



BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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Introverts & Extroverts

So introverts are shy and extroverts are outgoing right? Not exactly! In reality, introversion and extroversion actually relates to where we draw our energy from. These two types have different base levels of arousal, which means the extent that our minds and bodies are responsive to stimulation.

There is also a theory that introversion vs. extroversion relates with how our brains process rewards. More specifically, it relates to how brains process dopamine, the “feel good” brain chemical. Recent research led by Michael Cohen, now of the University of Amsterdam, tested this theory by taking a mouth swab from volunteers and then having them perform a gambling task while in a brain scanner. The results actually showed a difference on a genetic level between the brain activity of introverts and extroverts.

Introverts

Introverts tend to re-charge by spending time alone. These people actually lose energy when they have

to spend a great deal of time in large crowds. Introverts have a higher level of base arousal. This means they are stimulated easily, so alone time, one on one conversations, and predictable situations are very pleasant and rewarding. Since their base arousal is already high, introverts can become over-stimulated by too much external stimuli.

Extroverts

Extroverts actually gain energy from other people; they tend to re-charge by being social. These people tend to lose energy from spending too much time alone. Extroverts have a lower basic state of arousal, so they must work harder to arouse their minds and bodies, which lead them to seek out novelty, risk and adventure, and to crave the company of others.

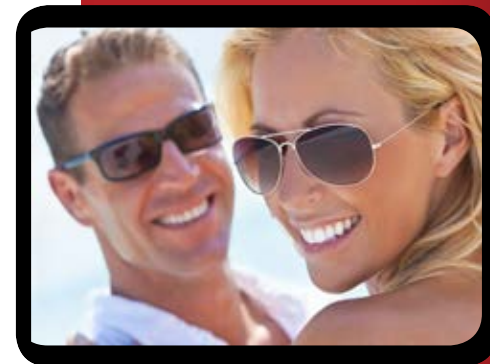
The Scale

Psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Carl Jung, famously said, “There is no such thing as a pure introvert or extrovert. Such a person would be in the lunatic

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asylum". The fact is that most people are not purely introverts or extroverts, instead we all fall somewhere on what is called the "Ambivert Personality Continuum Scale". An ambivert is someone who falls directly in the middle of this scale and displays almost equal introvert and extrovert tendencies.

The majority of people have at least slightly stronger tendencies toward either the extrovert or introvert side of the scale. The reason it is important to recognize if a person has more introverted tendencies or extroverted tendencies is because it changes how they prefer to interact, be rewarded, learn, socialize etc. Once you know if a person leans toward introversion or extroversion, you can tailor your interactions with them, which impacts all areas of our life, from communicating with co-workers, to parenting, to optimizing our relationships with significant others.

Use these tips from Fast Company when interacting with introverts:

- Respect their need for privacy
- Never embarrass them in public
- Let them observe first in new situations
- Give them time to think
- Don't interrupt them
- Give them advance notice of expected changes

- Give them 15 minute warnings to finish what they are doing
- Reprimand them privately
- Teach them new skills privately
- Don't push them to make lots of friends

When interacting with extroverts, use the following tips from Fast Company:

- Respect their independence
- Compliment them in the company of others
- Accept and encourage their enthusiasm
- Allow them to explore and talk things out
- Thoughtfully surprise them
- Understand when they are busy
- Let them dive right in
- Offer them options
- Make physical and verbal gestures of affection
- Let them shine

Introverts, extroverts, and ambiverts all have a number of character traits that make them great employees and friends!

Remember that eni's EAP is available if you would like additional tips on effective communication or relationship building with people who have either introverted or extroverted tendencies.

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