

The quiet leader

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Introversion: “ The state of being concerned primarily with one’s own thoughts and feelings rather than with the external environment; the act of directing one’s interest inward or to things within the self.

” The mysterious aura surrounding this personality type is a result of ignorance and oblivion. Often used synonymously with “ shyness,” introversion is widely misunderstood. Representing only a meager one quarter of the United States population, introverts are, by far, the minority group. However, introverted individuals are better decision makers, leaders and are often more intelligent than their extroverted counterparts. The characteristics of introversion are often misinterpreted for social ineptness, depression, or shyness. Introverted people prefer quiet solitude than bustling parties, and they would much rather reflect privately on a day’s occurrences than discuss them with another person.

Thoughts and emotions are of utmost importance to introverted individuals; introverts are often very philosophical, placing weight on what they believe rather than their actions. The mind of an introvert is like a battery; it requires time to recharge. Introverted people need this “ recharge time” for self reflection and to sort through their thoughts, while extroverts find it monotonous and annoying to be in a room with just themselves. Extroverts wonder why anyone would desire solitude for hours on end, making the false assumption that anyone who acts in this manner must be depressed. This is not true; in fact, introverts are much more in touch with their emotions than extroverts and therefore have better coping methods for stress, trauma and loss.

Because of this emotional awareness, introverted individuals often make thorough, clear decisions and are able to express these decisions in a calm, collected manner. This coolness makes introverts superior leaders, especially in times of crisis. Although small in numbers, introverts have left their mark on everyday life. Disciplines including science, the arts, and mathematics have benefited greatly from the impacts of introverted individuals. Names such as Sir Isaac Newton, William Shakespeare, Charles Darwin and Albert Einstein are heard very often, but it is not generally known that each one of these people were introverted. The theory of relativity, the tragic, endearing plays and stories of Shakespeare, the discovery of evolution: all these cherished accomplishments have affected everyday life in numerous ways.

Unfortunately, introverts are often the subject of ridicule and jokes. The stereotype of Albert Einstein today is an eccentric, dorky man with awkward clothing and social retardation. The truth is Albert Einstein was a brilliant, albeit misunderstood, man whose contributions to modern physics have allowed us to accomplish things previously thought impossible. And while William Shakespeare is thought of as a secluded, bizarre hermit, he was actually just an introvert who would much rather write than converse.

Each of these introverted individuals was a quiet leader; their ideas paved the way in scientific discovery and literary achievement, despite their unpopularity. A more modern example of an influential introvert is former actress and Princess of Monaco, Grace Kelly. Grace was, (as suggested by her name), a quiet woman of poise and beauty, but she was also a significant leader of her small country Monaco. Her kindness and generosity was known throughout the land, and people were fond of her bright personality. Grace

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advocated for children's wellbeing, and formed a non-profit organization that supported the equal rights and integrity of children regardless of race or religion. After her tragic death, many more organizations were founded in her memory.

Grace Kelly was an introvert, but her presence was felt all over the world. Grace, as well as each of the previously mentioned famous introverts, is a prime example of the leadership abilities of introverted individuals. Of 5600 children studied over a span of thirty years, the Gifted Development Center of Denver Colorado concluded that 75% of highly gifted children are introverted. The study, which began in 1979 and concluded in 2008, related these things to introversion: " introspection, reflection, the ability to inhibit aggression, deep sensitivity, moral development, high academic achievement, scholarly contributions, leadership in academic and aesthetic fields in adult life, and smoother passage through midlife." This study of gifted children is a clear indicator that the majority of introverted individuals are extremely intelligent; they make up three quarters of highly gifted children. Due to their self reflective, intuitive nature, introverts spend much more time thinking than extroverts.

While extroverts jump to conclusions, introverts thoroughly think through each and every situation before making a decision. Introverted individuals are well known for their creative problem solving methods, as well as their out of the box thinking. These two characteristics paired with extreme thoroughness are keys to success, which is why introversion is almost always linked to academic achievement. Albeit misunderstood, introverted individuals are perceptive, thorough, in touch with their emotions, and highly

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intelligent. Their will to contemplate life in quiet solitude leads to clarity of thought and decision making that is unmatched by extroverts. Their emotional sensitivity allows them to cope with stress, trauma and loss in a healthy and successful way, which contributes to their excellent leadership abilities in times of crisis.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: “ It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinions; it is easy in solitude to live after your own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.” Only an introvert can master this delicate balance between solitude and the rest of the world. The introvert is the quiet leader.