

Knowing You Introverted Self

By: Essi

Living in a society that favors extroversion, it can be a real challenge being an introvert. We are constantly told we're too quiet and don't do enough. As kids, we're told we need to speak up in class and to join a team sport. When we're older, we're pressured into being go-getters at work and hitting the town on weekends. If you don't, then you're seen as a weirdo and an outcast unfit to be around others. And that can take a very heavy toll on even the most outgoing introvert.

As a young girl, I struggled a lot with my shyness and introversion. It took me a long time to realize what exactly made me feel different from most of my peers. Knowledge really is power. And thanks to being able to read and talk about introversion, I can now understand myself and use my introversion to my advantage. Surprise, surprise; there is nothing wrong with me – or you.

Whether you're leaning heavily towards introversion or extroversion, we all find ourselves somewhere on the spectrum. However, not many are 100 percent introverted or extroverted. These individuals are called ambiverts, someone who is both an introvert and extrovert. Knowing where you measure on the introvert/extrovert spectrum can be really beneficial for you. It can explain why you suddenly don't feel like going out with your friends, even though you promised. Or why you feel bored and anxious on your own at home. When you know the reason for your feelings, it allows you to understand yourself and how to live with it. And who doesn't want a peaceful mind?

Through discussions with friends, I have been able to educate them (and myself) on something they might have felt confused about. Most people know what these terms mean, but

they haven't thought about applying it to themselves. My friends are not all completely extroverted and have not had the knowledge to understand why they feel or act a certain way. They might think they're down or sad when really they just need to go home and recharge on their own for a bit. It can be hard to understand *why* you don't want to see your friends after work when you don't know your needs. Even as an introvert, I still need company sometimes. It's just not as often and for as long as others because it tires me out pretty quickly.

Taking the Myers-Briggs test and reading about the nature of how I personally function changed my life. And though I don't think we should rely too much on the information we get from it. It has definitely given me an understanding of myself. I now have the tools to take my introversion in stride and use it to my advantage. However, I also believe we are even more complex than that. We shouldn't align ourselves with one type throughout our lives.

My advice to you, wherever you find yourself on the scale, is to educate yourself on this topic. It will give you insight into how not just you, but other people as well, function. If your friend goes quiet when meeting your colleagues, it's easier to understand why they seem so uninterested. If you know they're observing and taking everything in, you could step in and help them out. Vice versa, others will forgive you for not showing up to that party. They know it's not personal and that you need to rest after a hectic week. (Being around people five days a week is hectic for an introvert – no wonder we need the rest).

It all comes back to communication. Some people find it hard, but being able to say that you simply need to go home and be on your own for a bit without feeling bad is one of the greatest reliefs for an introvert. I can't count how many times I've felt like I may have disappointed someone for choosing to take care of myself and rest. I worry because the other person might not understand my reasons for it. And I also know when to really put in the effort

to attend an event with a friend. Thanks to that, I can prioritize and mentally prepare so that I don't feel too overwhelmed. It's a lot better than spending time trying to come up with excuses not to go.

We don't mean to be mean or selfish. But to an extrovert who doesn't know or consider our introversion, it can come off as pretty rude to always decline invitations. They're inviting us to a party because they think they're fun and want us to join in. However, they don't realize the pressure it puts on us and the spiral of thoughts that will go down beforehand. Thoughts of the large groups of people there, how to strike up meaningful conversations with strangers, how long you should stay, and excuses to use in order to *not* go in the first place run through your mind. And it becomes difficult to remain (not that you were to begin with) calm about going to that party.

Don't ever be afraid to tell people you're an introvert. Know what's best for you and maybe inform some people about it along the way. Spread the word. To be able to survive the pressures of an extroverted world, we have to be able to stand up for ourselves. We must make it socially acceptable to live our lives true to our introverted selves. It's the only way we can be genuinely happy.