

EPISODE 135: WHY INTROVERTS CAN BE GREAT COMMUNICATORS

1. INTROVERSION ISN'T WHAT YOU THINK IT IS

- Coined in the 1920s by psychologist Carl Jung.
- The stereotype: you either like people or you don't.
- The reality: where you get your energy. Do people charge you up or drain your batteries?
- How much outside stimulation do you need to function well?

2. WE LIVE IN AN EXTROVERTED WORLD

- According to *Psychology Today*, between 50 and 74% of people are extroverts. But if you're an introvert, it might seem like more!
- Susan Cain, 2012: New York Times bestseller "QUIET: The Power of Introverts in A World That Can't Stop Talking." Her TED talk has been viewed almost 21 million times.
"We live with a value system that I call the Extrovert Ideal—the omnipresent belief that the ideal self is gregarious, alpha, and comfortable in the spotlight. The archetypal extrovert prefers action to contemplation, risk-taking to heed-taking, certainty to doubt. He favors quick decisions, even at the risk of being wrong. She works well in teams and socializes in groups. We like to think that we value individuality, but all too often we admire one type of individual—the kind who's comfortable 'putting himself out there.'"

3. THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF INTROVERTS

- Wellesley psychologist Jonathan Cheek surveyed about 500 adults, ranging in age from 18 to 70, asking them about things like their preference for solitude, or how inclined they are to daydream. The common thread: a tendency to turn inward rather than outward.
- His conclusion: There are 4 "shades" of introversion, spelling out STAR.
 - **S**ocial introverts most closely resemble the common understanding of introversion. They prefer to be alone or to socialize with small groups instead of large ones, but they are not shy and don't feel anxious around others.
 - **T**hinking introverts don't share the aversion to social events, but they tend to get lost in their own thoughts. They're introspective, thoughtful, and self-reflective.
 - **A**nxious introverts seek out solitude because they tend to feel awkward or self-conscious around others. And this anxiety doesn't always go away when they're alone. They tend to ruminate on things that might have gone wrong in the past or could go wrong in the future.
 - **R**estrained introverts or reserved introverts. Restrained introverts sometimes seem to operate at a slightly slower pace, preferring to think before they speak or act. They also might take a while to get going — they can't, for instance, wake up and immediately spring into action.

- There's a third option: Ambiversion. Ambiverts are socially comfortable and interactive, yet value alone time. Their preference for introversion or extroversion can change depending on the situation.
- According to Barry Smith, director of the Laboratories of Human Psychophysiology at the University of Maryland, "Ambiverts make up 68% of the population."
- Introversion is really a continuum, a sliding scale, not a pigeonhole.

4. INTROVERTS CAN LEARN FROM EXTROVERTS

- Extroverts seem to get the promotions, so learn to study the *actions* of extroverts and copy them. View it as a performance, not a personality type.
- Learn to adapt to the situation.
- Instead of asking "What personality type am I?" ask "What behavior is required here?"
- What do extroverts do?

5. INTROVERTS CAN BE OUTSTANDING COMMUNICATORS

- We tend to think of introversion only in terms of its *liabilities*.
- We need to remember the *strengths* of introversion.
- Susan Cain wrote: "Some of our greatest ideas, art, and inventions...came from quiet and cerebral people who knew how to tune in to their inner world and the treasures to be found there."
- She reminds us that introverts:
 - Like to focus and have great powers of concentration.
 - Listen more than they talk.
 - Think before they speak.
 - Express themselves well in writing.
 - Dislike small talk but enjoy deep discussions.
 - Make excellent innovators and can be outstanding leaders.
- Introverts can make outstanding communicators and public speakers.

Sources mentioned in this episode:

Susan Cain, "QUIET: The Power of Introverts in A World That Can't Stop Talking"

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