

INTROVERTS SHOULD BE EXEMPTED FROM TEAMWORK AND PUBLIC SPEACHES

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ABSTRACT

'We are all different, Thank God!' is the headline of a local furniture producer. A simple, clear, brilliant message put out in the world. Yes, people are different and there is an underlying reason for it: the things that keep us apart are also the ones that complete us and make us whole as societies. As long as our disparities do not attack the other and as long as disagreements have place at the same table and can be addresses in a peaceful way, we are safe to move forward and create, behave, hope, understand the world and ourselves and most of all, live our lives as supposed to.

We should all be allowed to act, behave and live in line with our innate abilities, desires, thinking models, psychological patterns and skills. Due to latest technology and social shifts underneath, today's life has a clear predisposition to overexposure. As much as this is a pattern which some of the people can and are willing to embrace, for others it can be burden and more than that, an inhibitor of being who they actually are. They are preconditions for a misfit-type-of-attitude which can lead to major ruptures in behaviors and mental patterns for the individuals unequipped for this environment. A typical example is related to the introverts-extraverts binom and it should be explained in full and open recognition of all truths that needs to be said. I believe this is the only way to not defy, parody or force nature and ourselves into counterfeited lives.

KEY WORDS: *introverts, teamwork, public speaking, shyness, extraverts, ambiverts, misfit, misconceptions, psychology, daring, public speech, silence, mental patterns*

When I was a little girl I often kept myself busy when my parents were at work ... and apart from writing with chalk on the furniture teaching my imaginary class that 1+1 doesn't necessarily equal 2 and that who can help me prove it will get an A, I usually started to play. One of my favourite activities was the 'sales person': I used to put together all the beauty products in the house, attach them a price tag, simulate money from figures on paper and started to imagine that I am in front of clients to whom I explained what does each of the products do, why did I recommend it, how to use it and so on. It was a very fun game for me because I sensed that I contribute to people's lives, guiding them in the world of cosmetics. Up to one day when my parents came home earlier than expected and I was ... caught in the act. Of course, they smiled a bit and tried to understand what was going on there.

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Although the feedback received was not at all harsh, I felt devastated and completely discovered with my little secret universe and more than that, I felt intrusively misunderstood by the fact that we often see a result and not the reasons behind it. That embarrassing moment was cut from the today's cliché 'I can explain! This is not what it looks like'.

Somehow this moment went away and over time, in school, after refusing to study for subjects that kept me from doing what I liked more, peer pressure whispered to me 'fine, do not study...after all, you don't need education in order to be a seller'. I thought of it as the symbol of social injustice and more than that, a self betrayal everytime I accepted to let it go. But I also considered that I do not yet see the full picture and perhaps in time things will make more sense.

And they did. I later in life found out about very interesting theories on introverts, extraverts and ambiverts as a mix of the two and that genetics has a lot to say about the tendencies within us, the conclusion being that what makes us being different is the place we take our energy from and how we reboot our brain activity: introverts use to spend their time alone and tend to be creative, whilst the extraverts gather their energy through the interaction with other people, often showing their charm and charisma every chance they get. And according to the theories, I was to find out that I belonged to the *mostly introverts*' typology.

The terms of *introverts* and *extraverts* were invented by Carl Jung based on his assumption that what seems to be a random behavior of people is actually the consequence of people using different parts of their neuronal capacities.

'In all of us lies an unconscious mind – one which is not conscious of feelings and thoughts all the time, but those feelings and thoughts are capable of affecting our lives nonetheless. If you take an extravert you will find that his unconscious has an introverted quality, because all the extraverted qualities are played out in his consciousness and the introverted are left in the unconscious'. (Jung in McGuire & Hull, 1977, p. 342).

Based on the four psychological functions identified by Carl Jung (thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition) he has developed a matrix of eight personalities within us. Of course, in each of us there is one which prevails – one which we should be aware at and cultivate it accordingly, but to the extent of 'emancipating ourselves from mental slavery' (Bob Marley).

The Eight Preferences		
Where you prefer to focus your attention	E EXTRAVERSION People who prefer Extraversion tend to focus their attention on the outer world of people and things.	I INTROVERSION People who prefer Introversion tend to focus their attention on the inner world of ideas and impressions.
The way you prefer to take in information	S SENSING People who prefer Sensing tend to take in information through the five senses and focus on the here and now.	N INTUITION People who prefer Intuition tend to take in information from patterns and the big picture and focus on future possibilities.
The way you prefer to make decisions	T THINKING People who prefer Thinking tend to make decisions based primarily on logic and on objective analysis of cause and effect.	F FEELING People who prefer Feeling tend to make decisions based primarily on values and on subjective evaluation of person-centered concerns.
How you prefer to deal with the outer world	J JUDGING People who prefer Judging tend to like a planned and organized approach to life and prefer to have things settled.	P PERCEIVING People who prefer Perceiving tend to like a flexible and spontaneous approach to life and prefer to keep their options open.

Figure 1
 Source: fractaenlightenment.com

In the 1960s the psychologist Hans Eysenck found out about a major differentiator between introverts and extraverts, that being the high stimulation extraverts need from the world in order to feel energetic, whereas introverts are much more easily inward stimulated and therefore more inclined into loneliness and quietness. Should the extraverts be less dependant on the energy and presence of others and dwell a bit in their introverted unconscious they will be less likely to develop anxiety and distress. Just as much as introverts would be very likely to fall into depression and isolating tendencies should they not borrow a bit of extraverts' relations to other people.

After a study from 2005 taking into consideration neuronal reactions to gambling games, extraverts exhibiting an increased activity in the amygdala and the nucleus accumbens of the brain, and showing great deal of excitement are considered to be very adventurous and fans or risks. On the other hand a 2002 study proved that introverts have greater grey matter in the prefrontal cortex which is linked to abstract thinking, decision making and a less impulsive propensity.

As Dr. Marti Olsen Laney states, both types of individuals use their full brain at various moments in time, but the extraverts favour the sympathetic neurological part (the 'fight,

flight or freeze') indulging them into energetic and daring actions, very often impulsive whereas introverts look the other way in search of depth, reflection and focus through the parasympathetic side of the brain ('rest and digest'). In terms of neurotransmitters, it seems that chemistry has a different substance for each of them: dopamine works for extraverts as outer excitement, meanwhile acetylcholine is what leads the introverts towards inner pleasure.

It is considered that what we are today in terms of behavior has to do with genetics in a proportion of about 40-50%. Of course, we develop our personalities based on initial tendencies and societal surroundings, but behavioral predefined packages guide us no matter the life we end up living.

There are a lot of stories from where the above came out because we, introverts, usually spend big parts of our lives as consequences of the pressurized outer world and with the disappointment that we have this introvert underlying state of mind that leads us. **We don't want to be different, we just are!**

Professionally speaking, introverts would rather work alone, and solitude is for sure an innovation catalyst. As Hans Eysenck once noticed 'introverts focus more on what needs to be done and do not let themselves distracted by the social energy of the place they work in, should it had nothing to do with the work they do'.

Also, studies showed that the efficiency of a group diminishes by the time it gets bigger, a theory that welcomes introverts who would rather work alone. We are nowadays all so impressed by the power of collaboration and of the community, that we have come to overestimate team work in the detriment of individual work.

Psychologists usually find three explanations for why the trendy brainstormings are not that successful after all:

- Social inertia: in a group there will always be members whom will choose to step aside and let others do the job to the advantage of the ones who take the initiative and need to be allowed to
- Exposure blockage: while an idea is at some point produced, the others are obliged to passively listen to it even though they do not believe in it
- Evaluation fear: avoidance to look bad in front of the team

Grazyna Kochanska said: 'introverts and sensible typologies of people do not stand out, but are able to observe what the extraverts do not have eyes for. They are the writers and the artists whom at a party have interesting conversations outside the auditive spheres of the others. They are the inventors of new behavioral ways of doing things while the others borrow their ideas by replicating them'.

Introverts think twice before getting to action, they digest their information, they take their time on the problem, they rarely give up and usually reach a better accuracy.

Einstein, a self declared introvert used to say 'it's not that I am smarter, but that I do not rush when judging problems'.

There is a concept called ‘need for privacy’ which appear in both typologies of people, but while the extraverts see in socializing ‘the forum to validate their willingness to express themselves and lead’, the introverts would rather get to know their close ones within small circles.

The word ‘shyness’ is not only mistakenly associated with the introverts, but it also won a negative meaning in a society more and more inclined to exhibit whatever it can. ‘Shy people fear negative judgment; introverts simply prefer quiet, minimally [outer] stimulating environments ‘ (Susan Cain). We have transformed ourselves from the country people where socializing happened not further than the front porch of our house into individuals whom if not revealed on Facebook with what is more intimate about us and validate the social pressure, are considered shy and condoned to being ashamed of this so-called invalidity. Decency and humbleness have become pale words for today’s life.

There is another missbelief when it comes to introverts: they are very often considered as people disliking all other people, almost antisocial, rude and incapable of socializing and small talk. The truth behind this is that introverts find it extremely hard sometimes to use their energy for keeping a dialogue alive especially when the dialogue do not bring them an added value. While extraverts usually start a conversation with small talk and finally get to the deep subject, the introverts starts with the subject at stake and develop the small talk at the end, as their intent is to build on concepts and ideas in order to address the inner tension rather than filling the silence with personal assumptions.

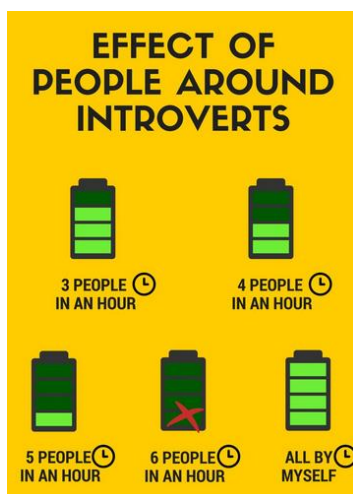


Figure 2

And to express this idea more symbolically, I will quote Laurie Helgoe who said “Let’s clear one thing up: Introverts do not hate small talk because we dislike people. We hate small talk because we hate the barrier it creates between people.”

Because of the institutional models we live our lives around – school, open space offices, front desk queues, all day meetings – we are constrained to adapt to a predominant model: that of the extraverts. There are days when instead of beautifully living their lives, the

introverts have to switch off and hide behind brick walls in order to live through the day and hope for a moment of recreation.

In these moments the introverts stop assimilating and are emotionally threatened.

“Our culture made a virtue of living only as extroverts. We discouraged the inner journey, the quest for a center. So we lost our center and have to find it again.” – Anaïs Nin

In a world where the extraverts would pace themselves, keep quiet, even sacrifice some of their exhibitionism for a bit of discretion and listen to those who choose not to shout in order to be heard, things might look different in a good way.

Studies say that there is one introvert at each two extraverts ... at least for the reason of critical mass, we are here!

We live in a world that encourages overexposure, social media and public speaking as if they have to come in combi pack with the Bachelor's degree or blood samples, and they all set organizational cultures towards team work regardless of the actual need of it.

Don't underestimate me
because I'm quiet.
I know more than I say,
think more than I speak
and observe more than
you know.

Figure 3

We perceive public speakers as smarter than the silent ones and moreover, as better leaders, although studies have found zero correlation between the two!

Introverts are proved to be extremely good in leading the ones with initiatives. As they are natively inclined to listen to the others and are not drawn into the temptation to dominate, introverts are more prone to hearing and implementing suggestions. Extraverts, on the other hand, can want so much to leave their mark on an event that they frequently risk other's people good ideas and lead them into passivity.

Some of the great world leaders were introverts: Charles Darwin, Marcel Proust, Ghandi or Nelson Mandela who once said 'when we lose the right to be different we lose our right to be free'. These leaders have hit spotlight not because they were urged to speak in public nor to work in teams, but because motivation guided them towards what they

thought needed to be done. The effort introverts have to make if they really have to work in teams and publicly expose themselves, need at most to end and not start from there!

It would be comfortable for us to feel that we are being trusted and not seen as wasting time or being disengaged when we choose to sit quietly in the middle of a hectic environment. Do not forget the words Stephen Hawking once said: “**Quiet people have the loudest minds!**” ‘ We sometimes know we have the perfect speech for a subject but making it public feels similar to own-creation-suicidal.



Figure 4

It was only few days back that I was professionally reproached for being an introvert and for not letting people know what I think. I made it clear to that person that we are not the ones that are hiding, but the others are the overexposed.

It is not shyness, nor lack of ideas, it is just the disbelief in the method! The world loses the spark of the introverts if it wants to treat them in a way they are not and force them to fit patterns that are not theirs to match.

Forced interaction with people, the obligativity to be productive as a result of team work and public speaking are all weaknesses for some of the introverts, sometimes even personal struggles which takes a lot of their resources that they can otherwise use to give birth to something beautiful.

I personally do not believe in the power of a speech about a smile, but I strongly believe in anonymously creating one. I work in Marketing and some of the first lessons learnt from PR and Communication people (from books and real life) are:

- Even if you do not have anything to say, be the first to speak and do it rememberable
- Do good and talk about it

I can not compel myself to this norm as I believe in other two concepts:

- Speak only if what you have to say beats silence
- Do good!

I strongly believe in our colliding collaboration and I have a strong faith in a matrix which would bring us together with what intrinsically makes us who we are. **What is a whim or lack of adaptation for some might be the air they breathe for others.** And which, in an unexpected moment, can be the birthplace of a revolutionary idea.

Some of my best friends are extraverts and we sometimes laugh together about ourselves: they ask ‘can you imagine how it would be if all of us would shut up about everything?’ and I answer ‘wouldn’t we be better off than if we endlessly speak about nothing?’

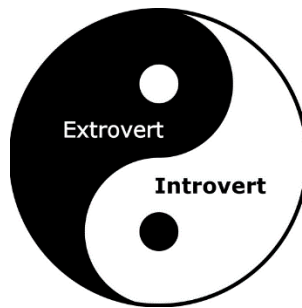


Figure 5

Both personally and professionally, our interaction is great and I believe that teams should be formed of people belonging to both of the typologies, with the disclaimer that each of them should be allowed to create as seen fit.

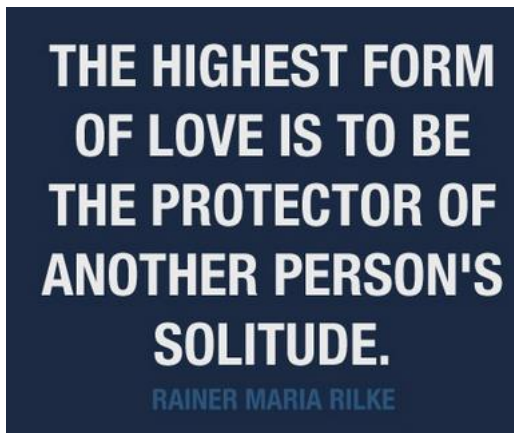


Figure 6

I don't think as being a pure accident the fact that more and more people look for retreat camps in India, or that yoga have become the new cool at the gym. Those who look for these getouts are not only the introverts feeling out of place but more and more the extraverts willing to take a bite of this kind of well being. It has been shown that maturity and wisdom usually lead people, in time and in small steps, towards behavioral

'symptoms' similar to those of the introverts: analysis, introspection, self doubt, need for indepth understanding of things, more and more quietness, detachment of the outer world.

The great searchers of religions (Moses, Jesus, Buddha) have lived in solitude in order to reach an indepth understanding which they afterwards brought into the world. We all have something to learn from one another and it would be enough to understand that both relationship patterns are valid.

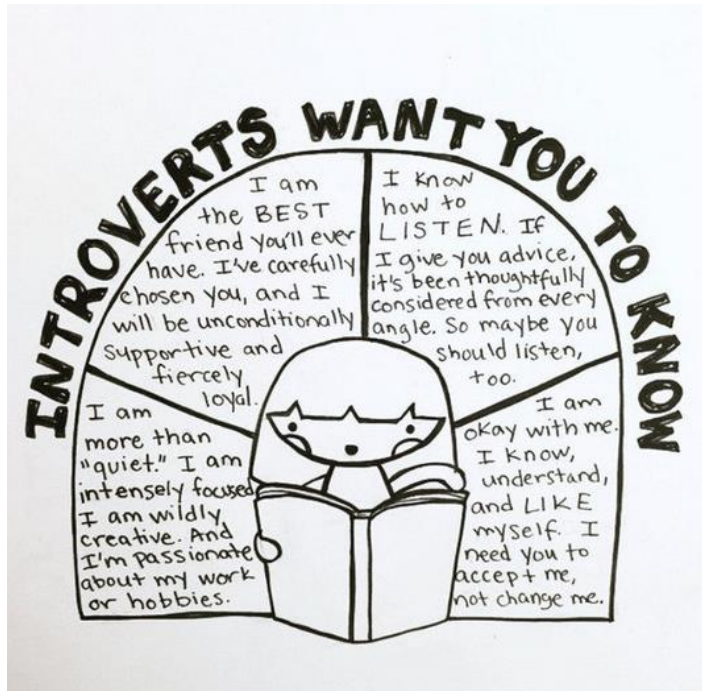


Figure 7

Conformism never proved to bring better results than tolerance and understanding. Think of something you strongly believed in at some point but which didn't pass the society's test. There's where home is. **The world needs the extravert's loud energy just as much as it needs the courage of introverts to whisper their own truths.**

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