

ARE YOU AN INNIE OR AN OUTIE? AN INTROVERT OR AN EXTROVERT?

PART TWO

Last month I shared part one of this series about the personality traits known as introversion and extroversion. I was inspired to do so when I saw a video and realized that most of us probably have stereotypic ideas of what it means to be an introvert (shy, insecure) and extrovert (outgoing, confident). These simplistic adjectives only apply to a few people and are often blatantly incorrect and stigmatizing. I decided to offer a two part series and last month I wrote about being an introvert.

Today we discuss the extrovert. What it means to be an extrovert and the advantages and disadvantages of this personality trait.

What is an extrovert?

Do you love meeting new people? Does a big social event leave you feeling energized and renewed? Do you feel happy talking and sharing stories with lots of people? If you answer yes to these questions there is a possibility that you might be an extrovert.

Simply defined an extrovert is a person who gains energy and feels refreshed from social situations and crowds of people. About 60-75 percent of people fall into this category. Extroverts use the chemistry in their brains differently than introverts. They are wired to feel pleasure and excitement related to outward experiences and interactions. Introverts are wired to turn more inward and be more reflective. It is similar with the nervous system. Introverts use the chemical parts of the nervous system related to conserving energy and quieting down. Extroverts favor the opposite side of the nervous system: the sympathetic side, known as "full-throttle" or "fight, flight system.

This side mobilizes extroverts to discover new things and makes them active, daring, and inquisitive. The brain becomes alert and hyper-focused on its surroundings. Blood sugar and free fatty acids are elevated to give more energy. Thinking is reduced, and they prepare to make fast decisions. Extroverts require more dopamine to feel pleasure and happiness. This means is that they will enjoy and seek more external stimuli (people, social events, etc) because it is rewarding and pleasurable. The general characteristics associated with extroversion include:

Having numerous, broad interests

Converses well with others

Enjoys attention

Sometimes acts before thinking

Looks to others and outside sources for ideas and inspiration

Likes to talk about thoughts and feelings

People who are extroverted may feel happier than introverts. This might be associated with how their brain and nervous system chemistry works. It is also associated with the positive association our culture places on being extroverted. People are drawn to the talkative, fun loving, sometimes bigger than life personality. If you are on this continuum if can be rewarding to have this appeal to others.

There are advantages and disadvantages to being extroverted and it is important to know them.

Advantages:

People like extroverts and they often have a wide circle of friends

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Good at group work and collaboration – "doers"

Can handle social pressure

Often excel in work situations needing their traits

Life can be excited, rich, and interesting

Disadvantages:

Relationships can be shallow as there are too many and not enough time invested in any one friendship.

Difficulty being alone

Easily bored

May rely on positive feedback from others

Sometimes says or does things without thinking

Can exhaust others who are not so extroverted!

People may not realise when extroverts need emotional support

Like most personality traits extroversion and introversion are on a spectrum. People usually fall somewhere in between extreme and mild on the continuum. Many of us have a mixture of these traits. The key to being happy and healthy is to recognise them and work with the positive aspects they offer us. When we struggle we should consider this and see if we are being true to ourselves. There is no right or wrong and striving make the most with our personality is a doable and rewarding result.

People on the extremes of either trait often therapy a support to work with their personalities and help them succeed.