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*Solo Flights of Thought:*  
**The Power of Introversion in a World of Learning**  
**Resource Packet**



presented at  
**The International Dialogue Education Institute**

Baltimore, Maryland USA

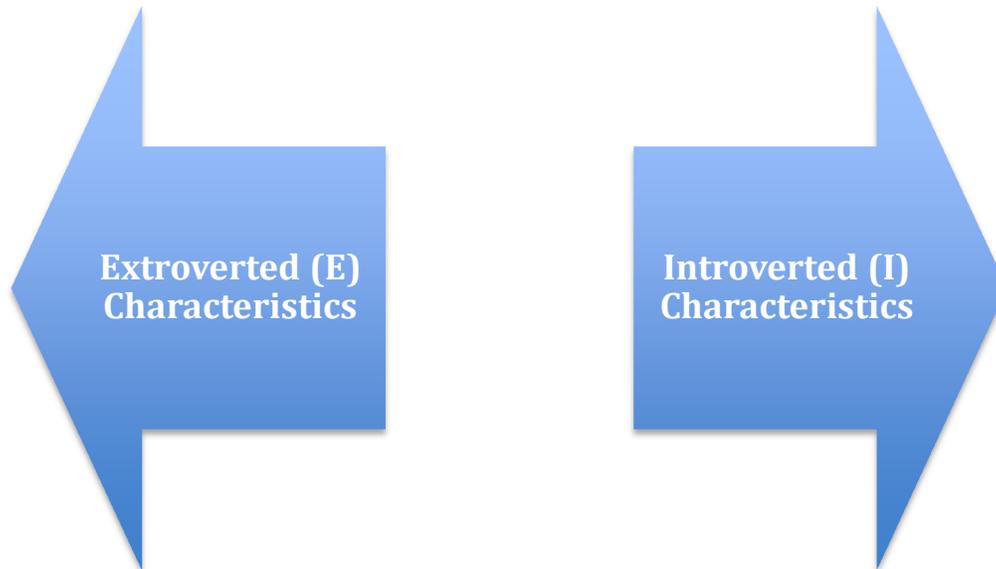
2013

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## One: Who Am I?

Every person has two 'faces'. One is directed towards the **OUTER** world of activities, excitements, people, and things. The other is directed inward to the **INNER** world of thoughts, interests, ideas, and imagination. While these are two different but complementary sides of our nature, most people have an innate preference towards **energy** from either the OUTER or the INNER world. Thus one of their faces, either the *Extroverted* (E) or *Introverted* (I), takes the lead in their personality development and plays a more **dominant role** in their behavior.<sup>1</sup>



- Act first, think/ reflect later
- Feel deprived when cutoff from interaction with the outside world
- Usually open to and motivated by outside world of people and things
- Enjoy wide variety and change in people relationships.



- Think/ reflect first, then act
- Regularly require an amount of "private time" to recharge their batteries
- Motivated internally, mind is sometimes so active it is "closed" to outside world
- Prefer one-to-one communication and relationships.



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<sup>1</sup> The top part of this page is adapted from: [http://www.personalitypathways.com/type\\_inventory.html](http://www.personalitypathways.com/type_inventory.html)

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## An Extrovert/Introvert Self-Test

(from Susan Cain's book: *Quiet* p13-14)

If you're still not sure where you fall on the introvert-extrovert spectrum, you can assess yourself here. Answer each question "true" or "false," choosing the answer that applies to you more often than not.\*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I prefer one-on-one conversations to group activities.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I often prefer to express myself in writing.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy solitude.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I seem to care less than my peers about wealth, fame, and status.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I dislike small talk, but I enjoy talking in depth about topics that matter to me.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ People tell me that I'm a good listener.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I'm not a big risk-taker.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy work that allows me to "dive in" with few interruptions.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I like to celebrate birthdays on a small scale, with only one or two close friends or family members.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ People describe me as "soft-spoken" or "mellow."
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I prefer not to show or discuss my work with others until it's finished.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ I dislike conflict.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ I do my best work on my own.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I tend to think before I speak.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel drained after being out and about, even if I've enjoyed myself.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ I often let calls go through to voice mail.

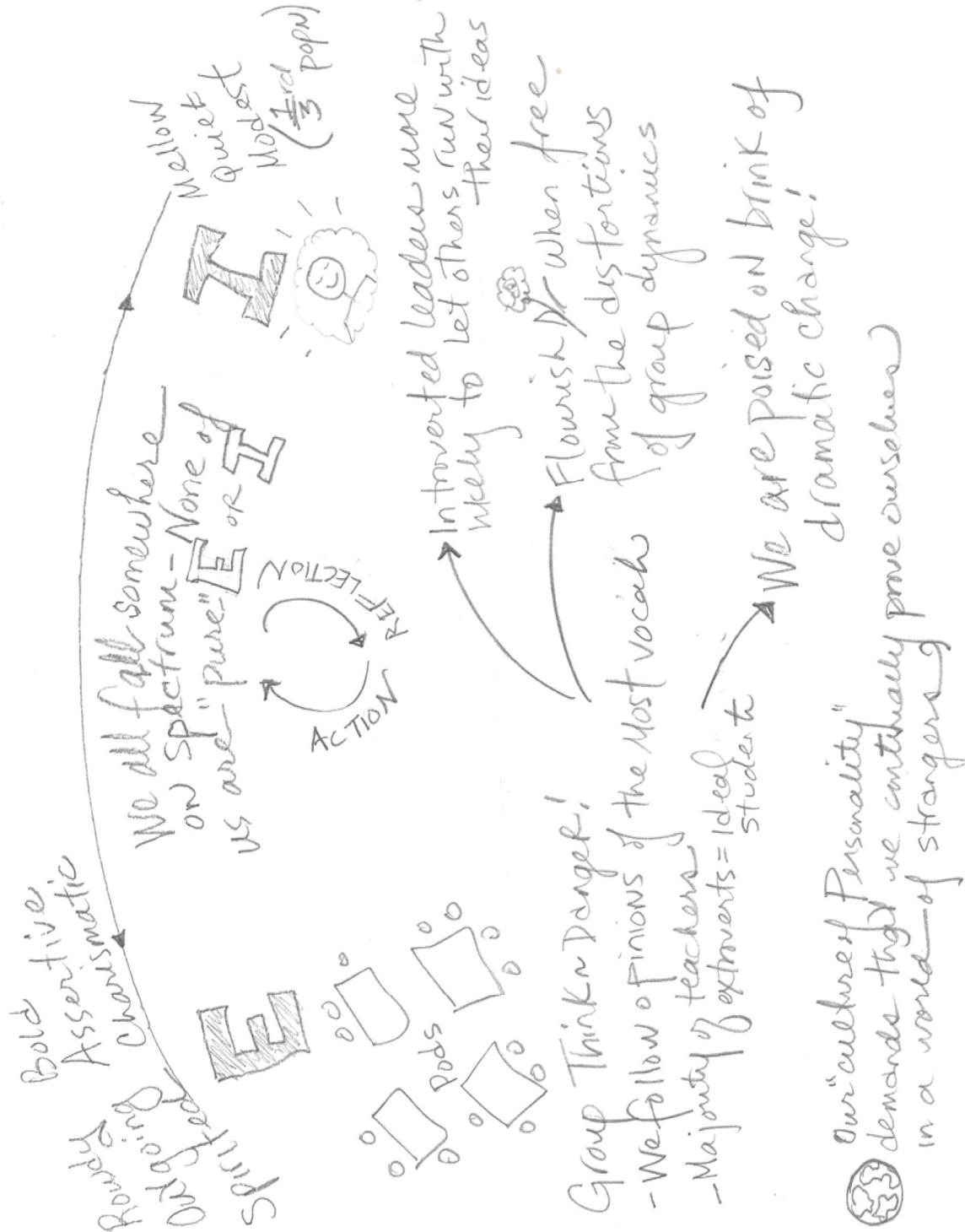
\*This is an informal quiz, not a scientifically validated personality test. The questions were formulated based on characteristics of introversion often accepted by contemporary researchers.

17. \_\_\_\_\_ If I had to choose, I'd prefer a weekend with absolutely nothing to do to one with too many things scheduled.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't enjoy multitasking.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ I can concentrate easily.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ In classroom situations, I prefer lectures to seminars.

The more often you answered "True," the more introverted you probably are. If you found yourself with a roughly equal number of "True" and "False" answers, then you may be an *ambivert* - yes, there really is such a word!

## Two: The Extrovert Ideal

Here's Val's journal while watching the TEDTalk by Susan Cain, author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*.



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## Two: The Extrovert Ideal

Below is an excerpt from p51 of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*. Here, Susan Cain outlines some of the negative impacts of the “extrovert ideal.”

*What implications does this have for you in any role you hold in life?*

If we assume that quiet and loud people have roughly the same number of good (and bad) ideas, then we should worry if the louder and more forceful people always carry the day. This would mean that an awful lot of bad ideas prevail while good ones get squashed. Yet studies in group dynamics suggest that this is exactly what happens. We perceive talkers as smarter than quiet types—even though grade-point averages and SAT and intelligence test scores reveal this perception to be inaccurate. In one experiment in which two strangers met over the phone, those who spoke more were considered more intelligent, better looking, and more likable. We also see talkers as leaders. The more a person talks, the more other group members direct their attention to him, which means that he becomes increasingly powerful as a meeting goes on. It also helps to speak fast; we rate quick talkers as more capable and appealing than slow talkers.

All of this would be fine if more talking were correlated with greater insight, but research suggests that there's no such link. In one study, groups of college students were asked to solve math problems together and then to rate one another's intelligence and judgment. The students who spoke first and most often were consistently given the highest ratings; even though their suggestions (and math SAT scores) were no better than those of the less talkative students. These same students were

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### Three: Understanding and Honouring the E-I Spectrum

- Contrary to common misunderstanding, both Es and Is like activity. It's very busy inside an I's head!
- Imagine that you are talking to someone...

If they tend toward Introversion, they are busy translating what they are hearing to their inside world. They want time while no one is talking for them to reflect on what they've heard.

If they tend toward Extroversion, they may do their thinking in the outside world. They are ready to respond immediately – while still reflecting on what you said!

- Differences are often a matter of quantity. For example...

If your preference is E and you are alone for too long a time (i.e. in your office working on a budget for 2 days) you are flattened.

If your preference is I and you are with a group for a full day (i.e. in an all-day meeting) you really do not want to go hang with them at dinner that night.

- Typically, when in a full group, the Introvert will say a whole lot less. It seems that small group and pair work can accommodate Introverts more than full group because it is intimate. But even this doesn't take the place of solitary reflection.
- We can never totally understand what those with another preference are truly experiencing.
- Highly-sensitive (HS) people react strongly to the stimuli around them. It is estimated that about 70% of Introverts are HS (but there are also Extroverts who need to minimize the stimuli around them—especially as we get older).

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## Four: Training Our Eyes

As you experience this International Dialogue Education Institute (IDEI) – and your life outside of IDEI - today and tomorrow, make mental notes about all we've been exploring together. Jot your notes down in your journal when time allows. We will draw on these observations tomorrow in Part II of this workshop.

*What did you notice about opportunities for **I**ntraversion?*

*Where did you see/ sense a favouring of “The **E**xtrovert Ideal”?*

*How did experiences along the **E-I** spectrum affect the following?*

- Your sense of safety
- Your energy level
- Your imagination and depth of ideas
- Your interest in a topic

*What did you notice about cultural differences and **E-I** preferences?*

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## Four: Training Our Eyes

### 6 Things You Thought Wrong About Introverts

The Huffington Post | By Carolyn Gregoire ~ Posted: 07/29/2013 8:07 am EDT

If common stereotypes have anything to say on the matter, it's that introverts are socially awkward loners who abhor large crowds and don't like people very much. An introvert may not be a particularly friendly or happy person, but hey, at least they're smarter and more creative than the average extrovert.

Despite comprising an estimated one-third of the general population, introversion may be one of the most frequently misunderstood personality traits. But the silent revolution of introverts -- catapulted into the spotlight largely by the work of Susan Cain, author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* -- is shedding light on the experience of introverts living in a culture that tends to value extroverted qualities like assertiveness and outspokenness over solitude and quiet contemplation.

Much of the problem stems from the lack of a simple distinction between introversion and extroversion -- the difference is far more complex than being shy versus outgoing, according to Sophia Dembling, author of *The Introvert's Way: Living a Quiet Life in a Noisy World*. The introversion/extroversion distinction has its roots in Jungian psychology, which views extroverts as being more naturally oriented towards the outside world, and introverts more focused on their own inner world.

"The description that introverts seem to relate most strongly to is the idea that Jung presented, that introverts are drained of energy by interaction, and gain energy in solitude and quiet, whereas extroverts gain energy in social situations with interaction," Dembling tells The Huffington Post. "It seems to be most strongly an energy thing -- where you get your energy and what takes it out of you."

If you're an introvert, you might be used to feeling misunderstood (many introvert children are criticized for not speaking up at school, and grow up being told to "come out of their shells") and having your actions (or inaction) misinterpreted. And if you're an extrovert, there's a good chance that you have at least a few misconceptions about those mysterious quiet types in your life. Scroll through the list below for six of the most common false assumptions about introverts -- and why they're wrong.

#### **1. All introverts are shy -- and all shy people are introverts.**

Shyness is so often confused with introversion that the two words are frequently used interchangeably - but in fact, they're remarkably different traits. As Susan Cain pointed out in a Psychology Today blog, Bill Gates is introverted but not shy: He's quiet and bookish, but isn't bothered by what other people think of him.

Whereas introversion, as Dembling explains, is commonly defined as recharging and gaining energy through alone time, shyness has more to do with discomfort and anxiety in situations involving social interaction. Many introverts aren't shy; they may feel confident and at ease around people, but simply require more alone time to balance out the energy they expend in social situations. Similarly, an extrovert may seek the company of others but feel insecure or uncomfortable in groups.

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“The number-one misconception about introversion is that it’s about shyness,” says Dembling. “The best distinction I’ve heard comes from a neuroscientist who studies shyness. He said, ‘Shyness is a behavior – it’s being fearful in a social situation. Whereas introversion is a motivation. It’s how much you want and need to be in those interactions.’”

## **2. Introverts don't like to be around people.**

Although introverts do generally need -- and enjoy -- more solitude than their extroverted counterparts, the idea that introverts are antisocial or don't want the company of others is completely false. They just tend to enjoy social interaction in a different way than extroverts do.

“There are a lot of negative labels placed on introverts -- socially anxious, don’t like people, judgmental (because we sit quietly),” says Dembling. “Introverts may prefer one-on-one interaction ... we might enjoy large parties but want to sit and watch the action from the sidelines. Extroverts may interpret this as not wanting to have fun, but this observation *is* fun for an introvert.”

Introversion shouldn't be confused with misanthropy -- introverts do like people, but they typically favor quality over quantity in their relationships, choosing to focus on creating a smaller circle of close friends rather than a large network of acquaintances.

“I like to say that we may like people more than extroverts because we take the time to get to know them ... It’s just a completely different style,” says Dembling.

## **3. Introverts don't make good leaders or public speakers.**

Many introverts enjoy and excel in roles that involve leading others, speaking publicly, and being in the spotlight. Bill Gates, Abraham Lincoln, Gandhi and countless other leaders through history have been classified as introverts. These leaders may also foster a better team environment, as research has shown they might work better in groups than extroverts do. And according to USA Today, roughly four in 10 top executives test as introverts.

Research has found that individuals of both personality types can be well-suited to leadership and sales roles.

“The good news ... is that in some sense we are all born to sell and equipped to lead,” writes author Daniel Pink in a Washington Post blog. “And that means a hidden but urgent challenge for organizations of every kind is to shatter the stereotype of who’s an effective leader.”

And when it comes to public speaking, introverts aren't the shrinking violets they're often thought to be, and they might actually have the upper hand over extroverts. Because introverts focus on preparing projects and thinking things through thoroughly before acting, they can be excellent speakers, says Dembling. Susan Cain's charismatically delivered TED talk on the power of introverts, for instance, was one of the fastest TED videos ever to reach one million views -- and it's just one of countless examples.

## **4. Introverts have more negative personalities.**

Because they actually *like* being alone, introverts are sometimes stereotyped as having more depressive or negative-slanting personalities. This misconception likely stems from the fact that extroverts -- who

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gain their energy from social interaction -- might feel sad when they don't spend enough time with people, Dembling says.

"When extroverts are in an introverted place for too long, spending time alone or being quiet, they can report feeling sad and depressed," says Dembling. "Because they feel sad when they're alone, maybe they therefore think we feel sad when we've been alone. That misconception is coming from a genuine concern, but it's more putting their feelings on us."

Most introverts don't connect solitude with loneliness, unless it becomes excessive. That being said, although introverts do not innately have more depressive personalities, they do tend to spend more time thinking and analyzing -- and if this turns to ruminating, it could potentially lead to depression.

"There's a definite link between rumination and depression," says Dembling. "Because introverts do like thinking and being alone, we need to keep ourselves in check."

### **5. Introverts are more intellectual or creative than extroverts.**

Many of the most celebrated artists and thinkers throughout history -- including Albert Einstein, Marcel Proust and Charles Darwin -- were thought to be quiet types. Introverts are sometimes touted as being "more intelligent, more reflective, more independent, more level-headed, more refined, and more sensitive," as Jonathan Rauch writes in an Atlantic article, "Caring for Your Introvert." But before any quiet types climb atop an intellectual high horse, it's important to note being an introvert doesn't innately make you a loftier, or more innovative, thinker. Extroverts are, of course, often incredibly intelligent and creative; there's just a good chance that their best ideas happen while they're in a more reflective, or introverted, mindset.

"Creativity occurs in an introverted space ... but that doesn't mean we've cornered the market on it," says Dembling. "Without both introverts and extroverts, things wouldn't get done. We've got one person thinking it through and one person going out and slaying the dragon."

### **6. It's easy to tell whether someone is introverted or extroverted.**

Many introverts could easily go out to a cocktail party and talk up everyone in the room -- and they may enjoy themselves doing it. But at the end of the day, they'll look forward to restoring their energy by coming home and reading in bed with a cup of tea. Given our culture's bias towards extroverted personality traits, many introverts have become accustomed to being the wolf in sheep's clothing -- behaving like an extrovert in social situations, and perhaps acting more outspoken and gregarious than they feel on the inside. Or they may enjoy the social interaction and attention, but later crave time alone to recover.

"Most introverts are very good at behaving like extroverts," says Dembling. "A lot of us are out there behaving as extroverts ... but then we have to shut it down. I call it my 'dog and pony show.' But then you have to be quiet and regain your energy for the next time. The long I'm out there putting on the show, the longer I need to recuperate."

"Introverts really do like people and we like socializing," Dembling says. "We just like it in different ways than extroverts."

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## Five: Designing and Teaching

Here's an excerpt from p81 of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*. Here, Susan Cain's draws on her learning from research psychologist, Anders Ericsson.

What's so magical about solitude? In many fields, Ericsson told me, it's only when you're alone that you can engage in Deliberate Practice, which he has identified as the key to exceptional achievement. When you practice deliberately, you identify the tasks or knowledge that are just out of your reach, strive to upgrade your performance, monitor your progress, and revise accordingly. Practice sessions that fall short of this standard are not only less useful—they're counterproductive. They reinforce existing cognitive mechanisms instead of improving them.

Deliberate Practice is best conducted alone for several reasons. It takes intense concentration, and other people can be distracting. It requires deep motivation, often self-generated. But most important, it involves working on the task that's most challenging to *you* personally. Only when you're alone, Ericsson told me, can you "go directly to the part that's challenging to you. If you want to improve what you're doing, you have to be the one who generates the move. Imagine a group class—you're the one generating the move only a small percentage of the time."

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## Five: Designing and Teaching

Below is a final perspective from p87-89 of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*. Here, Susan Cain cites research that turns some of our favorite group practices on their head.

Alex Osborn was a notable advertising man and author of the 1940s and 50s. He invented the concept of brainstorming, as a way to remove the threat of criticism from group work among his employees. He believed that this process bolstered creativity. His theory had great impact, and brainstorming has stormed the nation for decades.

But, Susan Cain claims: “There’s only one problem with Osborn’s breakthrough idea: group brainstorming doesn’t actually work.” She cites a series of studies, beginning with one by a psychology professor named Marvin Dunnette. Dunnette documented the number of, and quality of, ideas generated by scientists and advertising executives at Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M):

The results were unambiguous. The men in twenty-three of the twenty-four groups produced more ideas when they worked on their own than when they worked as a group. They also produced ideas of equal or higher quality when working individually. And the advertising executives were no better at group work than the presumably introverted research scientists.

Since then, some forty years of research has reached the same startling conclusion. Studies have shown that performance gets worse as group size increases: groups of nine generate fewer and poorer ideas compared to groups of six, which do worse than groups of four. The “evidence from science suggests that business people must be insane to use brainstorming

groups,” writes the organizational psychologist Adrian Furnham. “If you have talented and motivated people, they should be encouraged to work alone when creativity or efficiency is the highest priority.”

The one exception to this is online brainstorming. Groups brainstorming electronically, when properly managed, not only do better than individuals, research shows; the larger the group, the better it performs. The same is true of academic research—professors who work together electronically, from different physical locations tend to produce research that is more influential than those either working alone or collaborating face-to-face.

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## Six: Moving Forward, Differently

### Tips for Designing and Facilitating

Adapted from Susan Cain's *Quiet* p342-344 and p348-9

#### Design Tips to Honour Introverted Learners:

- 1. Include solo work as well as pair and small group work.**  
All of us get a boost out of solo work –even if we are the type who don't ask for it. Let learners surprise themselves by seeing what emerges when they work alone.
- 2. Let people choose how they want to take in, and process, new content.**  
When a facilitator invites each learner to choose for him or herself – where to work or sit, how to complete a task, whether to work in a group or solo – they are given an optimal environment in which to perform.
- 3. Offer time and options for people to share their ideas.**  
Be careful not to fall in a rut of always asking for everyone to speak, or always asking for people to share with a partner. Might it be enough for them to think it through for themselves?
- 4. Wait at least 5 seconds after asking a question.**  
This gives introverts time to think and encourages reflectiveness. People also soon learn that you will wait for them.
- 5. Affirm everyone's contributions wherever and however it is seen.**  
Find opportunities to affirm the work of everyone – even those who may choose not to speak up or share in a fully group. This may mean citing their written contributions, or chatting with them on-the-side.

#### Tips to Honour Introverted Facilitators:

- 1. If you can, visit the room where the event will be held in advance.** You will want to ensure the room arrangement is set up in such a way that maximizes engagement and works well for your learning design. You also want it to feel comfortable for you and your needs i.e. If you know you know voice tends to be soft, move as close to the group possible. Just taking time to “connect” with the space may be critical for you feeling ready to facilitate a group.
- 2. Remember: the event is about the learners, not you.** This means you are not there to entertain the group, but rather facilitate a well thought-out learning design that will ensure learning. The learners' voices are important, *not yours*. Experience of freeing this feels!
- 3. Take time for yourself – before, during and after the course.** It is critical to come early enough before your course to set up and “feel” the space – time to center yourself. Although it may seem especially challenging to take time for yourself during your learning event, a few minutes alone in the hall, bathroom, or another room can really help to keep your energy up. Likewise, after your session is finished take time to be alone before rushing off to dinner or a debriefing meeting. What you do during these moments to “pause” – meditate, stretch, or just sit – is personal; the important thing is self-care.

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## Tips for Supporting Young Introverts

Adapted by Global Learning Partners from Susan Cain's *Quiet* p345-347

1. **Don't just accept a child for who she is; treasure her.** As long as they're in settings that suit them, introverted children can be kind, thoughtful, focused, and very interesting company. Talk to her teacher(s), friends' parents, grandparents and other adults in her life to brainstorm how to best do this.
2. **If a child is reluctant to try new things or meet new people, expose him to new experiences gradually.** Don't let him opt out, but do respect his limits, even when they seem extreme. When he takes social risks, let him know that you admire his efforts: "I saw you go up to those new kids yesterday. I know that can be difficult, and I'm proud of you." when he ends up enjoying things he thought he wouldn't like or that he was initially scared of, point that out to him. Eventually he'll learn to self-regulate his feelings or wariness.
3. **If a child is shy, don't let her hear you call her that.** She'll start to experience her nervousness as a fixed trait rather than as an emotion she can learn to control. She also knows full well that "shy" is usually a criticism in our society. When others call her shy in front of her (and they will), reframe it lightly, saying things like, "Sophie likes to take her time to suss out new situations."
4. **If a child is "highly sensitive" – meaning sensitive to lights, sounds, emotional experiences, or new situations, - then she might be what's known as an "orchid child".** This term derives from a groundbreaking theory now being investigated by research psychologists. It holds that many children are like dandelions, able to thrive in just about any environment while others are more like orchids. They wilt easily, but given a nurturing environment, they actually do better than dandelion children. They're often healthier, have better grades, and enjoy stronger relationships.
5. **Introverted kids usually have the capacity to develop great passions.** Be alert to your child's enthusiasm and cultivate them. Intense engagement in an activity is a proven route to happiness, and a well-developed talent is a great source of confidence. Traditional childhood activities such as soccer and piano may work well for some kids, but don't forget to look off the beaten path. You may be surprised to learn what excites your child and has them devoting hours of time each day.
6. **Accept if your child only wants to invite *one* child over at a time or for special events.** Although you want to challenge your child to experiment with different social settings and experiences. However, there are also times when your child should feel free to choose what is more comfortable. This may mean just have his best friend over for his birthday party.
7. **If you're an introvert, try not to project your own history onto your child and children around you.** Your introversion may have caused you pain when you were younger. Don't assume that this will be the case for your child, or that he won't be able to handle the occasional sling or arrow. He can handle it, and he can thrive. The best thing you can do for him is take joy in his wonderful qualities, have confidence that those qualities will carry him far, and teach him the skills he needs to handle the challenging aspects of his nature.
8. **Teach children to self-advocate.** The better children understand themselves and their preferences, the better they can explain their needs to others.

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## Resources

- Cain, S. *Quiet: The Power of Introverts In a World that Can't Stop Talking*. New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2013.
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- <http://io9.com/the-science-behind-extroversion-and-introversion-1282059791>
- [www.cpp.com](http://www.cpp.com)
- <http://www.hsperson.com/> (Elaine Aron's lifetime work on highly-sensitive people)
- [www.personalitypathways.com/type\\_inventory.html](http://www.personalitypathways.com/type_inventory.html)
- [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0092656603000849](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0092656603000849)
- [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/29/introvert-myths\\_n\\_3569058.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=tw](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/29/introvert-myths_n_3569058.html?utm_hp_ref=tw)

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