



# Teacher's Guide - By Susan Cain

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## NOTE TO TEACHERS

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This teacher's guide to Susan Cain's wise and insightful book, *Quiet*, will be profoundly useful to teachers in a wide variety of academic disciplines. Whether teaching psychology, business, or education, teachers can use *Quiet* to show students how the two different temperament styles, extroversion and introversion, interact. They will see how the interaction sometimes works well, while at other times it does not. Students will learn how best to use and complement the strengths of introversion and extroversion within the context of their particular discipline. Business students, for example, will learn how extremely biased the business world is in idealizing the extrovert and some of the benefits and costs of that bias. Political science students will be able to analyze different leadership styles and their relative effectiveness depending on circumstances in the political realm. Furthermore, students in education will get a gold mine of information about how these two temperament styles will interact in every classroom—from preschool to college—and how best to develop teaching and curriculum that truly enhances, empowers, and celebrates both temperament styles equally.

In addition to learning how to apply *Quiet* to their respective professions, students—in class, in study groups, and even on their own in the library—will come to appreciate and accept their own temperaments. As Cain skillfully articulates, our dominant cultural norms that idealize extroverted personality

types often make the more introverted among us feel that they are square pegs stuck in a round-hole world.

It is our hope that this guide will aid teachers in helping students truly come to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of *both* extroverts and introverts in a nonjudgmental manner. Obviously, the challenge for the teacher is to create a classroom culture in which both the extroverts and introverts are able to discuss their feelings and perceptions openly, with acceptance and compassion for their differences.

We believe that the questions and exercises in this guide will encourage students to reflect on their own natural temperament and to learn the ways it fits into their lives and the ways it can be an impediment. We also hope students will explore and expand their repertoire of choices about when and how to push themselves out of their comfort zone as well as when and how to find life circumstances that reinforce their comfort in their natural “sweet spot.”

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

*Quiet* is a book that challenges cultural biases for and against extroversion and introversion. When most of us hear the word bias, we think of prominent historical examples of discrimination and prejudice based on race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Yet there are many more subtle forms of prejudice that imbue our current culture, and it is not uncommon for one group to be judged superior or inferior based on other factors that may or may not be as easy to identify.

A few obvious cultural biases exist against overweight people, mentally challenged people, poor and wealthy people, and people of various religious backgrounds. Nevertheless, there are many other examples of biases. *Quiet* introduces us to the profound social bias that favors, and even exalts, extroverts and criticizes introverts.

The term introvert denotes a personality style that is often more reserved, contemplative, and passive. These traits are viewed negatively in America. By contrast, contemporary American culture too often embraces an *Extrovert Ideal*: the notion that characteristics of extroverted personalities—assertiveness, charisma, gregariousness, social dominance—reflect a superior type of person. But, as Susan Cain elegantly and forcefully argues in her book, this notion of extrovert supremacy has not always existed, and, like all forms of discrimination or bias, prejudice based on personality has many destructive consequences for the success and happiness of society as a whole.

In Part I of this book, we encounter the ways our society tends to favor extroverts, the historical origins of this bias, and its embodiment in many of our most celebrated political, educational, and cultural institutions. We examine the ways cultural assumptions about the putative advantages of extroverted leadership are often unsupported by scientific evidence and uncover many situations in which the leadership approaches typically favored by introverts are more effective, as exemplified by introverted visionaries such as Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Rosa Parks.

In Part II, we review some of what is known about the biological basis of introversion and extroversion and how the interactions between biological predispositions and environmental factors shape the trajectory of who we become.

In Part III, we consider the perspective of cultures that do not emphasize the extrovert cultural ideal and some of the advantages of a cultural bias toward introversion.

And lastly, in Part IV, we examine ways introverts and extroverts can work effectively in comfortable and collaborative relationships, communicate and understand one another, develop friendships and intimate relationships, and live together as members of the same family.

## ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

SUSAN CAIN is the author of the acclaimed *New York Times* bestseller *QUIET: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, which is being translated into more than thirty languages and was named the #1 best book of the year by *Fast Company* magazine. Cain's book was the subject of a *TIME* cover story, and her writing has appeared in *The New York Times*; *The Atlantic*; *The Wall Street Journal*; *O, the Oprah Magazine*; *Salon.com*; *Time.com*; *PsychologyToday.com*, and many other publications.

Cain's record-smashing TED talk has been viewed more than 8 million times and was named by Bill Gates as one of his all-time favorite talks. Her groundbreaking ideas have been written about in dozens of publications, including *The New Yorker*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes*, *People*, *Scientific American*, *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN.com*, and *Slate.com*. She has also appeared on national broadcast television and radio, including CBS's "This Morning," NPR's "All Things Considered," and NPR's "Diane Rehm" and has spoken at Microsoft, Google, the U.S. Treasury, and West Point.

Cain is an honors graduate of Princeton and Harvard Law School. She lives in the Hudson River Valley with her husband and two sons. You can visit her at [thepowerofintroverts.com](http://thepowerofintroverts.com) and follow her on Twitter (@susancaain).

## DISCUSSION AND WRITING

### PART I: THE EXTROVERT IDEAL

#### Section Overview

In the first part of this book (Chapters 1–3), the author explores the origin of the Extrovert Ideal, which refers to the basic cultural assumption that

extroverts are superior to introverts. Extroverts are generally defined as people who are outgoing, confident, and assertive, and they frequently desire social interaction. In contrast, introverts are often described as introspective, reserved, and contemplative, and they often need more alone time to reflect on their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. As we will discover in the chapters that follow, the Extrovert Ideal is an assumption that masks many of the underappreciated weaknesses of extroverts and the hidden strengths of introverts. In this first section, we review past and present examples of the Extrovert Ideal in American society and explore the ways it has touched all aspects of our culture—from ivory towers to popular media.

### Setting the Stage

1. Students discuss the terms extrovert and introvert and consider whether they share the cultural bias toward favoring extroverts.
2. Students will pair up to discuss their hopes and fears in talking about themselves and their own temperaments in front of the class.
3. Teachers will discuss positive and nonjudgmental ways to talk about differences, respect vulnerability, and give critical feedback carefully. Students will be encouraged to participate in the classroom discussions but will not be graded on it.
4. Extroverted and talkative students who tend to dominate classroom discussion will be urged to be moderate in their contributions, whereas more introverted and quiet students will be encouraged to step outside their comfort zone and speak up more frequently.

### Classroom Activities

1. Who am I: In random pairs, have students discuss whether they see themselves as extroverts, introverts, or a combination of both.

2. **Personality test:** Have students take the Myers-Briggs personality test and see if the results match their assumptions about their temperaments.
3. **Secret ballot:** Have students vote anonymously as to whether introverts or extroverts will have happier lives. Discuss the outcome with the class.

## Homework Assignments

1. **The interview:** Students choose three friends or family members to interview. The students will ask their subjects whether they see themselves as extroverts or introverts and what impact their temperaments have on how they live their lives.
2. **The journal:** Have students begin private journals that are to be kept for the length of the course. Students should reflect on the evolution of their thoughts and opinions about themselves and others on the introvert-extrovert spectrum and the costs and benefits of being either type.

## Chapter 1

### The Rise of the “Mighty Likable Fellow”: How Extroversion Became the Cultural Ideal

The chapter begins with a summary of the life of Dale Carnegie, one of the first nationally recognized promoters of the Extrovert Ideal. Carnegie spent his early professional years working as a successful traveling salesman, but it was his public speaking class at the YMCA in New York and his lecture series that won him fame as a proponent of the outgoing personality type. His class, lectures, and later his book, *Public Speaking and Influencing Men*, promised to teach the characteristics and personality styles that would ensure success in the modern business world. Carnegie emphasized how the ability to speak out and get noticed was important to being successful in business. Carnegie's life story echoes the rise of the Culture of Personality that emerged in the early

twentieth century as a result of urbanization, the advent of the cinema, and the rise of big business.

### Discussion Questions

1. In this chapter, we are introduced to the Extrovert Ideal that took root in American culture. Think of someone in your life who embodies this ideal to you. Which of their qualities do you admire? Which do you dislike?
2. Consider the two different lists (on pages 23–24) of attitudes emphasized in self-help guides in the 1920s. What do you think was gained by the cultural shift towards conceptualizing oneself in terms of personality rather than moral values? What was lost?
3. The growing emphasis on personality in American culture coincided with the transition of America from an isolated republic to a world superpower during the first half of the twentieth century. How might this sociopolitical backdrop have influenced the development of the Extrovert Ideal—or reflected it?
4. How do you assess the American culture—as a whole—on the introvert-extrovert spectrum?
5. How do you think the rest of the world sees our culture? Do they primarily admire or dislike it?

### Classroom Activities

1. Pros and cons: Students evaluate the benefits and limitations of the Extrovert Ideal (e.g. being magnetic, dominant, attractive, forceful, and energetic) and explore the contexts in which it might be most applicable.
2. Self-rating: Have students anonymously rate each other on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 meaning not at all—10 meaning a perfect match), telling how closely they

embody the Extrovert Ideal. Students discuss in pairs whether they are comfortable with their rating.

3. Buy Ambiate 120: Ask a few students to volunteer to role-play a classic motivational sales pitch to convince other students to buy Ambiate 120 (or any other imaginary product). Observe and report on what the volunteers say or do that follow a stereotypical sales approach. Is it effective? Is the choice of product the more important variable, or is the quality of the sales presentation more important?

### Homework Assignments

1. What do you really think: Students use their journals to make a list of people they know who manifest the Extrovert Ideal and assess what they appreciate/admire and don't appreciate/respect about these kinds of people.

## Chapter 2

### The Myth of Charismatic Leadership:

### The Culture of Personality, a Hundred Years Later

From Moses to Rosa Parks, strong introverts have been powerful leaders in history. But to hear Tony Robbins tell it, leadership is all about extroverted qualities. A world-renowned motivational speaker, Tony Robbins uses his "Unleash the Power Within" workshops, a blend of entertainment and pop-psychology, to help his stadium-sized audiences enhance their confidence, assertiveness, and energy. And to prove how successful his techniques are, the workshops culminate with the Firewalk, in which participants are challenged to walk across a ten-foot bed of hot coals without burning their feet. This gauntlet supposedly demonstrates a newly found capacity for an "enhanced state of mind" (but it may, in actuality, depend primarily on the thickness of calluses on one's feet).

The fixation with engineered extroversion is not the sole purview of self-help



gurus; an institution of no less prestige than Harvard Business School (HBS) offers similar lessons. The core curriculum at HBS covers not only the intricacies of finance or operational management but also the art of speaking assertively about one's ideas, both inside and outside the classroom. Students are expected to be sociable and outgoing. As one HBS student interviewed said about life on campus, "Socializing is an extreme sport." The underlying assumption is that extroverts always make better leaders.

In this chapter and those that follow, Quiet questions the veracity of this claim. Is improving leadership really as simple as maximizing extroversion? Empirical evidence is actually far more mixed than the HBS curriculum might lead one to believe. For example, in one team-building exercise at HBS, students engage in a role-playing game called the Subarctic Survival Situation. In this game, students are grouped in teams and told to imagine that they have been stranded in the Arctic with only fifteen items following a crash landing. They are asked to rank the importance of each item for their survival. The exercise sometimes serves as an object lesson in the dangers of assertiveness within a group, as the most assertive person may not have the best ideas. Yet it is often assertiveness—not correctness—that determines whose ideas are chosen.

The question then becomes: how much assertiveness is the right amount? One study, conducted by Wharton professor Adam Grant, found that it depended on who was being led. When a leader was tasked with soliciting ideas from a group of predominantly passive employees, extroverted leaders generally came up with better ideas; their general charisma helped inspire contributions from their more taciturn employees. Strikingly, however, extroversion had the opposite effect on a group of assertive employees. Here, introverted leaders did better than extroverts, primarily because they were better at listening and didn't inadvertently overpower the good ideas of the more proactive employees. In other words, the leadership benefits of extroversion and introversion are context-dependent, suggesting that one must take careful

stock of a situation before determining which leadership style will be the best fit.

### Discussion Questions

1. Recall the HBS students discussed in this chapter. Would you like to go to school there, and would you feel comfortable in that environment? Why or why not?
2. Can you recall a situation in which you found that an introverted leadership style was more beneficial? Why? What could have been different that might have made an extroverted style more effective?
3. Can you identify an introverted leader in your life, such as a former teacher, coach, boss, or mentor? What made him or her effective? What types of problems or situations was he or she particularly good at handling?

### Classroom Activities

1. Different strokes for different folks: Have students select a group task, such as redecorating and re-organizing their group space. Divide the class into the following role-play groups:
  - a) an introvert leading an extrovert group
  - b) an extrovert leading an introvert group
  - c) an extrovert leading an extrovert group
  - d) an introvert leading an introvert group
  - e) a group in which neither the leader nor the group members are known as either extroverts or introverts

Each group reports on the pros and cons of their experience and evaluates the effectiveness of their group in terms of result—completion of a plan that is generally welcomed—and rate their experience of being in each group on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 meaning not pleasant at all—10 meaning extremely

pleasant).

## Homework Assignments

1. **Your own group evaluation:** Consider three or four groups that you are a member of now (e.g. your family, your religious community, a sports team, a club to which you belong, etc.) Is the leader an extrovert or introvert? What role do you play in the group? How would the group function differently if the leadership or membership were different? In what ways would it be better? In what ways would it be worse?
2. **Expand on these questions and write a brief synopsis assessing the relationships between the leaders and members of each group.**

## Chapter 3

**When Collaboration Kills Creativity:**

**The Rise of the New Groupthink and the Power of Working Alone**

Building off the themes introduced in Chapter 2, we continue to explore other contexts in which extrovert qualities and the environments that promote them (e.g. open-plan work spaces) can actually hamper employee productivity. Over the last fifty years, American corporate culture has increasingly emphasized collaboration and group work as the means of maximizing creativity and productivity. An early exemplar of this type of work is the *brainstorm session*, a term coined by Madison Avenue legend Alex Osborn that has since become a staple of corporate practice. During a brainstorm session, the emphasis is on generating as many ideas as possible, and the tendency is to reward those group members more comfortable with taking risks in a group setting (i.e. extroverts). Similarly, corporate offices have increasingly replaced private work spaces with public ones, with the idea that by facilitating more inter-employee dialogue, creative juices will flow faster.

Empirical data, however, belies much of the supposed benefits of this group-

oriented culture. In all pursuits in life and business—from training in music to developing chess skills to designing a new computer—the data repeatedly suggest that a good chunk of the most important work is done in solitude. It is during undisturbed alone time that skills deepen, genuine insights emerge, and real progress is made. Indeed, one study of 38,000 workers identified the simple act of being interrupted as one of the largest barriers to productivity in the workplace. Similarly, repeated studies of that purported bastion of creativity, the brainstorming session, have found that such sessions are at best no better than solitary work, and at worst may result in fewer and poorer ideas.

If solitary work is better than group work, what does this mean for the balance between extroverts and introverts? Simply put, introverts are better suited to working alone. This is not to say there is no place for collaboration or for extroverted employees. Rather, the most effective teams are composed of a healthy mix of introverts and extroverts, as well as a balance between group-oriented and self-oriented work environments.

### Discussion Questions

1. Try to picture the most introverted and extroverted classmates you know, and think of their strengths and weaknesses in their work, school, family, and other social environments. Now think of where you fall on this continuum. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are the situations when you find collaboration is most useful, and when do you most need to work alone?
2. Do you think all forms of collaboration are the same? What types of collaborative group work projects have you engaged in that were better suited to extroverts? Have you ever worked in small groups in ways that you felt were better suited for introverts? What were the differences compared to working in larger groups, and where did you find the greatest benefits for introversion?
3. Given your answers to the questions above, what do you think would be the

**key components of your ideal work environment?**

**4. How does your ideal work environment compare to your actual work environment? Are there any changes you could make that might bring you closer to your ideal? What are they?**

### **Classroom Activities**

**1. Best of both worlds: Divide the class into three groups and present a general problem that fits the nature of the coursework (e.g. psychology, political science, business, etc.) The groups should be represented by the following:**

- a) a collaborative/brainstorming group**
- b) a solitary/individual working group**
- c) a mix of brainstorming and solitary activities in same group**

**2. Have each group present their results. Assess the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Evaluate whether different problems may be better addressed by different methodologies.**

### **Homework Assignment**

**1. What's best for you: Create your ideal working model by combining the elements of collaborative and solitary work with the leadership style that you believe works best for you. Write a description of how that model will function when working on a project.**

## **PART II YOUR BIOLOGY, YOUR SELF?**

### **Section Overview**

**All of us are constrained by our biological makeup; the genetic code we inherit only lets us grow so tall or run so fast. But is there nothing more we can do? Increasingly, scientists appreciate the vast flexibility of our bodies and their**

ability to adapt to the ever-changing demands of our environment. In this section, we review evidence that suggests introverted and extroverted temperaments are sometimes based on innate biological factors; this evidence also suggests that temperament may be changed through experience.

Psychologists use the term temperament to denote innate, biologically based behavioral and emotional patterns that are observable in infancy and therefore are unlikely to reflect any effect from the environment. In contrast, the term personality is used to describe the complex set of responses (both internal and external) that individuals display and experience as they grow older. Unlike temperament, personality reflects a complicated interaction between biological (temperamental) and environmental factors.

Some of the most powerful evidence for the existence of introverted and extroverted temperaments comes from a longitudinal study led by Harvard professor Jerome Kagan over multiple decades. Beginning in the late 1980s, Kagan measured the responses of 500 four-month-old infants as they were exposed to various new experiences. Some of the infants showed strong reactions including crying and pumping their arms, while others remained relatively placid. Somewhat counterintuitively, Kagan hypothesized that those infants who were most reactive to the new stimuli (whom Kagan called high-reactives) would grow up to be introverts. Why? Because underlying the surface quiet of many introverts is a chronic responsiveness to new situations, especially social situations. Novelty can be fun and exciting, but it also brings uncertainty. In contrast, the calm infants, seemingly unfazed by the new stimuli, grew up to be more extroverted.

Do these early differences mean that temperament is destiny? Not necessarily. First, as Kagan himself frequently emphasizes, there are many factors beyond high-reactivity that can produce introverted or extroverted qualities. Reactivity to novelty is just one component, and many other aspects of life experience may either enhance or overshadow that component in the shaping of personality. Second, being *high-reactive* or *low-reactive* is a mixed blessing

in either case. Low-reactives are better able to “take life as it comes” and will be less likely to develop anxiety or depression following difficult experiences. High-reactives are more sensitive, which can increase their risk of being negatively affected, but can also enhance their ability to learn and grow from enriched environments.

The phenomenon regarding the positive aspects of being a high-reactive child has been further examined in the *orchid hypothesis*, a term coined by writer David Dobbs. Dobbs suggests that some children are like dandelions, plants able to thrive in just about any environment, while other children are like orchids. The orchid is more fragile than the dandelion, but given the right environment, it can produce a rare and extraordinary blossom.

Taken together, Kagan's study and the orchid hypothesis reveal that temperament can be determined at an early age and each temperament (high-reactive and low-reactive) has positive attributes. The high-reactives in Kagan's study are the orchids-in-waiting described in the orchid hypothesis.

## Chapter 4

### Is Temperament Destiny?:

### Nature, Nurture, and the Orchid Hypothesis

## Discussion Questions

1. In this chapter, a lot of data is revealed suggesting that qualities of temperament are manifest from a very early age and that personality is malleable as we grow. What would you identify as your temperament (i.e. high-reactive or low-reactive)? In what ways has your adult personality transcended your temperament? In what ways has it not?
2. Were you surprised to learn that adult personality traits could be predicted by responses to new stimuli at such an early age? If this is true, what do you think it means about how our emotional responses influence our personality?

3. Do you agree with the orchid hypothesis as a reasonable framework through which to view some of the potential benefits of being a high-reactive, or do you feel this hypothesis is biased towards introverts? What type of data or study would help support or refute it?

### Classroom Activities

1. Shock effect: Create a surprising shock effect (i.e. a loud noise, a surprising lighting change, make the room very bright or very dark, etc.) to simulate Kagan's study. Have students evaluate their response on the Kagan high-reactive–low-reactive scale.
2. Lemon juice test: Have students take the lemon juice test by having them place drops of lemon juice on the tips of their tongues. The theory here is that high-reactives will salivate more than low-reactives. Discuss whether the two tests reveal the same temperament in each student.
3. Control group: Have the students split into two groups in two different rooms. Have individuals in each group try to solve as many simple math problems as they can in ten minutes. Interrupt one group with some kind of brief startle effect twice during the ten minutes. Evaluate the accuracy and number of problems solved by each group, noting the different results by the control group and the startle group. Interview students in the startle group and ask them whether they feel their results were compromised because of the distractions. For a different take on this activity, instead of introducing the startle effect, the teacher plays loud music for one group and soft music for the other group while they are solving the problems. Compare how the extroverts and introverts in each group were affected by both music styles. Were there preferences?

### Homework Assignment



1. Home research: Track the number of times you are interrupted during the course of one day and record your responses to these interruptions in your journal. Rate the effect of each interruption on a scale from 0 to 10 (see scale below). Describe what impact the interruptions had on your productivity and how much time it took for you to get back to the task at hand.

## Chapter 5

### Beyond Temperament:

#### The Role of Free Will (and The Secret of Public Speaking for Introverts)

Temperament is not destiny, but it does place limits on what we can do. One of Kagan's mentees, Carl Schwartz, has demonstrated this by picking up where his mentor left off. Schwartz recruited the participants of Kagan's earlier longitudinal studies, who were now adults. Schwartz's question was a simple one: would the patterns of high-reactivity and low-reactivity that Kagan had identified in infancy still be detectable decades later? To test this, Schwartz examined his subjects' responses to viewing novel faces while their brains were scanned using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), a technique that allows researchers to examine changes in the brain's use of oxygen. Oxygen use reflects changes in neural activity as different brain regions become more or less active.

Schwartz found that the same individuals who had been characterized as high-reactives in the second year of their lives showed elevated responses to novel faces in a brain region called the amygdala. The amygdala is part of the brain's alarm system, and it frequently responds strongly to unanticipated or surprising events. Individuals with conditions such as anxiety and depression frequently have been found to have high amygdala responses, possibly reflecting a greater tendency toward worrying.

However, with help from the highly evolved prefrontal cortex, most of us are fully capable of overriding our amygdala responses. This is what allows shy people to overcome their anxieties in situations that initially make them

uncomfortable, such as attending cocktail parties or speaking in public. Still, the fact that amygdale responses were stronger in high-reactive children many years after they were first assessed tells us something important about temperament: we can change who we are, but only to a certain degree.

Therefore, it is important for each person to learn where his or her own comfort zone lies and to try to stay there as much as possible. Too little novelty can become boring, but too much can be overwhelming. The relative balance will differ from person to person, but the more you know where your “sweet spot” is, the more you will be able to adjust your daily routine to optimize it.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are the different challenges faced by high-reactives and low-reactives as they mature?
2. At the end of this chapter, the author encourages each of us to find our “sweet spot” of stimulation and novelty, that is, the place where we are most comfortable. What is your sweet spot? How do you know?
3. What are the top three signs that you are overstimulated?
4. What are the top three signs that you are understimulated?

### Classroom Activities

1. Can we change them: Students discuss, in pairs, whether it is easier to expand the repertoire of behaviors and social skills of an introvert or the reflection and sensitivity of an extrovert.
2. Walk a mile in my shoes: Have students role-play conversations in which introverts try to be more extroverted and extroverts try to be more introverted.

What difficulties does each type have emulating the other type? What actually feels useful about reversing roles?

## Homework Assignment

1. I'm OK with that: Experiment with expanding your repertoire at work and at home on alternate days and function as you normally do on the days in between. In your journal, record your experiences, positive and negative, and notice how other people responded or didn't respond. Also, reflect on your comfort level on the normal days. Are you fully comfortable in your normal pattern?

## Chapter 6

“Franklin Was a Politician, but Eleanor Spoke Out of Conscience”:  
Why Cool is Overrated

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt were among two of the most influential political figures of twentieth-century American life, but they represent remarkably distinct leadership styles. Franklin, the man who believed that “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself,” was brash and charming, and he loved crowds, mingling, and gossip. Eleanor, on the other hand, was shy, awkward, and unsure of herself in many ways, but she retained a gravitas, a sensitivity, and an intellectual depth that many—including Franklin—were drawn to and admired.

Sensitivity and introversion appear to be closely related traits. Think back to Kagan's high-reactives. These were the children who responded strongly to even small changes in the world around them. This could make them more anxious, but they were also more attuned to life's subtleties. As research psychologist Dr. Elaine Aron has suggested, this heightened sensitivity may be a cornerstone of some introverts' greatest strength: empathy. Empathy is the ability to not just intellectually understand what another person feels but also to feel what they feel. In this sense, empathy is very similar to compassion, a

word whose original meaning was to literally “suffer with.” Introverts feel things more deeply and may be more affected than extroverts by feelings and ideas.

A famously introverted politician of our time is Al Gore. When Gore was first exposed to theoretical models of climate change as a Harvard undergraduate, he was deeply moved—and terrified. When he arrived in Congress in the 1970s, he approached his fellow congressmen with the climate change information that had left such a strong impression on him. His colleagues, however, were unimpressed. As with most politicians, they were primarily extroverts, and pie charts and line graphs about temperature change based on complex statistical models weren't exciting enough to get the point across. It would take the synthesis of Gore's message with dramatic, cinematic techniques featured in his breakaway documentary hit *An Inconvenient Truth* before his colleagues and the general public would experience the threat of climate change the way Gore had as a college sophomore.

The Gore example offers two great lessons for introverts: (1) they must recognize that they may be more sensitive to important information than their more extroverted peers, and (2) they must recognize that they may have to step outside their comfort zone to successfully communicate their concerns to a broader audience.

### Discussion Questions

1. In this chapter, the author introduces the idea that an introvert's heightened sensitivity may enhance his or her capacity to experience empathy. Do you agree?
2. What about being introverted might enhance empathy?
3. Do you think introverts are better at understanding how other people think, or just how they feel? What's the difference?

## Classroom Activities

1. **Election showdown:** Students stage a mock election between Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. Who wins? Evaluate each of them on the introvert-extrovert spectrum. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses in each of their personalities as leaders. Which style are you more responsive to and why? How much did their leadership style and their introverted and extroverted qualities affect your vote?
2. **I feel your pain:** Have students rate their capacity for empathy on a scale from 0 to 10 (see scale below). In pairs, students discuss their self-ratings and how it makes them feel about themselves.

## Homework Assignment

1. **In your journal, keep track of your empathic responses to a few current situations (e.g. bad news reports, troubles of a friend or stranger, family problems, etc.)** Record how you feel about your ability to empathize and how strongly your feelings of empathy are. Include any judgments you might have about how you think you are supposed to feel as opposed to how you actually feel.

## Chapter 7

**Why did Wall Street Crash and Warren Buffett Prosper?:**

**How Introverts and Extroverts Think (and Process Dopamine) Differently**

Warren Buffett's investment acumen is legendary, and there is no shortage of theories to explain his success. But this chapter may contain the first instance where it has been suggested that Buffett's large bank balances may be attributable to his dopamine functioning.

**Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that is critical to how the brain orients itself**

toward and learns about rewards (e.g. money) in the environment. Dopamine plays a central role in getting us excited about life's fruits; it helps us "seize the day" and "just do it." But it can also cause us to become too focused on short-term gains and make it difficult to know when to walk away from a risky deal. Because the sensitivity of dopamine varies from person to person, it can be a risk factor since it encourages actions toward risks and rewards.

Extroverts are very *reward sensitive*: they tend to exhibit traits like novelty-seeking and impulsivity. That is, they crave new experiences more, get bored more easily, and can act rashly—especially when they see money on the table. In contrast, introverts are more likely to be *threat sensitive*, suggesting they are more concerned about avoiding a potential loss than they are about maximizing a possible gain.

Sometimes impulsivity in extroverts can be a good thing, but sometimes it can be problematic. Consider the series of experiments run by Professor Joe Newman at the University of Wisconsin. In a simple computer task, participants see random digits (0–9) displayed and have to learn when to push a button. Pushing a button for a "correct" number will earn the subject a little money, while a "wrong" button will cost money. All subjects learn through trial and error. However, even after the correct responses have been learned, people sometimes make mistakes—they jump the gun. Not surprisingly, this mistake is more common among extroverts, who are a little more impulsive than their introverted counterparts. The surprising thing is what happens next; when an introvert makes a mistake, they slow down and try to respond more carefully the next time. But extroverts do the opposite and speed up after a mistake. Because they are so focused on getting to the next reward, they have more trouble learning from their mistakes.

Interestingly, recent research has shown that these novelty-seeking and impulsivity traits are associated with higher dopamine levels. In contrast, introverts can be protected from these kinds of mistakes by their high sensitivity to the threat of loss. This is what helps explain Buffett's success—he

doesn't get too excited when his investments are going well, and his focus on avoiding losses keeps his exuberance at bay.

## Discussion Questions

1. Sensitivity to possible rewards can sometimes blind us to the risks involved. Recall an example when you were particularly affected by a potential reward (e.g. money, an attractive person, a promotion, etc.) What drew you in? Did you act on the urge? If not, what held you back?
2. Individuals who are threat sensitive tend to be more cautious about losses and punishments. How does this relate to the aspects of introversion discussed in prior chapters, including the high-reactive responses to novelty and the increased empathic response?
3. An important theme of this chapter is that a narrow focus on always increasing one's positive emotions and rewards can have grave negative consequences in certain circumstances. What are situations in your life when experiencing negative emotions (e.g. fear, anxiety, dread, sadness, shame, etc.) proved useful or necessary in hindsight?

## Classroom Activities

1. To bet or not to bet: Consider the following table of bets, listed 1–8. Each bet has a 50 percent chance of winning and a 50 percent chance of losing the amount in each column. Have students vote on whether to take each of these bets.

| Bet Number | 50% Chance of Winning | 50% Chance of Losing |
|------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1          | \$5.00                | \$7.00               |
| 2          | \$10.00               | \$10.00              |
| 3          | \$12.00               | \$10.00              |
| 4          | \$15.00               | \$12.00              |
| 5          | \$20.00               | \$15.00              |
| 6          | \$25.00               | \$17.00              |
| 7          | \$35.00               | \$20.00              |
| 8          | \$42.00               | \$21.00              |

Most people would only take the last bet, where the reward for winning is

double the cost of losing. In reality, however, only bet number 1 is a loser. Bet number 2 breaks even, and the rest are more likely to give money in the long run. But for most of us, that's not enough. People are wary of taking losses, even when the potential losses are smaller than the potential gains. This is called loss aversion, and how loss averse you are gives you a good idea whether you are more reward sensitive or more threat sensitive.

2. Cost/benefit analysis: In pairs, students perform a cost/benefit analysis on these two behaviors (reward sensitive and threat sensitive) and discuss situations when the benefit of each behavior outweighs its cost.

### Homework Assignments

1. Balanced risk: In your journal, record how you balanced your use of caution and risk throughout the week. What choices did you make? What results did you get? What would you change about how you balance risk and reward? If you would not change anything, explain why.

2. Life is just a fantasy: Write a fantasy in your journal about how you would act if you could act any way you want or be anyone you want to be.

## PART III: DO ALL CULTURES HAVE AN EXTROVERT IDEAL?

### Section Overview

So far in this book, we have focused on American culture, where the Extrovert Ideal has been a cherished institution for more than a century. But is the primacy of extroversion a fundamental fact of human nature, or is it a cultural phenomenon? One way to find out is to examine how introvert and extrovert qualities are viewed in non-Western societies.

Extroversion is not a universal ideal. To be sure, as the personality psychologist Robert McCrae has demonstrated, European cultures are extroverted, and



many Asian-American cultures are introverted. Summing up the temperament of whole civilizations is of course a sweeping generalization, but it speaks to the basic differences in social mores that members of different societies come to value. Unlike many Western cultures, Asian societies emphasize more introverted qualities of patience, calm, thoughtful listening, and—even more important—thoughtful speaking. Members of these cultures take conversation seriously, and don't believe in the idea of "talking just to talk." Indeed, what may pass in a Western college classroom as class participation can often sound like just "talking nonsense" to students in Asian cultures. Compare, for instance, the classic Western proverb "the squeaky wheel gets the grease" to the common Asian proverbs, "the wind howls, but the mountain remains still" and "those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know."

These cultures place more emphasis on *soft power*, or strength that is derived from quiet persistence rather than bold provocation. When you wield soft power, you win people over rather than forcing their hand. Perhaps one of the most famous examples of soft power in the last hundred years is the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi. Of his many strong qualities, Gandhi himself most prized his restraint. It was this capacity that allowed him to effectively choose his battles and stay focused on the much larger goal. He did not waste precious time and effort on minor conflicts that would have no real bearing on the ultimate outcome.

## Chapter 8

### Soft Power:

#### Asian-Americans and the Extrovert Ideal

### Discussion Questions

1. Much of this chapter focuses on the numerous ways that we are inculcated with the virtues of extroversion, many of which are so deeply ingrained that we don't even consider them to be culture-specific. Reflecting on your own time in school, what ideas were you taught that promoted extroversion? How did they

**suit your personal style?**

- 2. Can you think of a circumstance in which someone used a soft power approach in a negotiation with you? Was it effective? How did you feel about the negotiation afterwards?**

### **Classroom Activities**

- 1. Take my lead: Have students discuss current leaders who lead with soft power and leaders who lead with outgoing, extrovert power. Compare and contrast their leadership styles and explore their worldwide appeal.**
- 2. Debate session: Set up a debate between a soft power leader and a charismatic, extroverted leader. Ask students which leader had more appeal to them personally and who they think won the debate. Does the debate winner necessarily appeal to them the most? Why or why not?**

### **Homework Assignments**

- 1. Preferred leadership: Make a list of all the leaders you respect in your personal life. Take stock of whether they use soft power or charismatic power. Explain which type of power you are more responsive to and the reasons why.**
- 2. The situation room: With your own preference for leadership style in mind, consider whether the particular contexts of the different situations leaders face influence the value of their leadership style. Examine a few leaders from your list in this perspective.**

## **PART IV: HOW TO LOVE, HOW TO WORK**

### **Section Overview**

**Throughout this book, we have challenged the accepted dogma that being an**

extrovert necessarily leads to a better life, and that introverted qualities should be “cured” wherever possible. We have found that the truth is far more nuanced, and that the relative benefits of extroversion and introversion depend on a number of contextual factors. The question remains: how can introverts and extroverts get along better? What should each be looking for in the other? How should they adjust their responses and expectations? In this final section, we delve into the issues of how extroverts and introverts can learn to better recognize, understand, and appreciate one another.

## Chapter 9

### When Should You Act More Extroverted than You Really Are?:

Regardless of our native temperaments or preferences, we can all appreciate the importance of being flexible and adaptive, particularly in social situations. As the old saying goes, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” But what if the Romans are all gregarious, extrovert types, and you are more of a quiet, contemplative introvert type? Is it possible to fake it? If so, how is that different than just forcing yourself to be an extrovert?

Professor Brian Little has worked on solving this riddle. Little has developed a theory of personality called *Free Trait Theory*. According to this model, individuals can take on characteristics of a different personality style for small spurts at a time—similar to a walker bursting into a sprint for a short distance. As with sprinting, such changes come with a cost. Whether we are running or taking on a personality different than our own, we tend to exhaust our energy. Little has found that it is not only fatigue that makes donning a different personality difficult. Other factors are involved as well. According to Free Trait Theory, people will have a tough time achieving traits not aligned with their core goals or values. Little helps explain many of the apparent contradictions in the extroversion/introversion debate, such as how an apparent introvert like Barack Obama could nevertheless electrify enormous audiences with his speeches. The trick depends on a separate trait that psychologists describe as

self-monitoring. Individuals who are adept at *self-monitoring* are able to change their persona to fit the demands of a given situation, even if it means going against their natural tendencies. Importantly, Little has found that self-monitoring can be much easier when one is acting in accordance with core beliefs.

The important question is not whether you can fake it, but rather if you should. Taking on traits that are otherwise outside your normal comfort zone is taxing even under the best of circumstances. But when you find yourself doing it for a cause that you don't really believe in, it can cause substantial distress, with real implications for your physical and mental health. Therefore, it is important for each of us to know our limits and know we are true to our convictions when we decide to take on characteristics outside our normal personality.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are the tenets of Free Trait Theory? Why is it so important? Think of three different circumstances in which you left your comfort zone in terms of interpersonal style. How did you feel afterwards? Did the circumstances make a difference?
2. How far outside your own comfort zone are you willing to go to support a cause you really care about? Would you give a speech if you are petrified of public speaking? Would you raise money from friends and family? How about strangers? Would you stand up to a threatening boss who is treating people unfairly?

### Classroom Activities

1. Reaching your goals: Have students assess their current personal and professional life goals. Students discuss, in pairs, which traits they should be developing to enhance their chances of attaining their goals.

**2. Feelings versus beliefs:** Students discuss whether they should choose life goals that best suit their temperament or whether they should choose life goals attuned to their highest morals and values.

### Homework Assignment

**1. Outside the comfort zone:** Spend a week trying on a different trait each day (e.g. more or less talkative, more or less assertive, more or less solitary, etc.) In your journal, track how changing traits felt to you and record whether you enjoyed being outside your comfort zone.

## Chapter 10

### The Communication Gap:

#### How to Talk to Members of the Opposite Type

Opposites attract—or so the saying goes. In the case of introverts and extroverts, this adage turns out to be largely correct; the two personality types are frequently drawn to each other, as we saw earlier in the example of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. But as with any long-term relationship, the pairing of introverts and extroverts comes with unique challenges.

In the example of Greg and Emily, we see that each of them serves as the perfect complement to the other—his natural dynamism and effusive nature help Emily “come out of her shell,” and her quiet depth style helps forge true closeness and connection in their relationship. But in other ways, their differing temperaments create real distress. In Greg’s ideal world, he and Emily would be at the center of a large social network, constantly hosting large dinner parties and other events for a revolving list of friends. But after a long week at work, Emily cherishes quiet time on the weekend so she and Greg can enjoy each other and she can recharge her batteries through relaxed and intimate conversation. In a society that privileges extroversion, Emily’s desires are frequently labeled antisocial, but this is a mistake. Emily is social,

inasmuch as she wants to be with her husband. This issue is not about being social or antisocial, but rather what kind of social interaction one desires.

This type of conflict is not uncommon for introvert/extrovert couples, but the problem usually doesn't stop there. It also extends to how people like Greg and Emily confront each other about their differing wants and needs. As an extrovert, Greg is more reward sensitive and is likely to focus on getting his way more directly. This can raise alarm bells in Emily, who is likely to be more sensitive to negative emotions in others. As Emily begins to feel anxious and guilty about disappointing Greg, she withdraws. Greg perceives her withdrawal as her being dismissive of his concern. And so, the cycle continues.

To break this cycle, two things must happen. First, couples with opposing temperaments must come to understand and appreciate that it is OK to have different views on how to spend their social time. One predilection isn't good while the other is somehow wrong or bad. Second, they must learn to not make assumptions about each other when they enter conflict. Emily must understand that Greg's blunt demands are part of his temperament and don't necessarily mean that he is disappointed in her as a partner. And Greg needs to appreciate that Emily's apparent coldness and withdrawal are really acts of self-protection and not a rejection of him or what he wants.

The example of Greg and Emily teaches us that extroverts and introverts experience things differently. And because they are often confused about what causes certain responses in those with a different temperament, they should be careful not to make assumptions by projecting how they would feel or respond in a given situation.

### Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do extroverts and introverts respond differently to conflict?
2. What are ways an extrovert and an introvert may interpret each other's

response to conflict differently?

3. What do you think draws extroverts and introverts together?

4. Do you think extrovert/introvert pairs are stronger than, weaker than, or merely different than introvert/introvert and extrovert/extrovert pairs? What are the possible benefits and drawbacks of each pair type?

### Classroom Activity

1. **Role-playing:** Pair students up as extrovert/introvert couples and have them role-play Greg and Emily's problem from each respective point of view. Observe how easily one can feel misunderstood, judged, and rejected by the other's ideas. Suggest ways the couples can compromise.

### Homework Assignment

1. **Couples therapy:** In your journal, describe three different couples you know who are introvert/introvert, extrovert/extrovert, and introvert/extrovert pairs. What are the pros and cons of their temperament similarities and differences in relation to their happiness as a couple and how they manage conflict? Which temperament pairing would you prefer for your relationship? Why?

## Chapter 11

On Cobblers and Generals:

How to Cultivate Quiet Kids in a World That Can't Hear Them

Just as introverts and extroverts can run into challenges when they are on either side of a long-term relationship, so too can trouble arise when differing styles occur among parents and their children, a phenomenon described as *poor parent-child fit*.

When two predominantly extroverted parents find themselves raising introverted offspring, they may be too quick to misinterpret their child's quiet style as a sign that something is wrong. Perhaps the child is depressed, or has a learning disability. Similarly, a pair of introverts may misread their child's high-octane activity as a sign of ADHD, when it may just be a case of an excited extrovert exploring his world. In addition, sometimes parents who were introverted and ashamed of it in their own childhoods are acutely reactive and judgmental to "shyness" in their own children.

These mismatches can have significant consequences, as the parental concerns can be interpreted by the child as meaning that there is something wrong with his or her natural way of being. Parents can avoid this problem by paying close attention to how their child engages in school and hobbies. Many of these activities are structured to cater to a more extroverted style, leaving introverts at a disadvantage. You can help an introverted child by making her feel OK about preferring quieter activities.

Parents must nurture the natural strengths of developing introverts, allowing them to pursue new learning with more persistence and depth and helping them develop their natural competencies at an earlier age.

### Discussion Questions

1. If you have children, what assumptions about your child's experience do you make that may reflect differences in your personality styles?
2. What are ways introverted parents can support their extroverted child?
3. What are ways extroverted parents can support their introverted child?
4. Do you think it is always better for parents' personality styles to match their children's? What are the pros and cons of their personalities not matching?



## Classroom Activities

1. **The perfect child:** In pairs, have students discuss whether they would prefer an introverted or extroverted child. Have them explain their answers.
2. **Come out of your shell:** Students role-play an extroverted parent trying to encourage extroverted behavior with an introverted child.
3. **Take it down a notch:** Students role-play an introverted parent trying to restrain the activity level of an extroverted child.

## Homework Assignments

1. **Family interview:** Interview your parents and siblings about where they see themselves on the introvert-extrovert spectrum and how their personality styles affected their parent-child relationship. (If students are uncomfortable interviewing their own families, they can interview a friend's family.)
2. **Parent/child relations:** In your journal, describe your experience as a child regarding your parents' ways of supporting and nurturing you in your efforts to learn new things and handle new situations. Include ways you feel your parents may have impeded your development as they tried to engage you. If you could, what would you change about the ways your parents related to you in childhood? What would you change about the ways you related to your parents?

## Final Assignments:

1. **What have I learned:** Reread your journal and review your class experiences and what you have learned about yourself and others. Write a final paper about how you will use your new understanding of temperament in your personal and professional life and in your relationships with your friends, family, and significant other.

2. Letter of recommendation: Ultimately, *Quiet* is not a book about which temperament is best. It is a book that invites all of us to recognize the best of who we are, despite our differences. Write yourself a letter in which you review your qualities and temperament in a kind, accepting, and admiring manner. Tell yourself the positive aspects of being you as if you were your own best friend, loving parent, or devoted mentor. Highlight what you like best about being you and explore how to expand the menu of possibilities—granted to you by your temperament—as you search for your place in the world.

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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