

# Happily Introverted *ever after*



How to handle the challenges  
of an extroverted world

Felicitas Heyne

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# The Challenge of Being an Introvert

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**Being an introvert seems like a fate, but in fact it's a challenge.** Understanding yourself will help you tackle the problems that all introverts are facing: health risks, job-related problems and difficult relationships. Knowing about those introvert specific issues will help you to lift your burden and to develop your true potential. And as a result, you will live happier and healthier.

I sincerely hope that this eBook will inspire you on your way towards being happily introverted.

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# It is not that easy to be an Introvert ...



„Extroverts are happier than introverts“ - that was the conclusion of a recent research study elaborated at San Francisco State University. You might have guessed it! I suppose that being an introvert will have given you quite a hard time every now and then. But then again: most major scientific and artistic contributors of all times were introverts: Einstein, Darwin, Newton, Picasso - you name it! By the way, there are many introverts among politicians and actors, too: For instance Glenn

Close, Ingrid Bergman, Clint Eastwood and Richard Gere are introverted as well as Jimmy Carter, Harry S. Truman or Abraham Lincoln. The same applies to top executives like Bill Gates, Warren Buffet or Henry Ford.

Being an introvert seems like a fate, but in fact it's a challenge. Understanding yourself will help you tackle the problems that all introverts are facing in a world mostly dominated by extroverts: health risks, job-

related problems and difficult relationships. Knowing about those introvert specific issues will help you to lift your burden and to develop your true potential. After all, introverts can certainly be at least as happy as extroverts - if they know what to watch out for.

## **What exactly is Introversion?**

Estimates regarding the proportion of introverted among the general population vary between 25 and 35%; exact numbers are not available. Introverts are folks who have an easier time recharging their batteries as long as they have time alone – they are the famous “still waters”. They only let a few selected friend get close, making them more difficult to get to know. Most introverts are better listeners than talkers and ponder for a long time before they begin to speak – if they do it at all. They are not comfortable to talk for the sake of talking; they only say something when there is truly something to say. Too much company quickly wearies introverts and that is also the reason they generally favor a few selected friends and are rarely found as party goers (unless they stand with their back to the wall observing the activities from there). Too many external stimuli and too much interaction with others exhaust

them. Introverts find it easier to cope with social contacts in homeopathic doses. On the other hand, retreating and being by themselves are elemental sources of energy for introverts. That’s how they can recharge their batteries.

In many respects introversion is a very positive character trait. Introverts often are very reflective, profound personalities who contemplate a lot about themselves, others and the world. Added to this is their uncanny ability to concentrate and their often unusual creativity combined with the capacity to withdraw into themselves when they are preoccupied with something. It’s no wonder that many famous inventors, poets and thinkers are introverts!

Introverts are usually more thoughtful than extroverts when it comes to interpersonal relationships. Although they maintain a smaller number of contacts than extroverts, their friendships are usually closer, long-lasting and more resilient during times of crisis. Introverts are often more balanced, mature and independent personalities than extroverts because they are centered within themselves and less dependent on feedback from others.

According to studies introversion is largely innate. Upbringing and the social environ-

ment certainly play a role (because, depending on their tendency to encourage this preference or not, they can pronounce or dilute it in a person). On the other hand first predispositions of introversion or extroversion can be found even in newborns. The introvert and extrovert personality characteristics are largely stable throughout life - no one is ever going to turn a still water into a party animal or the other way around. As a matter of fact, neurological research reveals the difference between the brains of extroverts and introverts: Compared to those of extroverts, the brains of introverts at rest show a significantly increased electric activity. Researchers assume the reason for this is the fact that, introverts have to protect themselves from too many sensory stimuli emanating from their environment in order not to be over stimulated. On the other hand an introverted brain also processes information much more slowly than an extroverted (presumably because it simultaneously processes more 'internal information' than the extroverted brain). This is also the reason for introverts' urgent need for peace and concentration and their tendency to speak slowly.

On the other hand, no one is a 100% introverted or extroverted. Introversion and extroversion are merely the extreme poles on

a scale and each of us is aligned between them. One may be closer to the center, someone else closer towards the extreme end. It is a preference rather than an either/or. This can best be compared with our natural handedness. If someone is right-handed, this does not mean he/she can't do anything with his/her left hand. Some things a right-handed person may even prefer to manage with the left hand (in my case it usually concerns challenges requiring a lot of strength, like screwing the top off Mason jars, for instance). With sufficient practice, most of us can also learn to do some (if not all) tasks we normally do with our right hand with our left hand as well. Everyone who had to live with his preferred arm in a plaster cast already has had this experience. It just takes a little more effort than that which just "comes naturally".

A frequently cited example of an introvert's capability to successfully handle himself as an extrovert is the personality psychologist Brian Little, director of a research group at the British University Cambridge. He is known as an outstanding lecturer who has frequently been honored with numerous awards for the way he teaches. His lectures are extremely original, lively and witty. It is not at all unusual that his students gave him a standing ovation at the

end because they felt so marvelously entertained. However, as he says about himself, privately Little is a very introverted and reserved person. In his time off he won't be seen at parties but rather encountered during solitary walks in the forests. His extraordinary teaching skills are simply self-taught. They do not match his inherent temper – but he purposely adopted them because he sees them as an important tool to inspire his students and support their studies. As we are going to see, sometimes it is (regardless of all authenticity) at least in some situations actually better for us to behave *out of character*. Better for our professional and private well-being, even better for our health. More about that later.

Let's remember those three facts:

- Introversion is a largely innate, stable character trait.
- Your introversion is accompanied by many personal strengths.
- Your introversion merely represents a preference.

That does not mean that you as an introvert don't have any extroverted personality traits and can't act as an extrovert should the circumstances demand it.

## What Introversion is not

The word “introverted” is commonly being used rather sloppily and totally unjustly. It frequently even carries a negative connotation in cases when it is used to describe someone,

So let's make once and for all clear what introverts are definitely not:

- **Introverts are not timid *by nature*.**  
There are unquestionably timid introverts; on the other hand there are lots of timid extroverts. Timidity is defined as a social fear: a timid person is afraid to fail the expectations of others, to say or do something wrong or incur criticism. This fear causes a person to be withdrawn in the presence of others, possibly even avoid the company of other people or specific social situations. However, introverts are not more reserved and quiet than extroverts in the presence of crowds because of their fears - but rather for the previously explained reasons. The problem is that this frequently causes extroverts to see them as being timid. And that is a fallacy.
- **Introverts are not cool, withdrawn or arrogant *by nature*.** The same applies here: introverts just sometimes falsely *appear to be* like that to extroverts (since

they tend to judge others by their own standards). Introverts smile less frequently than extroverts, their gesticulation and facial expression is usually less animated; they are not exactly fond of small talk or the exchange of superficial pleasantries. They simply don't appreciate shallow chatter, rather they prefer to keep quiet and pursue their own thoughts. An extended lull in a conversation is not a drama for them but a respite. Extroverts tend to misinterpret these different communication styles as rudeness or indifference by introverts while it simply just reflects their disposition.

- **Introverts are anything but antisocial weirdoes or even misanthropes.** For them people are (at least) as important as to extroverts – they just prefer quality to quantity. They are perfectly happy with a few but close friends since they don't need as much extrinsic stimulation in order to be comfortable as do extroverts. They don't need to hop for hours from one bar to the other every Saturday. On the other hand they usually cultivate friendships and contacts which are important to them more intensely and carefully than extroverts do. In the company of familiar persons whose interests they share (and with whom they can enjoy exciting conversations) they suddenly are any-

thing but quiet and withdrawn. On the contrary: all of a sudden they can be observed in lively discussions and conversations.

- **Introverts are not super-sensitive or particularly intellectual by nature.**

There are many introverted Doer Types and introverted Realist Types whose aptitudes are rather more frequently found in the practical field than in conceptualizing daring visions and ideas. And obviously there are just as many introverts as extroverts who occasionally trample over the feelings of their fellow men like the proverbial bull in the china shop. Introversion can also be associated with special creativity and imagination but doesn't have to be - although some introverted authors like to assert just that.

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## Introverts at Work

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In many respects an introvert's life in today's society is tough. In our western culture, the qualities of the extrovert are at first glance much more valued than those of the introvert: extroverts are supposed to be quick, competitive, socially competent, action orientated, assertive, sociable, active ... the list is almost endless.

Nike's slogan "*Just do it!*" brings it to the point: Get going, move, and act! And do it with a healthy dose of self-confidence, optimism and candor! This will make you successful, professionally as well as privately. The world will be your oyster, people will admire you and seek your company. You are the radiant center of the party and no one has the chance to miss your professional achievements. You don't just take the initiative and strive for quick results but you are also familiar with, and heed the old proverb: "You have to blow your own trumpet." You cultivate contacts and networks for all they are worth and not merely in real

life - you do it in the virtual sphere of social networks, as well. You are the master of the extraversion claviature and work it with a fine ear for society's demands and rules.

In that respect introverts frequently have a much tougher time. Not just because they detest grandstanding and forcefully putting their foot down and therefore all too often don't receive the professional as well as private recognition they deserve. Another simple reason: They are - as already mentioned - a minority. Statistics about this vary somewhat; in our society you find at least two, and some claim even three extroverts for each introvert. No wonder that the introverted among us are practically just steamrolled by the pure dominance of extroverts. When they don't feel like participating in some social enterprise or just sit there lost in thought they have to suffer through concerned questions like: "Is there something wrong with you?" Extroverts tend to assume that anyone not as inter-

ested as themselves in a continuous exchange and contact with others must be suffering from some deficit and urgently needs help. Their well meant attempts to encourage introverts to participate in more social activities (“you need to get out and do some socializing, in here you’ll only rot away!”) only serve to quickly put introverts on the defensive. Hardly anyone would dream of criticizing an extrovert: “Don’t you think that there is a little too much activity in your life? A few less friends surely won’t hurt you!” On the other hand introverts often have to justify their life style and are often wrongly seen as unhappy loners.

Introverts are anything but unhappy by nature, on the contrary: in their quiet way many of them probably experience deeper and more authentic feelings of happiness than the sometimes superficial fun excesses enjoyed by many extroverts. On the other hand it can be said with some justification that introverts do have to deal professionally with more severe self doubts than those experienced by extroverts. You are already familiar with one reason for this: your higher capability and willingness for introspection. Introverts more intensely and more frequently deal with themselves, their life and capabilities than do extroverts. Therefore it is inevitable that they

question themselves and their activities more frequently, too. Beyond that they have an aversion to position themselves in the limelight. Self-aggrandizement in front of others or asking to be recognized for their work would never occur to them. Therefore superiors or colleagues often not only overlook them and their achievements but frequently others even reap their well-deserved laurels. Consequently introverts receive considerably less praise and positive feedback on the job than do extroverts – and that in turn can naturally fuel and feed those self doubts.

Beyond that, many introverts have to deal with a overdose of perfectionism that makes their life even more difficult. For extroverts, - especially the practical types among them – it is of primary importance that projects get started. They need to have the feeling to be doing something. In their eyes it is not absolutely necessary to have thought everything through to the tiniest little detail and to have anticipated every possible outcome . The main thing that matters is that things are up and running. Just do it! – just get going, let’s cross the bridges when we get to them. Course corrections can always be taken on the way. On the other hand, introverts don’t begin - regardless whether with words or actions - until they are convinced to have

thought everything through and have acquired all possible skills. The result of what they are striving for must be perfect – and how can they possibly start anything without being perfectly prepared? This perfectionist aspiration can well become paralyzing and then introverts don't get to be active, at all. Instead of just “doing” and having faith that things are somehow going to work out and the road ahead is going to be there, they sit like the proverbial paralyzed rabbit facing the snake – *pardon me, task* – and wait for the magic moment when they are going to feel up to it. Obviously this magic moment is a rare one because most tasks in life are much too complex for us to accomplish them perfectly.

Sometimes however problems between extroverts and introverts occur not only on the the action level but on the communication level as well. Introverts don't blather. They need time to coordinate their thoughts and don't talk until they sense that they have something important to contribute and know exactly how they are going to put it. They can take silence much better than extroverts; they don't see it as a threat but a welcome opportunity to think and catch their inner breath. Consequently many prefer to work alone, at home or during unusual times when everybody else in the office has already called it

a day. On the other hand many are also caught up having to hold their ground in an extrovert-dominated profession. They suffer through endless team meetings, brainstormings and business meals with customers and constantly think of the words coined by Mahatma Gandhi: “Speak only if it improves upon the silence.” They are called upon to do Powerpoint presentations in front of large groups that keep them awake nights because they feel the pressure. Half the time they are dizzy from the speed in which discussions are conducted around them and decisions are made and reversed. The other half of the time they curse Graham Bell for inventing the phone and the endless interruptions of their concentration associated with it. On Wednesday, they are already frantically pondering on how they can get out of the Friday evening drink with their peers. And they regularly catch a nasty flu well in advance of the annual company outing.

Extroverts frequently consider this demeanor to be strange - in the best case the judge it as timid and in the worst case even as arrogant. They don't get it that their pace and continuous talking are about to drive introverts out of their mind and that they don't even give them the opportunity to show their qualities. They just don't give them the time they need. Before

the introvert even has a chance to think about and respond to the first question, he is already bombarded with the second, the third and fourth with the extroverts turning away disappointed and irritated when there is no reaction. With several extroverts at the table, the introvert can't get a word in edgewise because the extroverts insist on talking simultaneously and interrupting each other. No space far and wide giving him/her the opportunity to say something, as well. When everything is said and done, the extroverts shake their heads and ask themselves whether the introvert had nothing to say because he/she does not have a grasp of the subject, or whether he/she is just uncooperative and not a team player. *Probably the latter* – because he/she is also always too good to have a drink with them and none of the other colleagues know anything about him/her personally. *Well, probably just a nerd.* The extroverts shrug their shoulders and return to their agenda. The introvert feels ignored, steamrolled and misunderstood but has no clue what to do in order to change that. And potentially retreats even further within himself and his (intellectual) world.

Introverts don't like to talk about themselves – that applies to their personal as well as their professional life. On the one hand this is caused by the fact that they

are uncomfortable occupying center stage, on the other hand it is their tendency to defend their private sphere like the lioness defends her cubs. They hate to sense someone intruding into their space uninvited and that applies to their living- as well as their emotional space. Another reason why introverts are withdrawn is that it usually does not occur to them that others might just want to share more of their life and feelings and learn more about them. They don't consider their complex intellectualism nor profound thoughts, not even their comprehensive knowledge about many things as something special. Consequently they only show what they consider necessary, wasting lots of (professional) opportunities for success and appreciation.

## **Typical job related Communication Problems among Extroverts and Introverts**

Extroverts like to talk, a lot and fast; they think while already talking. That conveys the impression that they are more dynamic, self assured and active than introverts who rarely speak up and if, then slowly, often rather quietly and deliberately. For introverts (keyword: *perfectionism!*) it is extremely important to select the

right words for their thoughts – as a result they pause frequently when they talk. Extroverts often react impatiently and irritated – why doesn't he/she get to the point and spits it out? Frequently they interrupt the introvert because they can't stand their slower speaking tempo. Consequently extroverts also often perceive introverts as being insecure, indecisive or disinterested about the subject. If he/she really knew what he/she is thinks or wants, he/she would not take forever to formulate it, no?!

Cubicle offices frequently represent a problem for introverts because of their high noise- and stimuli level. Introverts react much more quickly with stress to external stimuli than do extroverts. An office that an introvert has to share with one or two extroverts can already dramatically impede his/her ability to concentrate and reduce his/her productivity and job satisfaction. If an extrovert has the choice between telephone and e-mail to communicate, he/she will invariably reach for the telephone. Likewise he is never averse to a chat with a passing colleague. Extroverts quite frequently talk to themselves: "Where did I put that darn XYZ file again?" or "Pew, its sure hot today!" One or two colleagues like that in the same room with an introvert and he/she is probably close to acute hearing loss at the end of the day.

Extroverts frequently also have problems appreciating how much introverts can be irritated by interruptions. The extrovert generally regards the colleague who sticks his/her head into the door "just to ask a quick question" as a welcome diversion. Extroverts have no problem to resume their work routine afterwards. For introverts on the other hand, it is a lot more difficult to regain his/her deep concentration and train of thought after an interruption like that. For that reason most introverts hate interruptions like that with a vengeance, something that an extrovert can never understand. They see the colleague who stares at them with knitted eye brows and clearly are in no mood to deal with their "just a quick" question simply as uncooperative and sullen.

Last but not least, introverts tend to avoid physical contact more than extroverts. That also includes eye contact. During a conversation they less frequently make eye contact with their counterpart and tend to look sideways or down. Shaking hands, back slapping or other greeting rituals that are natural for extroverts are often uncomfortable for introverts. Introverts also smile less often than extroverts. All of that has to do with their elevated sensitivity to stimuli and also with their propensity to defend their private space. Extroverts

are frequently irritated and sometimes even rebuffed and snubbed by this behavior. Why doesn't he/she look at me when I talk to him/her? Isn't he/she listening, or is he/she bored? Does he/she dislike me because he/she studiously avoids any physical contact and never smiles? That can lead to misunderstandings among colleagues and unnecessarily complicate any daily cooperation, although there is no ill will on either side - just two totally different styles of communication.

## **What to do about it**

Just take a close look at your workplace: Are you taking advantage of every opportunity to make undisturbed working time and withdrawal options available? Flexible work times, "No-telephone" times, a "Please do not Disturb!" sign on the door or maybe one home-office-day per week can sometimes work miracles. Arrange for short breaks in between – the smokers among your colleagues also take a five-minute break outside the door – to get a little peace. Take a walk around the block; make a few breath exercises with your eyes closed; withdraw into a quiet corner with a cup of tea. Maybe you can arrange with your boss to handle part of your work in time frames while the office is normally

empty (for instance coming in on Saturdays instead of Fridays, or possibly before or after normal working hours?) Set up two times each day when you check your E-mail, turn off the acoustic signal announcing the arrival of a message – in that way your concentration is not constantly interrupted. Carefully educate your surroundings to preferably communicate via E-mail rather than by phone (that works really well if you casually mention that this is the best way to get a hold of you). Voice mail is also a very handy invention and also does its job while you sit next to it continuing to concentrate on whatever you happen to be doing. Please don't even think about *Whatsapp* and similar extrovert stuff from hell ...

Massage your extraversion a little. You are introverted, that is good and should really stay that way. This involves just a tiny bit more contact during your work life, no worries, you can manage that. Your colleagues will immediately see you in a totally different light and your good ideas will have a much better chance to be heard. There is no need for you to right away start with something super-personal – maybe you can just drop a few words about one of your hobbies while you wait with one of your colleagues for the elevator. Or, holler "here" the next time when they are looking

for someone to collect signatures for the department boss' birthday card and collect the money for his gift. On more thing: Get used to occasionally praise your colleagues or in other ways providing them with positive feedback. Just thinking that this or the other project was well done doesn't make it – you must also express it. You'll be amazed how much that will improve your working relationships! And vice versa: When someone else praises you and while for a moment you are the center of attention, don't play the issue down or react embarrassed. Simply say: "Thank you!" or, smile and say "Nice of you to say that". Not to accept earned praise is unprofessional and unnecessarily limits your achievement.

It's perfectly ok if you need time to arrange your thoughts and therefore don't want to answer right away. However, especially in the work environment it can be very important to explain your silence to your (extroverted) colleagues so they don't mistake it for disinterest, insecurity or ignorance. For extroverts lulls in the flow of conversation are uncomfortable and therefore they immediately attempt to somehow bridge them. Just say something like: "That is an interesting question. I would like to think about that a bit and then get back to you." Or, on the day after the meeting send an

E-mail to the participants where you write: "After our meeting I did some thinking and came up with the following points: ..." If someone interrupts you when you speak up in a meeting, defend yourself: "Just a moment please, I was not finished!" No worries, a remark like that doesn't hurt the extroverts' feelings.

If the noise level at your workplace bothers you or if you are too frequently distracted or interrupted, have a word with your superior. Maybe there is a possibility for a private office? Be open about it when your „*roommate's*“ continuous telephone conversations keep ruining your concentration – every superior is interested to increase the productivity of his employees. In case the idea with the private office is out of the question: Possibly during certain times of the work day you could simply use ear-plugs in order to acoustically isolate yourself a little? Place one or two large plants between yourself and the corridor where people are continuously are passing by? Occasionally grab your laptop and documentation and for a few hours barricade yourself in an, at the moment unused, conference room? Or maybe divide the room between yourself and your colleague with a screen? When considering all these measures it is obviously important to discuss this with your colleagues and explain

the reason why you are contemplating this. Otherwise someone could quickly feel snubbed. When everybody understands where you are coming from, your colleagues will surely be cooperative.

During meetings with several extroverts try to express your opinion at least once or twice, even if this means that you have to raise your voice or interrupt someone. (Why don't you observe the others – you'll see that they continuously do that to each other, so you are free to do that, as well!) It gets easier if you take some notes about points that are important to you in advance or while the others are talking. Watch your voice – don't speak too softly. If that is something with which you have a problem (especially in front of groups), invest in speech training, it will do wonders. (By the way, a great movie on the subject: "The King's Speech" with Colin Firth!)

Watch your behavior in matters of physical contact vis à vis your colleagues. Can you manage to maintain eye contact most of the time throughout a conversation, to smile occasionally and nod approvingly? Or do you avoid these things as much as possible? If that is the case, it may be a good idea to occasionally act out of character here. This does not mean that you open all the doors to your private space,

but that you signalize interest and empathy, which is something extroverts value immensely. It can make your life at work one heck of a lot easier!

Take care to not excessively withdraw from your colleagues but at least occasionally participate in unofficial events like for instance an after-work-drink or something like that. After all, you don't have to stay forever and you demonstrate good will with it. If your limit of social contacts has already been reached or even exceeded and you really, really need to be by yourself: Don't just say no. Say it nicely – this works best when you first say what you can't do but afterwards offer an alternative: „Today I really can't join you for the weekly bowling outing, but the next time I will for sure.“ – „Please go to the cafeteria without me today, I'll just stay here and have coffee ready for all of you when you get back.“

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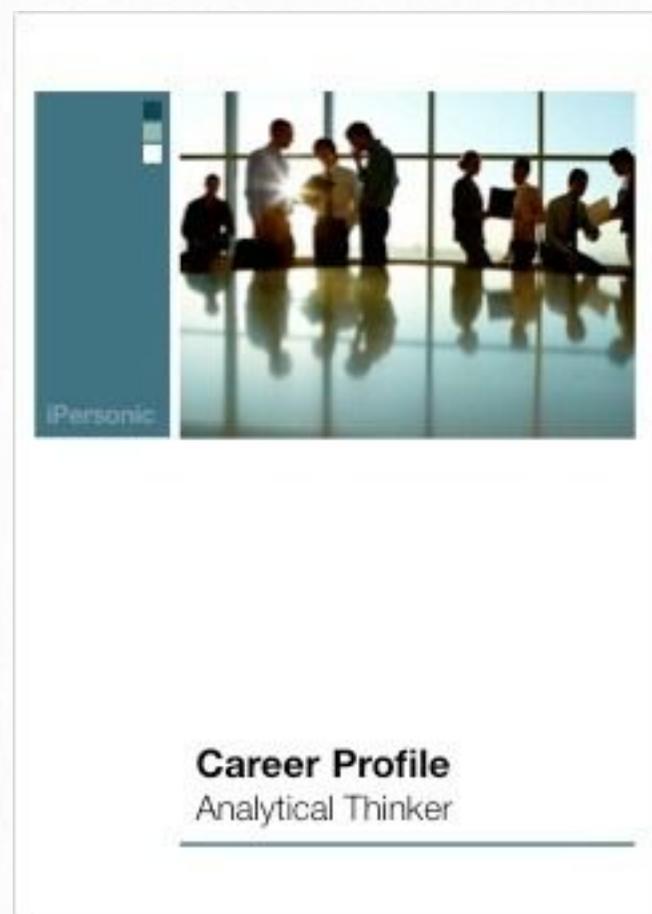
The 70 page iPersonic Career Profile is custom-tailored to your introvert personality type. It deals with all facets of professional development, job and career. As in all other areas of your life, your personality plays a decisive role in the things you enjoy or don't enjoy. It plays a role in why you are more successful in a particular area with less effort and why some areas might be more difficult for you and require more effort.

Your work should not be draining, but should instead energize you with a sense of satisfaction that you have accomplished something important, something useful and that you are in the "right place." The happiest people among us are probably those who describe their calling when speaking of their profession. There is no question that you should work in an environment where you are happy, where you are rewarded with appreciation and recognition, and where you get along with your colleagues and superiors. The structure of your work should match your disposition. More chaotic environments are the wrong place for those who prefer structure and order; in strongly team-oriented endeavors, the person who tends to be a loner

would probably be in the wrong place. Your iPersonic Career Profile includes in-depth profiles of 50 careers that are best suited for your personality type. Identifying your skills, interests, personality type and work values will help you to find a more satisfying and rewarding career.

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## Introverts in Love

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For most people a partnership is the most important component of their life, besides their profession. Research proves that a lasting, happy loving relationship is actually one of the most important, if not *the* most important key to individual happiness. Most of us appear to know this instinctively – except for a very few solitarily folks among us. Therefore most single people sooner or later start looking (again) for a (new) partner. Introverts admittedly often hesitate longer than extroverts. On the one hand it's because they can deal better with being alone and therefore value the advantages of being single more than extroverts. On the other hand it is more difficult for them to approach other people – which is naturally the basic prerequisite when looking for a new partner!

### **Partner Search for Introverts**

After having been alone for a while, many introverts have real problems deliberately searching for a partner. Sometimes that

might not even be necessary. If they are lucky they might have a nice friend or colleague in their life, who drags them along to some event and introduces them to some eligible person. Naturally this only works, if the (generally rather few) friends and acquaintances are even aware that he/she is searching for a partner (or at least is not adverse to a new relationship)! And that again is everything but self-evident with introverts.

While extroverts carry their heart on the tip of their tongue and the entire world is well informed about their current emotionally state, most of the time introverts hide their innermost thoughts and feelings to the point that even good friends often don't even suspect that they could possibly be ready for a (new) relationship. Therefore the first and most important advice in matters of partner search to you, the introvert is: when you are ready and you can at least imagine being (again) in a new rela-

relationship, talk about it! In that way you provide the people around you with an opportunity to help you. (Don't worry they are not going to spend their days inundating you with droves of potential candidates and drag you from one bar to the next! However, those who don't give happiness a chance should not be surprised if it fails to materialize.)

The second approach is the more indirect way to look for a partner by discovering common interests and activities. This suits introverts quite well. Making contact is naturally much easier, if one regularly meets with people with whom one is already connected by a common interest in a certain subject. There is automatically a common conversational topic and along with that comes the same wavelength. Beyond that the situation in itself is totally innocuous. Getting better acquainted is particularly easy during a regular and relaxed being-together. Those are perfect conditions for introverts. In case you are looking for a new partner, you should at least once a week prescribe yourself (or, if you like, a bit more often, but I don't want to over extend you) an activity that meets these qualifications. Sign up for a course that interests you; attend a function dealing with a subject that is close to your heart or volunteer for a project that suits you. The possi-

bilities are truly endless. And the chances to establish at least a few nice new contacts or even meet your true love are excellent!

If the indirect way doesn't work for you or if you have reached a point in your life where you don't want to leave things to chance, online dating may just be the perfect ticket to a new a partnership. Contrary to many, still circulating pre-conceptions today's online dating platforms are neither the gathering place for frustrated wallflowers who can't catch someone any other way nor the playground of psychopaths with dark intentions. Sure, both types also show up there, but not any more frequently than in real life. And where could you find a larger collection of people also looking for long-term commitments, than here?

It is quite possible that you as an introvert have an easier time approaching people on the net than in real life. The social networks on the Internet are teeming of introverts who, with the safety of the screen between themselves and their counterpart, turn out to be a lot more outgoing in virtual space than in normal interpersonal everyday life. If that is the case with you, you might prefer to use personal contact ads on the Internet (e.g. Match.com or Plentyoffish.com). After registering you cre-

ate your own profile with information about yourself and a picture (or more than one) and proceed to flirt as you wish. You can browse among, and contact the other users whenever you feel like it and the other way around, you can also be contacted by them. That is the financially most reasonable alternative.

In case you already know from experience (or even decide during the search process) that pro-actively approaching others is not really your thing (even virtually), you might be better off with one of the major dating sites with personality matching technology (e.g. eHarmony.com or Chemistry.com) Admittedly they require larger membership fees but in return you are also much more looked after and mentored. After you have completed a questionnaire they'll create a psychological profile that is then matched with the information provided by other people looking for partners. On this basis you'll receive a number of partner recommendations and you have the option to contact these members (and they have the option to contact you). You are less left on your own and the provider takes on a portion part of the effort.

Reputable providers of both formats offer the option of trial memberships. This allows you to test at your leisure whether you would be comfortable with this way of looking for a partner.

## **Introvert loves Extrovert – is that going to work?**

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**“At every party one meets two kinds of people – those who want to go home and those who want to stay. The problem is that those two are generally married to each other.” (Ann Landers)**

This quote by Ann Landers describes a typical situation proving the truth of the much quoted folk wisdom: “Opposites attract!” One very frequently meets couples where one of the partners is extroverted, however the other one is introverted. Motor mouth and the “still water”, the party lion/lioness and by his/her side the lone wolf. If nothing else, it is their difference that initially caused the mutual fascination: “How exciting, you are so totally different! You embody the traits that I am lacking, I would love to have more of them to add a new element to my life! I am enchanted!”

And indeed, a lot of good can come of such a dichotomy if the partners know how to deal with it. They can open new worlds for each other, complement and expand the other's perspective and maybe even discover and cultivate totally new facets about themselves. By the side of the lone wolf the party animal may well suddenly discover the wonderful experience of a cozy evening in front of the fireplace together and how much he/she appreciates a meaningful conversation instead of all that small talk. On the other hand by his/her side, the still water may just have the nerve to join other people, occasionally be at the center of activities and be surprised that he/she even finds it to be enjoyable in small doses. As long as it works, that's great!

However, due to their different behavior and needs the differences between extroverts and introverts in every-day life are unfortunately often the cause of friction. After a while the extrovert becomes frustrated because he/she has to laboriously convince his/her introverted partner to join him/her in every social activity. And for the introvert it is exhausting having to participate longer and more frequently for his/her partner's sake in stressful situations and ending up with stimulus overload in return. The extrovert begins to wonder if he/she

should not get him/herself an oyster knife to crack the introverted partner and get him/her her to open up a little more frequently and a little less frequently retreat within him-/ herself. On the other hand, with the extrovert's never ending efforts to continuously maintain contact by chatting in every waking minute about everything and nothing, the introvert sometimes feels like a hounded deer.

For couples like that it is extremely important to appreciate their differences in this dimension of their personalities and – importantly – not to see them as reluctance or a slight by the other. Incipient stages of extraversion and introversion can, as already explained in the introduction, already be detected in the newborn and therefore it can rightfully be assumed that this involves an innate character trait that isn't one's fault just like the color of the eyes or hair.

However, those traits can be changed up to a certain point given the fact that we are rational human beings, capable of learning and not mere puppets of our genetic predisposition. If necessary, even an introvert is capable of learning to speak before a large group without fainting, just as an extrovert is certainly capable to practice in occasionally keeping his/her mouth shut

and paying attention. It is often not a bad idea to pay a little attention and cultivate particularly those traits, which may not be as strongly pronounced by nature than those that come naturally. This is also true for health reasons, as we'll see later! Nevertheless, it is important to understand and admit that these attempts at changing face certain limits. Under certain circumstances (and when it makes sense to him/her) an introvert may be able to learn being the center of attention. But he/she will never savor it as much as the extrovert. And an extrovert can also practice occasionally enjoying some time alone or even be the listener for an entire evening. But to a certain degree these things are always going to be stressful because they go against his/her nature.

## **How you as an Introvert can make Things easier for your Extroverted Partner**

Don't feel pressured by your extrovert's constant need for communication! Extroverts just like to talk a lot and it is their way to think aloud, too. That's probably difficult to understand for you who likes to think about your words for a while. In many instances it is sufficient if you just let your ex-

trovert talk and occasionally send a message indicating your interest: by keeping eye contact, nodding, smiling, saying "mhm" or "aha". If you are actually expected to respond but you would like to ponder that a bit, it is best not just to be silent, but rather say something like: "Good question – can I think about that for a moment?" Then your partner knows that he/she is supposed to give you time and feels less irritated by the pause in the conversation. If you don't say anything, your extroverted partner may get the idea that you don't feel like responding, that you are disinterested, angry or elsewhere with your thoughts. This is a typical misinterpretation due to the fact that he/she infers something based on his/her own behavior patterns. When extroverts like he/ she are silent one can actually be sure assuming that there is a problem! (We already talked about that earlier in the context of work and extroverted colleagues ...)

In a quiet minute, go ahead and talk to your extroverted partner and explain the importance of withdrawal and times of being alone for you. Emphasize that this is nothing against him/her – an extrovert would assume just that! When an extrovert retreats from someone it is because he/she is angry with that person, he does not care for him/her or he/she wants to punish

him/her with attention withdrawal. In these situations people are frequently the victims of erroneous communication – the extrovert assumes that you react in the same way and therefore feels threatened or hurt by your withdrawal. In extreme cases he/she may even fear for the relationship. It is important that you relieve him/her of this fear because then he/she will have an easier time to let you have your alone time.

Another important aspect in case you and your partner live together, is your private personal sanctuary. Okay, it's understood, not everybody is fortunate to have sufficient personal living space for each partner to have his very own room. If you are fortunate enough to have that option, great! In that case you must take advantage of it. If not, at least arrange a corner of your communal room as your “private retreat” where you can disappear when the time comes. Here you can use the same configuration tricks as already mentioned in the „office part“: A screen, a couple of large plants or something similar between your refuge and the rest of the room. Bookshelves or decorative curtains also serve perfectly as room dividers! Arrange your sanctuary in such a way to make it as comfortable as possible for you.

Many therapists recommend as a rule of thumb that per hour of intensive social contacts an introvert should at least allow him/herself two hours privacy as compensation. It is your decision whether this rule of thumb works for you. In any case, you should discuss the subject with your partner! Frequently this strategy of a friendly „No“ already mentioned in the part dealing with professional issues tends to work really well. At the same time in conjunction with the „No“ offer there is something else you can do: “To be very honest, after eating out with Sue and John on Friday, it is simply a bit much for me to also visit your parents on Saturday. Why don't you go ahead? While you are gone, I deal with the weekend housecleaning chores. All right?”

Go ahead, negotiate a „social contact contingent“ which you can handle and both of you can live with. This may well boil down to a mutual understanding on the maximum time you are going to stay at the party. Many introverts already feel relieved just by knowing that an event is only going to last for a specific time and not open-end. Potentially it may even be a good idea if you don't drive to the party together – in that way you can easily leave at different times. At first blush this may appear strange, but it can truly relax the situation.

During social events you may always want to look for opportunities of a few minutes of “mini-timeouts” in order to catch your breath. Ask if you can take a look at the garden or retreat to the balcony for a cigarette (even without having one!). Also a good idea is to come up with a socially acceptable “exit strategy” in advance just in case the event unexpectedly is getting a bit too much for you after all and you have to pull the emergency brake. “I would love to stay but our baby sitter can only stay until 21:00, I gotta go!” – “Thank you very much it was a great dinner but I have an early morning important presentation and if I don’t leave now I am not going to be fit for it.”

Beyond that, encourage your extroverted partner to pursue additional contacts or activities without you while you utilize that time to recharge your batteries without feeling guilty. When he/she returns, be interested in that which he/she did and let him/her talk as much as he/she wants. Be happy with and for him/her if he/she experienced something nice! Don’t mistakenly interpret his/ her initiative and his/her fascination with the outside world for a lack of interest in intimacy with you. Both things are important to him/her - the bottom line is simply that he/she needs more people in his/her life to be happy, than you.

Neither of you should forget what initially fascinated you and attracted you to each other - and why! Your different dispositions can be a source of mutual enrichment and inspiration if you let them. Cultivate and value your differences rather than fighting and resenting them. Your relationship will involve more tension than that between two similarly endowed partners, but that is exactly what can provide vitality and growth to your relationship. You just have to manage to deal with each other respectfully and with tolerance and continuously communicate regarding this point of your relationship. As a result your love is going to function splendidly and in perpetuity!

## **Introvert loves Introvert – the best of all Alternatives?**

After having read the part above about the classic communication problems between extroverted and introverted partners, one could come to the conclusion that the best solution for introverts is simply to look for an introverted partner. All issues regarding leisure activities and circle of friends would be off the table. Sounds great, doesn’t it?

Well, yes and no. In one respect I would certainly recommend looking for a partner who is as alike as possible at least in the

most important areas - and that for a good reason. It's not just popular wisdom that knows that "birds of a feather flock together". Couple research suggests that partners who are alike usually maintain happier and consistent relationships in the long term than couples with partners that are the opposite of each other. And indeed, you can find many introverts who live very happily with another introvert. But then again, you can't always choose with whom to fall in love - and the attraction among opposites cannot be denied. Beyond that introvert/introvert couples also have to deal with their typical problems, which are sometimes not at all benign.

The advantages of an introvert/introvert relationship are obvious: A partner instinctively knows when the other partner needs peace and time alone and respects that without questioning it or acting hurt. The preferences of both partners regarding leisure time activities and social contacts are largely similar; longwinded discussions about which party one should attend and how long, are unnecessary. Beyond superficial small talk, particularly the silent understanding linking both partners as well as calm, content-intensive conversations create an intimate bond often unsurpassed in its quality and depth.

On the other hand, the important disadvantage of an introvert/introvert relationship is less obvious but not to be underestimated. As opposed to couples of other configurations, two introverts in a partnership have a stronger tendency to isolate themselves in a "the two of us against the world" attitude and be too involved with each other and their relationship. They go flat out relishing their intimacy and like to see their relationship as the secure harbor where they seek refuge and retreat during each available minute. In the long run this means that they often miss valuable impulses from the outside world - something that everybody and every relationship needs to evolve and grow. As the saying so pointedly states: "A ship in port is safe. But that is not what ships are built for." The result of this exaggerated cocooning by two introverts can sometimes lead to their personal and mutual stagnation and sometimes even boredom and aversion. Who behaves like Velcro and never does anything without the other, at some point becomes unappealing to his/her partner. The tension necessary for a lively relationship gets lost and eroticism withers. Too much intimacy can ruin a relationship just as reliably as not enough of it.

This process happens insidiously - in the beginning it is just wonderful to retreat

from everything and to disappear into the shared little world together (physically and emotionally). But later rituals and habits solidify closing any access to the outside. Consequently many introvert/introvert couples miss the moment when it would have been beneficial and important to pursue increased outside activities and contacts. Sometimes one partner recognizes it but is too afraid to mention it to the other, because he/she is concerned his/her partner may see this as lack of loyalty. It is only natural that one partner's wish for more openness towards the outside can easily be misunderstood by the other as an assault on this precious property, given the fact that introverts highly value intimacy and togetherness. If you are in an introvert/introvert relationship, you should therefore keep a keen eye on the balance between intimacy and openness and seek an honest conversation with your partner if necessary. Don't worry, there will always be more than enough time and space for closeness and intimacy for the two of you!

## Get more insights with your iPersonic Relationship Profile

Your personal iPersonic Relationship Profile is custom-tailored to your introvert personality type and deals with the subjects of love and relationship. This part of life is very important for most people: many invest copious amounts of energy, time and perhaps money in their search for the “perfect” partner. At the same time these days it seems to get ever more difficult to create long lasting relationships in such a way that they contribute to the happiness and contentment of both partners and not turn into a source of frustration and continuous stress.

There are two primary aspects that contribute to the success of a permanent relationship: First, it is important to find a well-suited partner. Second, it is important to understand and respect both oneself and the chosen partner as much as possible. Your iPersonic Relationship Profile is intended to give you information and a few pointers regarding both aspects. Psychologists have long debated the first point - the choice of a well suited partner - and the question which of the two old adages “birds of a feather flock together,” or “opposites attract” best describe it.

While reading your Relationship Profile, you will find lots of tips and pointers to use to shape happy love relationships and partnerships for yourself - regardless of whether you are looking for a new partner or already are in a relationship.

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**You will find your corresponding iPersonic Relationship Profile at [www.iPersonic.com/store/](http://www.iPersonic.com/store/)**



# 3

## Introversion - a Health Risk?

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Research shows that being an introvert comes with a few downsides when it comes to health. Compared with extroverts, introverts are subject to increased psychological and physiological health risks. For instance, a study by the University of North Carolina demonstrated that introverts run a significant higher risk of depressions than extroverts do. (By the way, for those readers who already are familiar with their iPersonic-Type: the male Sensitive Doers ranged on top of the scale.)

It seems that the preference combination introverted/feeling/perceiving represents a risk factor for depression. Apart from the Sensitive Doer this also applies to the Dreamy Idealist personality type. All other introverts also proved to be more at risk than extroverts. Another study by the same university also established that introverted persons are subject to a higher suicide risk factor than their extroverted counterparts. This apparently especially affects

introverted-perceiving personality types (namely the Sensitive and Individualistic Doers, the Analytical Thinkers and Dreamy Idealists).

Studies also reveal significantly more affective disorders (such as mania, unipolar and bipolar depression) among introverts in connection with alcohol- and drug abuse. The combination introverted/feeling/perceiving proved to represent an elevated risk factor. On the other hand, the extroverted/thinking personalities among alcohol- and drug patients were primarily those without affective disorders.

It is not yet clear, how introversion causes this increased susceptibility for affective disturbances. Maybe this tendency for depressive disorders by introverts is nothing more than the down side of their magnified introspection and capacity for reflective behavior. Whoever focuses too much and too intensively on him/herself and his/her very own feelings and is always prepared to

question everything in his/her life naturally risks to be confronted with something unpleasant or depressing. To put it in other words: Depressions occur probably more easily if you sit all by yourself behind closed doors constantly pondering the meaning of life and humanity's existential trajectory. And less with people preferring to occupy themselves with social contacts, party- and entertainment activities (like extroverts do). The extrovert escapes from the great enigma of life (and thus frequently from the missing answers) as well as the world's negative sides. The introvert primarily tends to glaringly and without mercy focus on everything making life difficult and incomprehensible. Many of the resulting musings are probably especially difficult to deal with for „feeler“ personality types.

The neurotransmitter Dopamine might also play a role in this question. Research indicates that the brain areas working with this transmitter (the so-called brain reward circuitry) are larger and more active among extroverts in comparison with introverts. That means that positive stimuli and experiences trigger more intensive reactions with extroverts than they do with introverts – and that again leads to the fact that extroverts are more inclined to specifically and actively look for positive experiences.

Thanks to their neuronal make-up extroverts apparently simply take better care of themselves than introverts in this respect. On the other hand, they unfairly profit more strongly from positive stimuli than introverts, too. To quote the psychologist Thomas Saum-Aldehoff: “Extroversion includes a talent to be happy, or to be exact: the capability to search for pleasant emotional states and avoid the unpleasant ones. The list of studies proving that people of the extroverted type have a tendency for a cheerful mood and positive emotions is growing.”

Research by the University of Houston-Victoria during the year 2001 actually established that introverted personalities suffer from a significantly lower level of subjective well-being and reduced psychological well-being combined with an increased self-awareness (in terms of self reflection) than extroverted persons. It is entirely possible that the increased alcohol- and drug abuse observed with depressive bi-polar Sensitive Doers or Dreamy Idealists might be nothing but their desperate attempt to “treat” overwhelming negative emotions in this manner. Or at least to make them a little more bearable. Drugs (and especially alcohol) increase the brain's serotonin level that is too low during depressions and in

that way generate an increased sense of well-being.

The increased risk for depression and suicide among introverts can well be rooted in the fact that introverts tend to react by retreating more than extroverts at times of crises. That is their usual coping strategy and an essentially thoroughly sound reflex to stressful situations considering that they actually do require peace and time alone in order to re-charge their batteries. The problem that arises is that this basically helpful mechanism can occasionally run off the track – i.e. they isolate themselves from the people around them and at some point are unable to help but rather hurt themselves. Innumerable studies have demonstrated that especially at times of crises, social support by family and friends provides an extremely important protection factor from stress and depression. The saying “sorrow shared is sorrow halved” is absolutely correct in that situation. The feeling to be able to speak to others about problems and receive moral and perhaps even material help and the feeling of being picked up and supported by a social net is existential for every human being and aids enormously in coping with stress. Extroverts who already profit more from the company of others than from being alone during good times, instinctively utilize this

mechanism during bad times, but introverts often don't. On the other hand, introverts discount the psychological and physical help by others and therefore leave that resource lying idle. Under certain circumstances and at some point this can lead to an imagined or actual total isolation - resulting in overwhelming feelings of despondency and hopelessness.

## **Introverts cope with Stimuli and Stress less well than Extroverts**

Another possible explanation for the correlation of introversion and health problems: Comparative brain measurements of extroverts and introverts demonstrate that introverted people sense all stimuli more intensely than their extroverted counterparts. As mentioned earlier, demonstrating increased cortical stimulation, researchers measured higher electric brain activity with introverted subjects at rest as well as during the solution of cognitive tasks. Psychologists speak of an “optimal stimulation level”, the balance between too much and too little stimulation that we instinctively strive for in order to feel well. This optimal stimulation level differs with every person and herein may well lie the explanation for

the different preferences of introverts and extroverts: introverts must regularly withdraw from their environment in order to counteract a sensory overload, while extroverts need exactly those sensory stimuli in order to avoid their brain's lack of sensory stimulation. Introverts have a lot more difficulties coping with too many stimuli psychologically as well as physically: It has actually been proven that the immune system of introverts reacts more sensitively to stress overload and sensory overload than that of extroverts. In 2003 AIDS researchers discovered that this makes introverts more susceptible to infectious diseases and chronic illnesses which often take a more serious course.

The fact that introverts have a harder time coping with stress than extroverts may also well be a contributing factor to their suffering from burnouts, which is more frequently than among extroverts. In addition to the already mentioned critical behavior in crises situations – exaggerated retreat and thus lack of social support – it also favors the introvert's propensity for sleep disorders, the development of burnout and other stress related disorders. Due to their propensity for exaggerated brooding introverts frequently have trouble to sleep at night or even get any rest at all – they wake up in the middle of the night getting

entrapped in endless mind games. In a certain way introverts' sleep disorders are also "home made": Because the day's world appears to be too noisy and overwhelming, and in order to dwell on their thoughts in peace, they prefer the night's comparative quiet. However, since most introverts are still forced to get up early in the morning, this often leads to a spiraling lack of sleep, chronic fatigue and increased susceptibility to infection (because sleep withdrawal naturally also weakens the immune system).

## **What can Introverts do?**

You have already taken the most important step to counteract all those special health risks inherent in the introversion character trait: You have found out that you are an introvert! Therefore you are now well aware that in many respects you must be especially careful dealing with yourself – in any case at least more careful than an extroverted personality type should be. That should not be a reason for exaggerated concerns. But at any rate you should be alert and just a tiny bit self deprecating when observing your own behavior in certain situations (particularly crises).

Always be aware that particularly for you it is extremely important to maintain a good balance between too many and not enough social contacts and external stimuli. On one hand you absolutely must have time alone and peace and cannot expose yourself to hyper-stimulation in order to feel well. On the other hand you should watch out that your need to retreat especially in times of crises does not end up taking on a life of its own and that you deprive yourself of important resources to cope with them. Social relationships of introverts are characterized by a special thoughtfulness and closeness and certainly can handle stress. Introverts maintain considerably fewer friendships than extroverts (many say of themselves that they only have one or two true friends) but these few friendships are of very high quality. Therefore don't be shy to ask something of your friends during phases when life appears to be particularly trying. Instead of hiding behind closed doors and quietly suffering all by yourself, permit yourself to ask others for help and support. You'll see that your friends will surely not disappoint your trust!

During normal times you should occasionally take inventory by asking yourself how things are going and how your social net is doing. I already mentioned that it is quite

alright that you, the introvert, don't collect telephone numbers and don't tour the pubs with someone else every night (only thinking about a life like that probably already exhausts you, doesn't it?). Still, you should be sure not to let your social net shrink to nothing, which is something that sometimes happens to introverts (for instance when changing the residence or place of work and familiar contacts are suddenly not readily available any longer). Don't overestimate the value of virtual contacts. On one hand the telephone, E-mail and the Internet may be a blessing for introverts – most of them really appreciate regulating and maintaining their social contacts by these means. On the other hand it also can be a curse: It's not a good thing when you scroll through your social contacts and realize that all those who are truly close and important to you actually live 200 miles away.

At least one or two of your friends should be reachable without problems at any time - and in person. Don't kid yourself, it may be great to have a soul mate on the other end of the state but he/she is hardly going to be all that effective supporting you in an emergency at 03:00 in the morning. As wonderful as hour-long telephone conversations and profound E-mail contacts may be, they still can't replace getting together

face-to-face over a cup of coffee or being able to do something fun together.

When you realize that this is getting a little difficult with your existing social contacts, take the initiative to extend your network a little. Understood, for you that might probably be not all that easy. However – and again: research confirms that it is a good idea to act out of character sometimes. The work- and health psychologist Ben Fletcher of Hertfordshire University has even developed an entire training program for this: It is called DSD – “Do Something Different”. Consciously doing something that is not necessarily part of one’s nature, (something that one would not do spontaneously), is strenuous and one cannot do it all the time. You are not supposed to do it either. It is sufficient when you act occasionally a little more extroverted than you actually feel. No worries, you don’t have to become someone else or frantically disguise yourself. Remember: Introversion and extraversion are alternative dispositions – as an introvert you also carry an extroverted part of personality. You simply must deploy that on demand a bit more intensely than you normally would.

Common interests are the best way to establish new relationships for introverts. So, pull yourself together and sign-up for a

class that interests you, and engage in something that is close to your heart. From time to time, accept invitations by others for activities or appointments that you, if you were to follow your first impulse, would probably decline (because you don’t know these folks well enough, because you would rather spend a comfortable evening on the couch, because you shy away from larger company etc.). Don’t always be the first to leave a get together. Consciously create situations where you have the opportunity to quietly create new contacts: For instance at work by joining a study group; during your leisure time by joining a club. It will probably mean overcoming your disposition but in order to make new friends you just have to leave your comfort zone. During parties and other group functions you don’t have to continuously hang around in the center of the crowd (something that is probably too stressful for you). Maybe an interesting conversation with one or two others who were also looking for a little quiet will await you in the kitchen or on the host’s balcony?

One more word on the subject *small talk* – in certain situations it can prove to be very useful but on the other hand it’s thoroughly repugnant to introverts like you. In her book “The Introvert Advantage” Marti Olsen Laney dissects this phenomena and

at the same time provides helpful tips how an introvert can still be him/herself without bending over backwards:

- Open the conversation yourself and preferably with an open question: “How do you like the concert so far?” – “And from where do you know the host?” – “Perhaps I just heard that you spent your last vacation in Rome – could you give me a few tips for my next trip there?”
- Since you as an introvert prefer to listen, just stick to the questioning technique by referring to subjects which your conversation partner mentions him/herself. Most people would much rather talk about themselves and appreciate your interest (unless you have the bad luck to have caught up with someone even more introverted than you are): “Wow, you are a teacher? What subjects do you teach? Which grades?” – “Two children, that is wonderful, do they enjoy living in our area?” In this way you can effortlessly keep the conversation going without having to contribute a lot more than an occasional nod or smile.
- In case you feel like getting out of the conversation, do it with a friendly explanation/apology: “Do you have any idea where I can find the rest rooms?” –

„I would like to get something to drink/eat, please excuse me.” In case the other party concludes the conversation, you could say something nice like: “I enjoyed meeting you”, or “Enjoy the party!”

Not all that difficult, don't you think? By the way, whenever you as an introvert want to improve the quantity and quality of your social contacts, this technique of questions is simply and easily the silver bullet to accomplish that. As previously mentioned, most people rather and primarily talk about themselves - for you this represents the opportunity of profiling yourself as the perfect listener which is something you already are by nature. Beyond that you have the opportunity to learn more about your counter part and to weigh whether you would like to elevate the relationship between the both of you to the next intensity level. Wherever possible get used to asking open questions no matter whether you are professionally or privately aspiring to new friends or looking to find a new love. Depending on the situation this works equally well with innocuous questions (“What was your most enjoyable vacation ever and why”? – “Which book that you read most recently did you like best, and why?“) and even more personal questions (“Do you remember what you wanted to be one day when you were little?” – “In

case you would win the lotto tomorrow, what would you do differently the day after tomorrow?“) With these questions you could potentially very quickly find out whether you and your counterpart have a good prospect for a really good relationship or whether things between the two of you may not really be “in sync”.

As already previously mentioned, your increased introspection capability is frequently boon and bane at the same time: On one hand it frequently enables you to reach important perceptions and insights and to a certain degree it is also part of your creativity. On the other hand introverts frequently skid into a merry-go-round of negatively colored thoughts they’ll find difficult to escape. Three techniques can assist you to break out of this unproductive and auto-destructive cycle:

- Keep a diary or simply write your thoughts down. Writing is a perfect means of structuring your thoughts. At the same time writing down your thoughts enormously relieves your psyche; many people recount how the recording triggered downright cathartic processes in them. Deposit your notes in a drawer or a box afterwards in case you want to increase the effect. The symbolic

locking-up will help you to turn to other matters with a clear head.

- Each night make a record of at least three (preferably more) things that positively surprised you, made you happy, made you laugh or even made you happy on that day. Start a special notebook, your “Sunny Day Book” just for this. Give it a little “sunny” appearance – with light colors, a particularly pretty binding or whatever else might appeal to you.
- If at all possible get consciously used to associate a positive reaction with every negative thought and to find a positive aspect to every negative event. You are sitting in a traffic jam being late for your next appointment? Not good – but you have at least the opportunity to finish listening to your audio book for which you never had the time. The guy behind you tailgated you and you are “looking forward” to the disputes with the auto repair shop and the insurance company? Not good – but at least no one got hurt, fortunately it was only a fender bender! Your colleague snatched that project you had your eye on from under your nose? Not good – but now he/she is going to spend the next three weekends at work while you can enjoy three extra-lazy Sundays . . . understand the concept? The issue is

not ignoring negative thoughts (something you'll probably never will manage doing anyway), the point is to consciously balance them with at least one (preferably more) counterweights. Once you get used to that, it will become ingrained behavior and eventually is actually fun!

Last but not least: In case of doubt, seek professional help - better sooner than later. This means: When you sense that your mood continues to worsen over an extended period of time, your drive dwindles, you feel drained more quickly and things you normally enjoy fail to be of interest or you can't stop brooding - just remember that you belong to a special risk group particularly for unipolar depressive disorders and burnout. Even experts sometimes have a difficult time recognizing the borderline between temporary emotional disturbance and the onset of a depression or a burnout. Therefore, don't take a chance and discuss your situation as soon as possible with a psychotherapist. If you are actually on the way into an affective disorder you can be helped easier and more effectively the earlier this is diagnosed and treated. No one wins if you are needlessly feeling miserable any longer than you actually have to. Looking for help in a situation like that is not a sign of weakness. On the

contrary: it shows strength and life skills. So, get a grip – you have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

## Get more insights with your iPersonic Health Coach

Your 60-page iPersonic Health Coach eBook has been developed with the objective to process general scientific knowledge on the subject of health and happiness for the benefit of individual personality types. With each strategy presented here, you will learn exactly what significance it has for your own introvert personality type.

Recent research provides a clear answer to the question about the correlation between happiness and health: Increased life satisfaction is related to better health and a longer life. As a matter of fact, the latest research demonstrates: A happy life not only prolongs overall life expectancy by 14% (amounting to 10 years in the industrialized countries!), it also has a substantial impact on physical health. Consequently in this iPersonic eBook we are not only going to deal with the physical aspect of health for your personality type but frequently with the psychological aspect, as well. The fact is that emotional and physical health benefit each other, they are intricately linked.

Health and happiness counselors dealing with these subjects and providing well-

meaning advice for the masses are already a-dime-a-dozen. The problem is that—all too frequently—the recipient will only be able to apply a small portion of the offered wisdom for practical applications in his/her everyday life. After all, consultants must address as large an audience as possible and that is naturally at the expense of the individual. On the subject of health, happiness and life-shaping, the individual personality type is crucial for which strategies are suitable and successful, and which are not.

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**You will find your corresponding iPersonic Health Coach at [www.iPersonic.com/store/](http://www.iPersonic.com/store/)**



# About the Author

*Felicitas Heyne is a well-known psychologist and best-selling book-author. She is an International Affiliate of the American Psychological Association (APA) and Member of the German Psychological Association (BDP). She is also the developer of the iPersonic Personality system.*

*More than 10.000.000 people worldwide have taken the free personality test which is available in 26 different languages. iPersonic has satisfied customers in more than 100 countries worldwide.*

*iPersonic is recommended as a career planning tool by numerous organizations and institutes worldwide, such as the Bavarian State Ministry of Labour, the National Health Service, Manitoba Career Development, the Centre Franco-Ontarien de Ressources Pédagogiques and the YMCA. iPersonic is also used for career development and recruitment by companies as diverse as the banking giant HSBC, the Austrian oil and gas company ÖMV or the non-profit organization Greeneration Indonesia.*

*The iPersonic personality system serves as the basis for both the book "Glücksfitness" (Herder Verlag, Germany) and its corresponding Chinese version "性格的快乐密码" by Felicitas Heyne.*

*Visit [www.iPersonic.com](http://www.iPersonic.com) to find out more.*