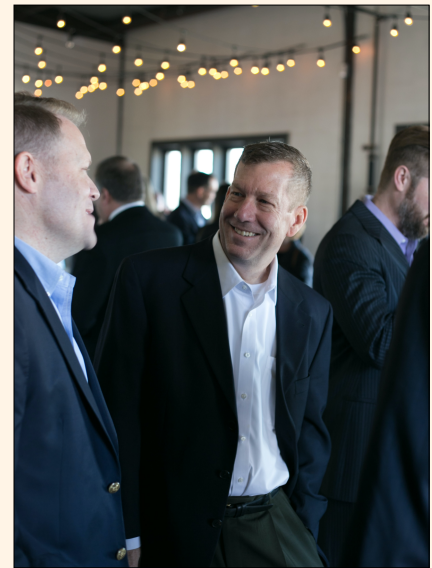
No problem, Barnes says. Simply wrap things up with a “thank you” or a “good luck.”

“The key is to end the conversation with a clear statement,” Barnes stresses.

Technology expert Vadim Kravcenko offers similar advice in his recent blog post entitled “Networking as an Introvert CTO [Chief Technology Officer].”

“We've all be there, trapped in a conversation that's dragging on, looking for an escape route,” Kravcenko writes.

But there's no need for you to take a fake phone call, he stresses, or to suddenly remember some “meeting” you need to get to.



“Just be honest,” he says. “Thank them for the chat, express hope to catch up again, and move on. No drama, no awkwardness.”

SELF-CARE

Designate a “Reading Spot” So That You Feel Immersed

You probably already know it from personal experience: Reading is one of the best things you can do as an introvert to maintain your health (physical, psychological, and emotional) and avoid burnout.

Yet it's oh so easy to let reading slip away as a priority in your everyday life.

One simple way to combat the problem is to set aside a specific “reading spot” for yourself in your home, says writer and introvert coach Jess Cabrera, in her recent blog post entitled “Reading Benefits Introverts: Read to Recharge.”

“Designating a spot might make your reading feel special,” according to Cabrera.

“It can also help you subtly reinforce boundaries with others in your home (for example, ‘If I'm in my

reading spot, I'm not to be bothered’),” Cabrera says.

Think about making your reading spot cozy and inviting, Cabrera advises, with pillows and blankets available for comfort.

“You can also make it a sensory experience,” she adds, “by lighting incense or candles.”

The idea is to give yourself the

best possible chance of feeling immersed in what you're reading, Cabrera stresses, so that you reach the state of *flow*—sometimes called “being in the zone”—that recharges your batteries.

“I never could have imagined,” she says, “how much reading benefits introverts, especially those feeling burned out (like me).”



IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

A Newsletter Has Its Place—but Introverts Need Something Else

By Peter Vogt

A dear, caring friend of mine sent me a depressing text the other day:

I have a great friend at work who is trying to get through high school as an introvert. I have been talking with her about you. She is not on Facebook. Is there another way she can follow you and get your newsletters?

I wrote back to my friend and said that yes, of course, the girl could read the newsletter on my website. She could check out my blog there, too, as well as my weekly newsletter on LinkedIn.

I also told my friend that I would send the girl a care package, with my book *The Introvert Manifesto*, my “Introvert’s Bill of Rights” poster, and a note of support inside.

“If you tell me a bit about Julia [not her real name],” I said to my friend, “and what she could use for encouragement etc., please do.”

That’s when my friend revealed the true extent of the bullshit this kid is dealing with—simply (though not solely) because she’s an introvert, and she’s committing the “crime” of being herself. Or at least trying to be herself, as a 16- or 17-year-old kid in today’s high school scene.

Here’s what my friend said:

Julia has the biggest heart and is so loving and kind. Her biggest issue is people telling her she is boring, never does anything, etc. because she

doesn’t like to be in crowds where people are being cruel and mean to each other.

She is actually going to [a nearby community college] this year as a junior because she hates being in the high school where snotty girls video her, post it on social media, and make fun of her just for sitting down and having lunch. ...

Julia is a fun-loving person who just prefers smaller groups with the people who are true friends.

First of all, God bless my friend for reaching out to this girl and standing up for her (neither of which is surprising, by the way).

But my friend’s text about Julia came at a time when I’ve already been doing a lot of thinking about what **I** do each day, each week, each month, each year, and how I can be most helpful to people—especially people like Julia—who are introverts and who want not to merely survive in the world, but thrive in it.

As I sit at my dad’s old desk writing this piece, I’m next to a small file drawer. Inside that drawer, at the front, is a binder I’ve labeled “Introverts & Shame.”

This file is bursting with hundreds—hundreds—of articles I’ve collected over the last few years, all of them written by other Julias in this world; other people who get shit simply for being introverts, and who



often end up giving themselves shit for it as well.

What do they all need?

What they don’t need, I’ve realized, is a continuing monthly newsletter about introversion, semi-appealing as it might be.

What they do need is what my friend just delivered to Julia: individualized attention **when they need it**—combined with giving a damn about who **they** are individually, and how **they** can be healthy and happy as the introverts they are—with and in **their** unique lives.

I can best deliver on this need by stepping away from this newsletter, and instead pouring more of my energy into my online course in particular—“Be the Introvert You Are!”—where I get to help participants with their individual questions and concerns by leading the course’s private coaching group.

So ... I am indeed stepping away. This is the final issue of the *Introvert Insights* newsletter.

But it’s not my last word. Not by a longshot.

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

You can. And you will.

ENROLL NOW!

The Premier Online Course for Introverts



BE THE INTROVERT YOU ARE!

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course.introvertinsights.com

PRACTICAL RESEARCH

Light Exposure Has Significant Effects on Your Mental Health

You can improve your overall mental health—and reduce your risk of experiencing a variety of psychiatric disorders—by boosting your exposure to light during the daytime hours and reducing it in the evening and at night, according to a recent study in the journal *Nature Mental Health*.

The study—the largest of its kind, with more than 85,000 subjects from across the United Kingdom—asked participants to wear an electronic light monitor on their wrist for seven straight days.

Later, the participants completed a mental health questionnaire that assessed them on a variety of psychiatric outcomes.

The study's key finding: Greater exposure to light at night increased participants' risk for problems like major depression, generalized anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, and self-harm behavior.

Conversely, greater exposure to light during the day was associated with reduced risk for most of those same psychiatric difficulties.

“Our findings will have a potentially huge societal impact,” says study co-author Sean Cain, an associate professor of psychology at Monash University.

“Once people understand that their light exposure patterns have a powerful influence on their mental health, they can take some simple steps to optimize their well-being.

“It's about getting bright light in the day and darkness at night.”

We often do the exact opposite these days, Cain says, fighting the fact that our brains evolved to work best with bright light during the day and little or even no light during the evening and at night.

“Humans today challenge this biology,” Cain says, “spending around 90 percent of the day indoors under electric lighting, which is too dim during the day and too bright at night compared to natural light and dark cycles.

“It is confusing our bodies and making us unwell.”

Sources: “Day and Night Light Exposure Are Associated with Psychiatric Disorders: An Objective Light Study in >85,000 People,” *Nature Mental Health*, 1 (November 2023), pp. 853-862; Monash University news release, October 9, 2023.

REFLECTIVE READS

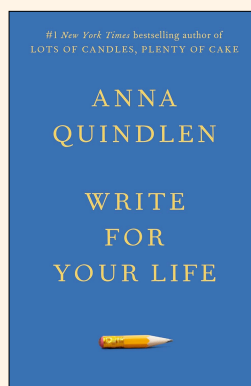
Write for Your Life Stresses the Power of Writing It Down

Anna Quindlen calls her latest book *Write for Your Life*, but she could just as easily have named it *Write for the Lives of the People You Care About*.

She's talking about both, actually.

Yes, write for your own benefit, Quindlen says—especially when it comes to processing your experiences and feelings, which we introverts often keep locked up tight in our heads and hearts.

But write as well to give a permanent gift to the people in your life you will someday leave behind.



And if you're willing and able to do so in the form of handwritten letters or essays, Quindlen says, so much the better.

“[W]hen you've written something by hand,” she notes, “the only person who could have done it is

you. It's unmistakable you wrote this, touched it, laid hands and eyes upon it.”

“Something written by hand,” Quindlen emphasizes, “is a piece of your personality on paper.”

Writing is a way of connecting with both yourself and others, Quindlen says. And anyone and everyone can do it.

And should, she stresses.

“If, in good times and bad times and ordinary times, people who may not think of themselves as writers begin to set their stories down, in their own voices, in whichever way they choose, it will make history, make it truer, fairer, richer.”

Continued from page 1

it, too, is merely a preference—a basic personality trait—just like extraversion is.

Instead, introversion is too often viewed as a disorder or a disability, some kind of “condition” that needs to be fixed or overcome.

Let me be the first to acknowledge: Things have gotten a bit better in recent years, particularly after the publication of Susan Cain’s groundbreaking bestseller *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking*.

But we have a ways to go.

Because the cultural undercurrents against introversion continue to be strong.

Subtle, but definitely strong.

Words Matter

Here’s a quick sampling of references to introverts/introversion that you’ll find in the media, with very little effort. (Note: I’m the one who has *italicized* the key words and

phrases to focus on; the articles themselves do not do that.)

“Johnny Carson was an *admitted* introvert ...”

“There are, however, ways for introverts to *overcome* their natural tendencies ...”

“... he is quiet and smart, *but* introverted”

“*Even if* you are an introvert, you can boost your business ...”

“Oh, my God! I’m an *introvert!*?”

We tend not to even notice, let alone question, this stuff. It’s par for the proverbial course.

But what if you were to take these snippets and substitute the word “extravert/extraversion” for “introvert/introversion”? To wit:

“Johnny Carson was an *admitted* **extravert** ...”

“There are, however, ways for **extraverts** to *overcome* their natural tendencies ...”

“... he is quiet and smart, *but* **extraverted**”

“*Even if* you are an **extravert**, you can boost your business ...”

“Oh, my God! I’m an *extravert!*?”

Suddenly the statements are all ridiculous.

Well, the original statements are ridiculous too.

But they’re still out there, as are the attitudes and expectations that drive them.

So we must continue to be vigilant—not about flipping the scales completely and making **introversion** the “right” way to be, but instead about merely balancing those scales.

That way, we introverts can all go ahead and be who we are—without apology, explanation, or justification. Same as extraverts can.





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INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“Acknowledge your introversion and, when you are ready, embrace it. Rather than fighting against it or trying to emulate a particular way of being seen by others, aim to be comfortable and assured in your own skin.”

~ Helen Nolan

“[F]or most of us, a good life can’t be had just through having great social interactions. We also benefit from great moments of solitude.”

~ Netta Weinstein

“Your introversion is, in fact, your superpower.”

~ Magda Gradova

“Embracing who you are is key to your success as an introvert. We are so programmed to believe that extraversion is superior that we spend more of our time running on a hamster wheel trying to be something we’re not rather than embracing our hero-like gifts.”

~ Gabi Robledo