

# Chatterboxes and Cave Dwellers: Demystifying Introversion and Extraversion



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- ▶ How to Survive, Excel and Advance as an Introvert
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## COMMUNICATION

## Chatterboxes and Cave Dwellers

While on a train ride, I overheard four people engaged in lively chatter. Well, that's not quite correct. Three of them were soft-spoken and reserved. The fourth, a gregarious conversationalist, dominated the interaction. She caught my attention when she said to one of the others: "You have a lot of ideas for such a quiet person."

What a misconception — that a quiet person lacks ideas! Yet, it's an easy mistake to make. After all, if a person has ideas, that person would spout those ideas, right? Well, not necessarily. In fact, one's verbosity in expressing ideas is no clue at all to the quantity of one's ideas. What this woman was experiencing, but didn't realize, was the difference between her own communication style as an extravert and that of her three seat-mates, who were all introverts.

Actually, both introverts and extraverts can talk your head off. And both need quiet time for reflection. But as emphasized by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, introverts and extraverts differ in where they get their energy. The result is a huge difference in communication style. (This spelling of "extravert" is not a typo. In everyday English, it's spelled "extrovert." However, in the context of psychological Type, it is typically spelled "extravert.")

Extraverts get their energy from interaction and tend to be much more animated and expressive than introverts. They enjoy being with people, and can talk with people all day long and still enjoy a group gathering in the evening.

Introverts get their energy internally; much of their communication takes place on the inside, a private place not accessible by others. Thus, they are often less talkative, animated and expressive. And they lose energy from interaction. The very process of talking — or even listening — for an extended period depletes an introvert's energy. As a result, they have a much greater need for

Cave Time to recharge.

Is it any wonder the two types confuse each other? Extraverts think out loud. All that talking is actually the thought process in action. It's not surprising, therefore, that they may appear to be changing their minds in mid-sentence as they work out their ideas and draw conclusions.

Introverts, by contrast, process their thoughts internally and *then* voice them — if indeed they voice them at all. They often prefer time to reflect on a thought before voicing it. As a result, they may take longer to respond than extraverts, but may be more articulate when (if!) they do respond; after all, their utterances have been through several rehearsals already.

Taken to an extreme, introverts look at extraverts and wonder if they'll

ever stop yapping, and extraverts

look at introverts and wonder if there's anyone at home. Yet, these differences are very real, and we will get along better if we try to understand them, respect them, and find ways to laugh about them together.

We can also help others understand our

own style. For example, extraverts can remind their introverted colleagues not to mistake the ideas they are voicing for their final thought on the matter; they are just thinking out loud. Introverts can remind their extraverted buddies that they need a time-out or a break or a week alone in Hawaii.

Perhaps we can all learn how to collaborate in our communication so that we can respect each other's style without sacrificing our own. How wonderful it would be if we could give each other permission to raise concerns about how we are communicating so that we can make adjustments in support of our relationships.

As for me, I've had my say and I'm off to the cave. 



## Introversion/Extraversion Resources for You

Thanks so much for attending this presentation. You can download a copy of this handout, with active links, at:

<http://www.nkarten.com/SPIN-ASQ-EI.pdf>

This presentation draws from my program:

### **Introverts and Extraverts in the Workplace**

which I provide for client companies and at conferences as a workshop:

<http://www.nkarten.com/sem2.html> (the 6th seminar in the list)

and as a presentation:

<http://www.nkarten.com/pres2.html> (the 4th presentation in the list)

The information in this presentation is also covered in my ebook:

### **How to Survive, Excel and Advance as an Introvert: A Guide for Introverts — and for Extroverts Who Want to Understand Introversion**

<http://www.nkarten.com/introversionguide.html>

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If you have questions, please contact me at **naomikarten@verizon.net**.

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## Setting the Stage

Some key points about terminology I use in this presentation:

### 1. Language:

It is *not* the case that all introverts or all extraverts behave a certain way, or that either type always behaves a certain way in a given situation. Therefore, in discussing extraversion and introversion, it is advisable to use qualifiers, such as “tends to,” “generally,” and “typically” — as in “Extraverts generally feel comfortable in large groups” or “Introverts tend to be reserved.” These qualifiers acknowledge that even if a given description fits most of the time, any given introvert or extravert may behave otherwise.

### 2. Alternating usage:

Sometimes I refer to introverts and extraverts, sometimes to extraverts and introverts, switching back and forth so as not to favor either in my comments.

### 3. MBTI

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a personality instrument that helps people understand their preference for introversion or extraversion, as well as other aspects of their personality. Unlike many other personality instruments, the MBTI looks at normal differences among healthy individuals, rather than strengths vs. weaknesses or appropriate vs. inappropriate behavior. As a result, the MBTI can help you understand your own behavior better, as well as how you are similar to or different from others.

Numerous websites offer information on the MBTI. A good starting point is:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MBTI#Skeptical view](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MBTI#Skeptical_view)

### 4. Extraversion vs. extraversion:

In everyday English, “extroversion” describes people who are outgoing, lively, and talkative. In the context of psychological Type, the word is spelled “extraversion,” going back to its early use in the work of the psychologist Carl Jung. In this presentation, I use “extraversion” and “extravert,” except where quoting sources that using the other spelling.

## Self-Assessment

Introversion and extraversion concern *where we get our energy*, which influences how we communicate, when we communicate, and what we communicate about.

	<b>Do You . . . ?</b>	✓	✓	✓	<b>Do You . . . ?</b>
<b>1</b>	Do you tend to be oriented to the outer world of people and things?				Do you tend to be oriented to the inner world of ideas and thoughts?
<b>2</b>	Do you thrive on interaction?				Do you thrive on quiet?
<b>3</b>	Are you generally animated and expressive?				Are you generally reserved and reflective?
<b>4</b>	Do you gain energy from interacting with others?				Do you lose energy from interacting with others?
<b>5</b>	Do you generally enjoy being with lots of people?				Do you generally prefer to interact one-to-one and in small groups?
<b>6</b>	Do you have numerous close friends?				Do you have a small number of close friends?
<b>7</b>	Do you tend to hear your thoughts for the first time when you say them out loud?				Do you tend to “hear” your thoughts internally before you say them out loud?
<b>8</b>	Do you prefer to develop ideas by speaking out loud and by interacting with others?				Do you prefer to develop ideas alone or with a small number of other people?

## Universal Truths

It's important to keep introversion and extraversion in perspective:

1. We are multi-dimensional beings. The introvert/extravert dimension is just one small aspect of who we are.
2. Both introverts and extraverts are capable of doing important, complex work, though they may prefer different approaches to carrying out that work.
3. Extraversion/introversion is *not* about air-time:
  - ▶ Both extraverts and introverts can talk your head off.
  - ▶ Both introverts and extraverts need quiet time for reflection and recharging.
4. It is vital that we guard against stereotyping.
5. What's important is not whether others are introverts or extraverts, but how well you work together, regardless of which you each are. Therefore:
  - ▶ Early in your work with others, compare your communication and work style as it relates to introversion and extraversion, and discuss how your style and theirs are similar or different.
  - ▶ Collaborate about how you can work together in a way that maintains respect for their style — and your own.
  - ▶ Agree to raise concerns about communication differences so that you can make adjustments in support of your relationship and your goals.

### **BEWARE:**

**Any strength, taken to an extreme,  
can become a liability.**

## Research on Introversion/Extraversion

A lot of research has been done regarding the brain pathways associated with introversion and extraversion. It appears that introverts' and extraverts' blood travels along different pathways and that each pathway requires a different neurotransmitter.

For example, extraverts require large amounts of the neurotransmitter, dopamine, and the more active the extravert is, the more dopamine is increased.

Introverts, by contrast, are highly sensitive to dopamine. Too much causes them to feel overstimulated. Introverts use the neurotransmitter, acetylcholine, on their more dominant pathway, and this helps them maintain a calm, alert feeling.

For the abstract of some of this research (and access to the full report), see The American Journal of Psychiatry, February 1999, which reports:

**RESULTS:** Overall, introversion was associated with increased blood flow in the frontal lobes and in the anterior thalamus. Regions in the anterior cingulate gyrus, the temporal lobes, and the posterior thalamus were found to be correlated with extraversion.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The findings of the study lend support to the notion that introversion is associated with increased activity in frontal lobe regions. Moreover, the study suggests that individual differences in introversion and extraversion are related to differences in a fronto-striato-thalamic circuit.

<http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/abstract/156/2/252>

## Sharing Perceptions

### Positive Perceptions

Extraverts sometimes see introverts as

- ↑ Deep thinkers
- ↑ Articulate in presenting their ideas
- ↑ A calm and calming influence
- ↑ Good listeners

Introverts sometimes see extraverts as

- ↑ Bringing great energy to interactions
- ↑ Lively, enthusiastic
- ↑ Able to keep any conversation going
- ↑ Skilled in social situations

### Negative Perceptions

Introverts sometimes see extraverts as

- ↓ Controlling and dominating the group process
- ↓ Talking non-stop, even if no one seems interested in what they're saying
- ↓ Frequently changing their minds
- ↓ Social butterflies who can't just sit down and get their job done
- ↓ Needy – always needing someone to talk to

Extraverts sometimes see introverts as

- ↓ Deliberately withholding ideas or important information
- ↓ Uninvolved, uninterested, non-participative
- ↓ Making minimal contributions to team efforts
- ↓ Putting everything in writing instead of just picking up the phone
- ↓ Unfriendly, aloof, distant, cold, remote, etc.

## Working Well Together

### Examples of how introverts can accommodate extraverts

1. Allow them to think out loud.
2. Listen persuasively. Show “signs of life” when they are speaking.
3. Use brainstorming as at least one method of generating ideas.
4. Provide opportunities for them to interact with others.
5. Occasionally respond more quickly with less pausing to think.
6. Offer information — don’t always wait till you’re asked.
7. Let them know that you need time to reflect before responding.

### Examples of how extraverts can accommodate introverts

1. Provide written information in advance of a meeting.
2. Don’t wait for them to offer ideas — ask them.
3. Allow time for them to work through their ideas before they respond.
4. Guard against taking over.
5. Allow opportunities for them to work alone.
6. Explain that you’re thinking out loud.
7. Allow breaks or periods of quiet time during times of intense interaction.

## Tendencies and Preferences

	<b>Extraverts Tend To . . .</b>	<b>Introverts Tend To . . .</b>
<b>1</b>	Be oriented to the outer world of people and things	Be oriented to the inner world of thoughts, ideas and feelings
<b>2</b>	Seek stimulation from the outer world	Seek stimulation from the inner world
<b>3</b>	Reach understanding through interaction and discussion with others	Reach understanding through quiet reflection
<b>4</b>	Gain energy through interacting with others	Lose energy through interacting with others (even just listening)
<b>5</b>	Enjoy action and variety	Enjoy concentration and quiet reflection
<b>6</b>	Act, then think, then act	Think, then act, then think
<b>7</b>	Think out loud, hearing their thoughts for the first time when they speak them	Refine, edit, revise, and “rehearse” their thoughts before speaking them
<b>8</b>	Be self-disclosing, sometimes readily revealing personal information to others	Be private, often withholding personal information from all but a select few
<b>9</b>	Be animated and expressive	Be reserved and reflective
<b>10</b>	Prefer to communicate in spoken form (especially face-to-face) than in writing	Prefer to communicate in writing than in spoken form
<b>11</b>	Enjoy interaction in large groups	Prefer interacting one-on-one or in small groups
<b>12</b>	Prefer to attend a party than stay home alone and read a book	Prefer to stay home alone and read a book than attend a party
<b>13</b>	Need occasional quiet time to recharge, especially after a demanding schedule	Need frequent quiet to recharge, and may suffer if they don't get it
<b>14</b>	Often find it energizing and enjoyable for people to stop by while they're working	Usually find it disruptive or distracting for people to stop by while they're working
<b>15</b>	Enjoy solving problems by brainstorming with others	Enjoy solving problems alone or with input from selected others

## Work Styles

	<b>In This Context</b>	<b>Extraverts Tend To . . .</b>	<b>Introverts Tend To . . .</b>
<b>1</b>	Work style	Seek opportunities to interact with others, ideally in person	Prefer working alone, involving others (if at all) only after clarifying their own ideas
<b>2</b>	In communicating vital information	Prefer to communicate in person, rather than in writing	Prefer to communicate in writing, rather than in person
<b>3</b>	Speaking style	Speak at length, often presenting many ideas at a time	Speak deliberately and present ideas in a coherent, orderly fashion
<b>4</b>	In meetings	Speak up early and often. Contributing actively.	Speak up (if at all) after thinking, reflecting and observing
<b>5</b>	As a member of a team or group	Let others know what they think, even if not asked	Remain reserved about what they think until asked
<b>6</b>	In coping with change	Seek ideas from many others and display eagerness to act	Seek ideas primarily from close colleagues and make decisions in a deliberate manner
<b>7</b>	During problem solving	Enjoy rapid-fire methods such as brainstorming for surfacing ideas about the problem	Enjoy pondering problems alone or with just a few others and reflecting on the ideas generated
<b>8</b>	In resolving conflict	Readily express thoughts, concerns and feelings, often preferring to address issues now rather than later	Seek private time to reflect on issues, often preferring to address them later rather than sooner
<b>9</b>	Regarding social activities	Enjoy interacting with co-workers at birthday parties, lunch, after-work gatherings, and the like	Prefer to limit or skip social occasions such as birthday parties, lunch, after-work gatherings, and the like

## Recommended Reading

Hirsh, Sandra Krebs. **Work It Out: Clues for Solving People Problems at Work.** Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 1996.

Hirsh, Sandra Krebs and Jean Kummerow: **Life Types: Understand Yourself and Make the Most of Who You Are.** NY, NY, Warner Books, 1989.

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40 Frequent Feedback-Gathering Flaws and How to Fix Them (26 pages)	<del>\$29</del> \$20		\$
How to Survive, Excel and Advance as an Introvert (54 pages)	<del>\$29</del> \$20		\$
Changing How You Communicate During Change (58 pages)	<del>\$29</del> \$20		\$
How to Profit ( <b>Quickly!</b> ) by Writing a Handbook (48-pages)	<del>\$29</del> \$20		\$
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