



# SUMMARY

# Quiet

**The Power of Introverts  
in a World That Can't  
Stop Talking**

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By:

**SUSAN CAIN**

**Summary of**  
**Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a**  
**World that Can't Stop Talking**  
**By: Susan Cain**

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# The Book at a Glance

In *Quiet*, author Susan Cain, an introvert herself, is on a mission to understand introversion on a deeper level, beyond society's judgment. To do so, she starts exploring the rise of the concept of the *Extrovert Ideal* and how it continues to permeate our culture. Cain's research combines scientific research, eye-opening interviews, and fascinating stories from real introverts.

*Quiet* is a powerful book that gives us insights into the minds of introverts as well as extroverts in the hope that we can finally break the stigma and end judgment. This book will help us see introverts in a different light and understand their value and contributions to society.

The book has **eleven chapters** organized in four major parts consisting of **four main themes**.

*In Part One, the author introduces the **Extrovert Ideal**.*

Chapter One looks into the reasons why and how extroversion became the ideal personality trait that was embraced by cultures and society.

Chapter Two explains why there was a shift from a Culture of Character to a Culture of Personality. It also debunks the myth of the charismatic leader.

Chapter Three explores the rise of the New Groupthink and how it affects collaboration and creativity.

*In Part Two, the author focuses on the scientific evidence that explains **personality traits** with a laser focus on temperament.*

Chapter Four explores whether temperament is shaped by nature or nurture. It also introduces the Orchid Hypothesis.

Chapter Five takes the discussion beyond temperament and explores the role of free will. It also unveils the secret how some introverts can still do well in public speaking.

Chapter Six touches on the concept of cool and why it is overrated. It uses the story of Eleanor Roosevelt as an example to show how introverts act out of conscience.

Chapter Seven distinguishes how introverts and extroverts think and act under stressful and risky situations. It uses the Wall Street crash as a take-off

point for the discussion.

*In **Part Three**, the author delves into the dominance of the Extrovert Ideal in different cultures.*

Chapter Eight discusses the concept of “soft power” which is predominantly an Asian attribute. It presents stories and experiences from Asian-American students.

*In **Part Four**, the author discusses **relationships** in the **workplace** and at **home**. It shows how introverts and extroverts get along in this world*

Chapter Nine discusses how introverts can act out of character to fulfill core projects. It explores when to act like an extrovert.

Chapter Ten explores the communication gap that exists between introverts and extroverts. It serves as a guide on how to approach members of the opposite personality trait.

Chapter Eleven guides parents on how to cultivate and develop quiet introverted kids.

The **Conclusion** summarizes the main insights and lessons learned from reading the book.

# INTRODUCTION

*Quiet* by Susan Cain is a breakthrough book that signifies the importance of **understanding introverts**. The world is full of introverted people who avoid interacting with the crowd and prefer working in solitude. They feel discomfort in engaging in small talk with people they hardly know and would instead retreat to their comfort zones. They prefer listening instead of going on stage to speak. They dislike self-promotion even if they are some of the most innovative and creative people on the planet. They value their “alone” time and they favor working by themselves over working in groups.

Introverts may come off as aloof and detached from the real world and that’s why people who don’t understand their **personalities** and **motivations** undervalue them whether in school, at work, or even within their own family and social settings. What not many people know is that introverts like Rosa Park, Steve Wozniak, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Dr. Seuss, to name a few, contributed to the society in profound ways and changed the world for the better.

Author Susan Cain saw the need to expose what introversion really means so that biases against introverts will be removed. Everything is designed for extroverts and it becomes the yardstick to which people are measured up against. Schools, workplaces, churches, and other institutions promote the **Extrovert Ideal** so there’s the incorrect notion that introverts are the inferior ones. Such thinking undervalues introverts in a colossal way that people don’t realize the **massive contributions** of introverts **throughout history**.

Even introverts don’t fully understand themselves and this makes the pressure to act like an extrovert so real. Society pressures them to act gregariously against their will because they are expected to behave as close as possible to the **Extrovert Ideal**. Such narrow-minded perception of introversion is slowly being rectified by books and research studies that remove biases and prejudices against one personality type. *Quiet* is one such book.

The topic has special significance to Cain because she herself is an introvert. She co-founded the **Quiet Revolution movement** whose mission is to **unlock the power** of introverts, promote their quiet strengths, and celebrate their contributions. *Quiet* was written based on the same principles.



# PART ONE: THE EXTROVERT DEAL

## THE RISE OF THE “MIGHTY LIKEABLE FELLOW”

### *How Extroversion Became the Cultural Ideal*

Dale Carnegie’s transformation from a shy farm boy to an iconic public speaker ushered the rise of the “Extrovert Ideal”. Carnegie’s story reflected the cultural revolution around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which changed the way Americans act and behave in job interviews, social settings, inner circles, and even in family affairs. Cultural historian Warren Susman called it a massive shift from a **Culture of Character** to a **Culture of Personality**.

In the Culture of Character, the ideal self is perceived as disciplined and honorable. It was serious and it didn’t have a personality. At that period, Americans didn’t give much thought about how they are perceived by others. When they started to embrace the Culture of Personality, Americans demanded a “performing self” with a big personality that captivated the audience. Citizens morphed into people who wanted to make a good impression on complete strangers and people whom they have no familial or civic ties. There was a pressure to become salesmen and saleswomen who could sell not only their companies’ products, but also themselves.

Self-help guides had switched focus from **inner virtue** to **outer charm**. It quickly caught on and everyone strived to become a charming and likeable person. Having a great personality means possessing great power. Reputation became a precursor to success. Being clever and charming were characteristics that employers and companies look for in prospective employees. Personality became a crucial requirement to land cushy jobs and get into influential circles.

Americans became obsessed with self-presentation. This was propagated by the advertising industry, which created the archetype that success depended on personality. Ads for soap, shaving cream, toothbrush, and other personal effects spoke to the anxieties of every man and woman.

New social codes emerged when it came to dating and courtship. It became a

high-stake performance for both genders. The formalities and the restrictive codes of conduct were significantly relaxed and eventually crumbled with the advent of the Culture of Personality.

Men can openly flirt with women instead of paying ceremonial calls to declare their true intentions. Women were expected to balance propriety and boldness and are allowed to respond to romantic overtures. **It was all about projecting confidence.**

It was in 1921 when Carl Jung acknowledged the newly precarious status of introversion, in that it attracted even more prejudices against this type. Viennese psychologist Alfred Adler developed the concept in psychology called the **Inferiority Complex**, which described feelings of inadequacies and their eventual consequences. Inferiority Complex became the all-purpose explanation and excuse for problems that plagued many aspects of life. It was perceived as an affliction that needed to be treated. This is particularly evident in child guidance books.

Experts no longer worry about precocious and delinquent children. The focus shifted to shy children. Shyness became the enemy that must be eradicated. Psychologists boldly warned that shyness could lead to grim outcomes including alcoholism and suicide.

While they put a stigma to shyness, at the same time, they were singing praises for an outgoing personality, stating that it would bring social and financial success. Children were encouraged to socialize to help develop a more socially desirable personality.

Parents agreed that **“quiet”** was **not acceptable**, thus, they discourage their children from solitary activities and serious hobbies like classical music, which could make them unpopular. Introverted children were singled out as problems. Teachers and parents colluded to change the personalities of quiet children. Parents welcomed the intervention to what experts believed as an abnormality. Even Ivy League universities saw little use for the brilliant but introvert student.

The Culture of Personality dominated organizations and businesses with dire consequences. Many people could not handle the tremendous pressure, so they developed acute anxiety.

According to some psychologists, the **Extrovert Ideal** is not really a modern

invention because it's literally in our **DNA**. History also tells us that there was a widespread admiration for extroverts in Ancient Greece. Oratory skills and showmanship were highly regarded, and therefore, highly sought after. Throughout history, the big personalities with the gift of gab were exalted and considered successful. Think of ministers and pastors bringing large crowds to their feet.

The downside of this is that biases against introverts have magnified and intensified in all facets of life. While the Culture of Personality was embraced with open arms, there were still critics who lamented society's obsession with such ideal. Poets, writers, and other introverts turned to their art in protest of such unfair perception of introverted people.

In the present time, the same ideal pervades our consciousness. People shape their online and offline persona to meet the ridiculous demands of the Culture of Personality. We measure ourselves against higher standards based on **self-presentation**. Those who cannot cope with the demands, fall into deep anxiety and depression.

Decades after Dale Carnegie's seminal work on public speaking was released, self-help books on the same subject continue to thrive with updated versions. This goes to show how the Extrovert Ideal remains the yardstick of success in many aspects of life, but we failed to question why we shifted so drastically from **Character** to **Personality** without recognizing that we might have been ignoring something so significant.

# THE MYTH OF CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP: The Culture of Personality, A Hundred Years Later

## *Salesmanship as a Virtue: Live with Tony Robbins*

Author Susan Cain tells the story of the time she attended a seminar by the immensely popular self-help guru and life coach Tony Robbins. Her intention was not to unleash the power within but to understand the Extrovert Ideal. She describes the experience as an energetic rock-concert style seminar where those who **screamed the loudest** are deemed “**more successful**” in life.

Tony Robbins is behind the theory of Practical Psychology wherein knowledge is useless unless it is coupled with **action**. The take away from the seminar was not the electrifying energy that Robbins exuded, but the fact that those who attended the seminar entered the Tony Robbins state of mind, which consists of a superior mind, good-heartedness, and belief in what he’s pitching.

At the onset of the Culture of Personality, people were strongly encouraged to develop an extroverted personality for selfish reasons, that is, to outshine others in a largely competitive society. But in this day and age, we now tend to think that “extrovertedness” not only makes us more successful, it also makes us better individuals. Salesmanship now has a poignant goal. That’s why Tony Robbins’ zeal and enthusiasm to pitch and sell is not perceived as narcissism, but a leadership trait of the highest order.

## *The Myth of Charismatic Leadership: Harvard Business School and Beyond*

Students of Harvard Business School (HBS) acknowledge that the school is predicated on extroversion, so it will be a challenge to find introverts in the campus. The unspoken rule is that grades and social status depend on how extroverted a student is.

Not many people are aware that the HBS graduates are highly influential people. They make important decisions that affect lives of certain population and economies of the world. They are the movers and shakers in politics and business, which says a lot about the kind of graduates that HBS produces.

In HBS, there's not enough opportunity to become an introvert, because the programs are designed for **constant interaction** with students and teachers.

One student named Don is a self-confessed "bitter introvert". He thinks that the more time he spends time in HBS, the more convinced he is that he'd better change into an extrovert. A HBS education means that students are armed with confidence and skills to make wise decisions in the face of pressure and incomplete information. The teaching method encourages students to voice out their opinions. In the absence of uncertainty, they are still able to hold their own.

Those who talk often and forcefully are marked as players, but those who don't, are considered to be on the margins. The students quickly adapt to the HBS system, but there are a few students like Don who has difficulty speaking in class discussions.

**Social networking** is a big thing in HBS and if a student graduates without having built an extensive network, then that student has failed the HBS experience. In a nutshell, HBS is training students in a business culture where verbal fluency and sociability are two of the most important predictors of success.

Despite HBS' proven track record, there are signs that the system could be wrong by favoring a **leadership style** that values extroverts over introverts. There is a perception that the talkers are smarter than quiet types, but **grade-point averages, SAT** (Scholastic Assessment Test) and **IQ** test scores reveal otherwise.

Those with great ideas don't necessarily get approved. The reality is that some ideas are chosen not because they are the best ideas, but they have the best presenters. What's interesting is that, despite the push for a vocal leadership, many effective CEOs are introverts. Some excellent leaders who are introverts include Bill Gates, Charles Schwab, James Copeland, and Brenda Barnes.

The case of the former Kimberly-Clark CEO Darwin Smith is a great example of a **quiet leadership**. Smith is a **reserved** and **mild-mannered** man, but he has a fierce resolve that no one sees.

After being appointed as CEO, he made a critical decision to sell the company's core business of coated paper and invested on consumer paper

products. Everyone thought that he was out of his mind, but he was unmoved by the criticisms. He proved everyone wrong when the decision turned out to be a great one. The company experienced strong growth and outperformed its competitors. From the case, it is evident that companies don't need huge personalities or flamboyant leaders to transform companies.

This begs the question: What do introverts do differently that make them better than extroverts? Professor Adam Grant from Wharton state that research studies are inconclusive and that the correlation between leadership and personality was modest at best. Further, he believed that the research done on this topic are largely based on people's perception of what makes a good leader, instead of actual measurable results. This means that the opinions of those involved in the research reflect of cultural bias.

In Grant's own research, he revealed that the **introverted leaders** are more inclined to **listen** to other people's ideas and are very open to **implementing suggestions**. This motivates the people they lead, which increases productivity significantly. On the other hand, extroverts tend to put their own stamp on the team projects or events, that they miss out on some of the good ideas of team members. This makes them passive rather than proactive. It must be pointed out that the extroverts have the natural ability to inspire with their showmanship, so their leadership style is better suited for companies with more passive workers who need motivation.

### ***Does God Love Introverts? An Evangelicals Dilemma***

If HBS is where the global elites hone their business and leadership skills, Saddleback Church is anybody's playground. The sprawling campus in Lake Forest, California is one of the most influential evangelical churches in the US. It's open to anyone who wants to join and is headed by Rick Warren, the author of the best-selling book *The Purpose Driven Life*. Clearly, it does not cater to the business elites or famous leaders, like HBS does, but it is a behemoth in business with its production companies, recording studios, and distribution deals. Though Saddleback and HBS are from the opposite sides of the pole, they have something in common: They both follow and propagate the Culture of Personality.

Just like HBS, evangelical churches like Saddleback make extroversion a requirement for leadership so that pastors can engage members of the church with enthusiasm and passion. It is with that same characteristic that

evangelicalism is built on. It is how churches and ministries can entice people to join the ministry.

Before social media exploded, introvert leaders and members lamented on how they can fit in a church that puts value on **extroverted evangelism**. The guilt was real and they were in constant state of inner conflict. Sensitive and reflective types find it difficult to serve on parish or ministry committees because all they wanted to do was to serve the Lord.

They started to voice out their frustration in **blogs** and **online articles**. They were no longer silent and they argued that even religious leaders like Buddha and Jesus had gone off away from the crowds to experience the revelations that were later on shared with the world.

Local evangelical pastor Adam McHugh shared the same sentiments from many introverted pastors and priests who found themselves challenged by the extrovert prerequisite to serve the Lord and the community.

Being part of an evangelical church like Saddleback, McHugh admits that there was no emphasis (much less time to be) in quiet contemplation. It's all about meeting and welcoming people into the fold. Although the meet and greet part pains him immensely, McHugh believes in the church and the amazing things it does to the community and around the world. He confesses that he's willing to endure it, but he worries that not many introverts will.

Churches like Saddleback creates an extroverted atmosphere that will come across as unnatural to the introverts. The blatant expression of enthusiasm and eagerness can be too much for an introvert who value silence and alone time. According to McHugh, evangelicalism embraced the Extroverted Ideal, but it has taken it to the extreme level.

**Those who do not shout out their love for Jesus Christ are being thought of as a less devout believer.** Worse, if devotion is not publicly displayed, then it's not enough to forge a deep spiritual connection to the divine. This thinking affects introverts like McHugh and they start to question their own devotion.

Despite the evidence of bias against introverts in church and ministry setting, McHugh still believes that there will be a meaningful change and the religious culture will come to realize that extroversion is not just the only personality trait pleasing to God. He believes that even introverts are

important to the community because of the things they do and put out in the world.



# WHEN COLLABORATION KILLS CREATIVITY

## *The Rise of the New Groupthink and the Power of Working Alone*

Apple Co-Founder Steve Wozniak is an introvert. It's almost impossible to think of him as such because the Apple computer is a product of a **collaborative approach**. It was in the Homebrew Computer Club meeting that the idea for a personal computer was conceived. However, it was what he did after the meeting that got the ball rolling. He did not huddle with the other members of the club. It was working in solitude that created the prototype of the machine. He was by himself when he had the breakthrough moment. This is a shining example of how **underrated** introverts are.

The Institute of Personality Assessment and Research at the University of California, Berkeley conducted a research between **1956** and **1962** to identify the most creative people from different fields and find out what made them different from everyone else.

One of the most striking findings was that many **creative** people tend to be **socially poised introverts**. They were naturally **independent** and **individualistic**. The explanation offered by the study was that introverts prefer to work alone and that solitude can be a **catalyst to innovation**. Psychologist Hans Eysenck explains that introverts concentrate on the task at hand, which stops the dissipation of energy on other things that do not matter to the task.

The problem is that there is a disconnect between the results of the series of studies and the way schools, workplaces, and other institutions are organized and operate. Institutions promote the phenomenon called **New Groupthink**, which relies on a group or a crowd to accomplish a task or achieve excellence.

It gives more importance to **teamwork** than individual work. Leaders and managers agree that teams are crucial to the success of the company. Therefore, companies invest on group training, meetings, and team building that encourage socialization and discourage individualistic activities. Working in teams is now highly valued. Even office spaces are designed to maximize group interaction.

Schools also embraced the New Groupthink and practice the method of cooperative learning. The trend shows the tremendous popularity of this method which matches perfectly with the methods of corporate America. This is how educational institutions are training students because this is how businesses work. So, it's essentially training the kids to be extroverts.

It's hard to contradict this method because everyone's on it. The New Groupthink finds an ally in social media. Big ideas happen because of shared brainpower. Open-source operating systems, online encyclopedia, crowdsourcing, and grassroots political movements are the products of the New Groupthink. With such breakthroughs, it's difficult to deny that collaboration is the key multiplier for success.

It's ironic that the early web was the medium that enabled introverts to band together to topple the traditional and usual ways of solving problems. And yet, it is now the medium that promotes groupthink where extroverts come together.

Psychologist Anders Ericsson conducted a study to determine how extraordinary individuals achieve greatness. How did they become so great in their own fields of practice? The findings were strikingly interesting. The groups in the study spent the same amount of time participating in activities, but the best groups spent most of their time practicing in solitude. While group practice serves its purpose well, it is **solo practice** that makes all the difference. **It's what makes individuals achieve greatness.** With that said, it's undeniable that deliberate practice is a crucial factor in exceptional achievement. Intense concentration requires focus so solo practices fulfill that requirement. On the other hand, in group practices, the participants are distractions that could affect one's concentration.

Another topic that relates to performance is **personal space**. Nowadays, workspaces are densely packed compared to decades ago. Tom DeMarco of Atlantic Systems Guild conducted a study to find out the effect of social interaction on performance.

Programmers and developers from 92 companies participated in the Coding War Games. The results revealed that there is a big performance gap among these programmers. The best outperformed the worst by a staggering 10:1 ratio. DeMarco then found out that years of experience, salary, and time spent completing the work had little correlation to the outcome. These variables

were expected to have a significant effect on performance, but the findings revealed otherwise. Looking further into the results, DeMarco figured out that the best performers are those that work in companies that gave them the most privacy. They were given enough personal space and they have control over their physical environments. This means that they experience **little interruptions** while they work.

What's particularly astonishing is that data on open-plan offices across different industries corroborates the findings of the Coding War Games. What this means is that interruptions of any kind (whether from people or from the environment) are barriers to productivity. Introverts know these instinctively that's why they avoid noise and crowded areas. They know that to be able to concentrate, there should be peace and quiet.

Introverts know that personal space is vital to creativity, but they also want freedom from peer pressure. Sharing ideas to a group can be difficult for fear of judgment and ridicule. To remedy this, advertising man Alex Osborn invented the concept of brainstorming. Leaders were sold on group brainstorming, but in reality, the concept does not work. Studies on brainstorming revealed that people produced more ideas when they work on their own. Performance suffers significantly as the group size gets bigger. In a nutshell, brainstorming is a bane to creativity and efficiency.

Author Susan Cain does not suggest completely stopping face-to-face collaboration. What she is suggesting is to refine collaboration while taking into account the symbiotic relationship of an introvert and an extrovert. The most productive and effective groups are those that have a healthy mix of introverts and extroverts.

Many companies are now starting to understand the value of privacy, silence, solitude, which is a precursor to understanding how an introvert's mind works. Companies that experience a rise in efficiency and productivity as a result of this renewed understanding are now creating **flexible open plans** that offer quiet zones, reading rooms, casual meeting areas, computer hubs, and other areas where interruptions are kept to a minimum. This is a welcome development that may just catch on.

# PART TWO: YOUR BIOLOGY, YOUR SELF?

## IS TEMPERAMENT DESTINY?

### *Nature, Nurture, and the Orchid Hypothesis*

Anxiety is part of introversion. Fear of public speaking is common among introverts who would rather be in the audience rather than standing on stage. This raises the question of whether the mix of traits that make up temperament is a result of **nurture** (the way a person was raised) **or** of - (genetic makeup). Researchers at Harvard University have pondered on this question to discover the biological origins of human temperament.

Development psychologist Jerome Kagan studied extensively the emotional and cognitive development of children. Using longitudinal studies, he followed the development of children from infancy through adolescence and documented their physiologies and personalities throughout a time period.

Kagan's findings revealed that high-reactive (the noisy ones) infants were more likely to have developed serious careful personalities. On the other hand, low-reactive infants (the quiet ones) were more likely to have become confident and relaxed.

Temperament refers to behavior and emotional patterns that are based on biological make up observable during infancy and childhood. **Personality**, on the other hand, is the complex mix that emerges when **personal experience** and **cultural influence** are added to the equation. What this means is that Kagan's work helped show the link between infant temperaments and adolescent personality styles.

Kagan's study was so extensive that he and his team measured biological markers like heart rate, blood pressure, temperature, and other markers relating to the nervous system, and correlated them to brain activities with special focus on the **amygdala**. The amygdala is that part of the brain that is responsible for detecting fear. Simply put, it's the brain's emotional switchboard.

Kagan's hypothesized that an infant with an excitable amygdala would react

more when given an unfamiliar object, and would grow up to be more wary and vigilant when meeting new people. Conversely, the quiet infant has a nervous system that is unaffected and unmoved by new stimuli.

The evidence presented by Kagan is powerful because it confirmed many of the beliefs that many experts sensed all along. The study went further to incorporate the rather speculative realm of cultural myth. It included **physical attributes** like eye color, body type, and face shape. For example, highly reactive people are more likely to have a narrow face, blue eyes, and thin body. These physiological tendencies were believed to have links to temperament.

Other research studies on personality support the idea that the introversion and extroversion are based on **physiology** and therefore are heritable. If the findings of these studies were to be believed, then it can be said that we are born with pre-packaged temperaments that eventually shape our personalities in adulthood.

Kagan clarified that children who are slow to warm up do not necessarily mean that they automatically fall into the high-reactive category because every behavior has more than one cause. There are other factors at play including **environmental factors**.

Determining which percentage of our personality is shaped by nature or nurture is an impossibility and perhaps not the best way to understand the concept. The better inquiry is to ask how inborn temperament interacts with environment factors and free will. The interaction of these variables can help better understand introversion and extroversion.

The theory of gene-environment interaction states that when we inherit certain traits from our parents, we seek out life experiences that reinforce those traits, and hence shape our life as we enter adulthood.

For example, low-reactive children are exposed to risks and dangers early in their toddler years, so when they grow up as adults, they are unfazed by risks. On the other hand, high-reactive kids may grow up to be writers and artists because they have the natural aversion to novelty and they feel safe within the confines of their familiar environment.

Though this is widely accepted, experts also believe that there are other possible outcomes for temperaments such as how children are being raised by

parents. Kids growing up in dangerous environments have the tendency to fall into delinquency because there are limited constructive outlets to channel bold temperaments.

David Dobbs's groundbreaking theory called the **Orchid Hypothesis** holds that a lot of children are like dandelions because they are able to thrive in any type of environment, but high-reactive kids are likened to orchids that wilt easily but can grow strong and magnificent under the right conditions.

Jay Belsky, a leading proponent of this theory, suggests that the reactivity of nervous system of the orchid children make them easily overwhelmed by adversity. The upside is that they benefit tremendously from a nurturing environment.

Orchid children are especially vulnerable to challenges and negative experiences like death, divorce, or abuse. They can easily fall into **anxiety** and **depression**. In fact, the kids in Kagan's study suffer some degree of social anxiety, which is considered a disabling form of shyness.

Not many scientists realized that despite the risk factors, high-reactive kids who are raised with good parenting in stable home environments tend to have fewer emotional problems. When raised right, they tend to be caring, emphatic, cooperative, and productive members of the society. This goes to show that the **time**, **effort**, and **love** that they invest in raising high-reactive children will make a huge difference. Instead of seeing orchid-type children as vulnerable, they must see them as malleable and impressionable, for better or worse.

Orchid kids may easily be disrupted by life-changing events like divorce or death in the family, but they can withstand them just as easily, given the fact that they were raised right by caring and nurturing parents.

What this all means is that temperament is, in part, genetically acquired, but it is not the only factor that shapes our personality. Environmental factors as well childhood experience also play a role in shaping our temperaments in adulthood.

# BEYOND TEMPERAMENT

## *The Role of Free Will (and the Secret of Public Speaking for Introverts)*

Dr. Carl Schwartz picks up where Kagan's longitudinal studies left off. The kids in Kagan's studies have now grown up and Schwartz is using a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scanner to peer inside their brains. He wants to know if the low and high-reactive temperaments from infancy can still be detectable in adults after all these years. Or would it have been deleted by the environmental factors and nurturing parenting as discussed in the previous chapter?

Schwartz believes that he can still trace that **temperament footprint** even beyond the longitudinal timeline from Kagan's study. He demonstrated this research to author Susan Cain by showing her a series of photos that mimics the environment that corresponds to the senses of high-reactive people when they walk into a room full of strangers.

The first set of data from the group of high-reactive children from Kagan's study revealed that the amygdalae of the now grown up participants turned out to be more sensitive to pictures of unfamiliar faces compared to the amygdalae of those bold toddlers from Kagan's research. Simply put, the same temperaments never disappeared in adulthood. Schwartz's findings were significant because it suggests that our innate temperaments influence us regardless of the lives we lead, but what's even more interesting is that with our **free will**, we can stretch out our **personalities** and **shape** them, but not infinitely beyond our genetic limits. We are rubber bands that can stretch ourselves, but only to a certain extent.

To better understand the findings, think of how high-reactive people would react at a party when they are introduced to strangers. The amygdala may go into overdrive when they are introduced to new people, but the frontal cortex tells them that everything is alright and that they should calm down and extend their hands for a handshake. Although the frontal cortex allows them to relax and do beyond what they are willing to do comfortably, it does not completely shut off the amygdala. Henceforth, this shows that they can stretch their personalities, but not so much to completely unlearn all the anxieties and fears.

Although the ability to stretch one's self within limits is seen in introverts, it also applies to extroverts. However, it is the introverts that make **conscious efforts** to reach the outer limits of their temperaments because they are the ones that feel so uncomfortable when they are outside of their comfort zones.

The stretching part happens quite often when introverts are forced into doing something that they dread doing. A perfect example is **public speaking**. It's not that introverts can't do it, they just don't feel comfortable with speaking spontaneously. It takes a whole lot of preparation to get to the level where they can convey their thoughts intelligibly and engagingly with ease.

Another glaring difference between introverts and extroverts is their **preference for stimulation**. According to influential psychologist Hans Eysenck, human beings look for the right levels of stimulation. It can take many forms and it varies depending on the personality. Extroverts tend to require more stimulation than introverts. Introverts find quiet intellectual activities more stimulating, while extroverts do best in high-powered activities.

Eysenck believed that the difference might be traced to the brain structure called **ascending reticular activating system** (ARAS), which is a part of the brain stem that connects to the cerebral cortex. The brain provides both arousal and calming mechanisms and the ARAS acts as a regulator of sensory stimulation. Sometimes, more amounts of stimulation can flow in, and at times, there are less. Eysenck believed that ARAS doesn't function in the same way in introverts and extroverts. In **introverts**, there are wider information paths that cause **over-arousal**, while **extroverts** have narrower paths which cause **under-arousal**.

In reality, brain function is a lot more complex than what Eysenck explained. The ARAS doesn't work like a light switch because other parts of the brain are stimulated more than the rest at different times. However, studies that tested Eysenck's theory revealed that the levels of arousal are very important in understanding introversion and extroversion. There is also a number of evidence suggesting that introverts are far more sensitive to different forms of stimulations compared to extroverts.

Combining the results of Eysenck's studies with Kagan's findings on high reactivity offer a new lens through which to view our own personalities, and ultimately understand them. If we understand this, we can start to consciously



put ourselves in environments or situations that give us optimal levels of arousal and stimulation where we can thrive without excessive fear and anxiety. We can set up our work and social life based on these **sweet spots** and that we can decide if certain things exhaust us or satisfy us.

# “FRANKLIN WAS A POLITICIAN, BUT ELEANOR SPOKE OUT OF CONSCIENCE”

## *Why Cool is Overrated*

In **1939**, black singer Marian Anderson took the stage at The Lincoln Memorial and made the audience tearful with her golden voice. Her performance wouldn't have happened if it were not for former **First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt**. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) did not allow Anderson to perform at the Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. because of her race. Eleanor resigned from DAR and arranged for Anderson to perform at the Lincoln Memorial. It was a remarkable move because she acted and spoke out of conscience, risking her own reputation. Clearly, Franklin was the politician, and Eleanor was his conscience.

Eleanor and Franklin were an unlikely pair. She was an introvert and Franklin was an extrovert. She wanted intimacy and intellectual conversations, while he loved parties and gossips. When the stress of social duties proved to be too much for a shy person, Eleanor hired a social secretary named Lucy Mercer, who became Franklin's mistress for a long time. Franklin's infidelity devastated Eleanor, but she stayed in the marriage. They never rekindled their romance, but they replaced it with a formidable union of his confidence and her conscience.

Dr. Elaine Aron, who has the same temperament as Eleanor Roosevelt, is a research psychologist who reframed Kagan's concept of high-reactivity and called it sensitivity. Perhaps her biggest contribution is that she transformed and deepened our understanding of the concept. She thinks differently about the studies that other researchers have done in the past, so she is able to give a fresh view of concepts and theories.

Aron was often told that she was too sensitive and strangely intense. In a way, her own personality becomes a good source material for her groundbreaking research. Many of her findings are in support of Kagan's own findings, but her new insights are astonishing.

According to her study, highly sensitive people tend to be **philosophical** and **spiritual** rather than **hedonistic** and **materialistic**. They usually describe themselves as creative or intuitive and they love music, art, nature, and

physical beauty. They feel intense emotions of joy, but they also feel sorrow, fear, and melancholy. They tend to process information much more deeply because they notice subtleties that other people completely miss (for example, a shift in mood or a lightbulb shining a tad brightly).

Sensitive people also tend to associate images or new objects shown to them with the stored information in their brain, that's why they spend more time looking at these objects. They process things more elaborately and reflect more on them at a deeper level. They are also highly emphatic. They can't separate themselves from the emotions of other people. They are acutely aware of the consequences of their actions, that's why they have unusually strong **consciences**.

Aron has learned that the characteristics of sensitive people that she identified were also characteristics of other personality traits considered as a fundamental part of sensitivity. In short, her findings challenged the accepted principles of personality psychology.

Highly sensitive people, in Aron's description, are those that experience strong emotions when presented with disturbing images of scared faces, accident victims, and mutilated bodies. The amygdala of a highly sensitive person is strongly activated which is why strong feelings manifest and the person becomes so empathetic, just like Eleanor Roosevelt.

On the other side of the spectrum is low-reactive physiology, which can be exemplified by the jock culture of "cool". Cool is perceived as being low reactive even in the face of pressure or extraordinary circumstance. Cool people appear unfazed by things that would otherwise send a highly-sensitive people on the edge. However, researchers see the social value of the physical lack of cool in highly-sensitive people because it is an **authentic sign of empathy**.

# WHY DID WALL STREET CRASH AND WARREN BUFFET PROSPER?

## *How Introverts and Extroverts Think (and Process Dopamine) Differently*

The stock market crash of **2008** caused the housing prices to plummet to unprecedented levels. The credit markets froze and General Motors (GM) was on the brink of bankruptcy. Many people lost money on their stock investments. Despite this unfortunate global crisis, some people continued to invest in GM stock when news of a government bailout might just happen. At that time GM's stock continued to go on freefall and investors could no longer recoup their losses.

Dr. Janice Dorn had an explanation for this fearless and reckless behavior. Dorn suggested that those bold investors were experiencing an **excess of reward sensitivity**. A person who is reward-sensitive is highly motivated to seek rewards from doing certain activities. It makes individuals pursue goals that would give the best rewards like money, sex, influence, or social status. When reward sensitivity is on overdrive, it can be dangerous because it can cause people to ignore warning signals and they take bigger risks than necessary. It can get them in trouble because they are pumped up by the prospect of winning big.

Extroverts are more likely to be **highly reward-sensitive** and introverts are more likely to be observant of the **warning signals**. In their excited state, extroverts are more likely to act, while introverts are more likely to hold back. This shows that extroverts and introverts don't react the same when presented with the prospect of rewards.

The observations are not just based on behavior. Dorn believed that a chemical called dopamine has something to do with it too. **Dopamine** is known as the "**reward chemical**" released in response to expected pleasures. With a higher level of dopamine, the urge to go after rewards are high as well. Extroverts are buzzing with dopamine, while introverts just don't get the same level of dopamine that's why they are not drawn to rewards that can be experienced by engaging in certain activities that provide them.

Of course, the theory is not absolute, and it would be unwise to say that all extroverts crave rewards and put themselves in trouble all the time. It also

doesn't mean that introverts are not motivated by rewards. What the theory suggests is that extroverts and introverts process rewards sensitivity differently. It is this theory that puts us closer to better understanding introversion.

# **PART THREE: DO ALL CULTURES HAVE AN EXTROVERT IDEAL?**

## **SOFT POWER**

In an article entitled **“The New White Flight”** published in the Wall Street Journal, white families are said to be leaving Cupertino, California en masse because white parents fear that their kids could not keep up with the impressive study habits of Asian-American students. Even if the fear was warranted, the article did not explore the reasons behind the exemplary academic performance of Asian-American students.

Author Cain wanted to find out if Cupertino’s scholarly culture is insulated from the excesses of the Extrovert Ideal. Cupertino is teeming with Asian immigrants who work at tech companies including Apple and Google. SAT scores in Cupertino schools are higher than the nationwide average. Athletic students and cheerleaders don’t follow the stereotypes proliferated by films and TV shows.

Research Psychologist Robert McCrae suggested reasons why there is a great cultural divide between Westerners and Easterners when it comes to study habits or perception of behavior in the classroom setting. Americans are some of the most extroverted people on earth, so there will be differences in perception if combined with other races who are much more inclined to the introvert spectrum.

One study revealed that European-Americans think out loud when trying to solve a reasoning problem. Asians, on the other hand, fared better when they were allowed to solve in silence. The stark difference in beliefs and attitudes can be attributed to Asians’ reverence for education. Another explanation is group identity. Asians consider themselves as part of a team and accept their place in the hierarchy. Westerners, on the other hand, believe in freedom of expression and do not submit to group will. They put value in verbal skill and boldness because they are ways to express individuality. What Westerners view as submission, Asians view as basic politeness. One would think that the Extrovert Ideal is something that’s inherent to humanity, but McCrae’s personality map suggests that each way of being is a trait of its own

## **civilization.**

In the corporate world, leaders who are aggressive and fierce are considered effective, but the Asian concept of “soft power” is slowly finding its way into corporate America. The aggressive communication style of Westerners works for them, but the alternative is to use a subtle way that can win over people.

Soft power utilizes sufficient communication skills, but the real power lies in the **quiet persistence** of the leader using it. The person who uses soft power does not radiate charisma, but a caring person whose real strength comes from substance. Throughout history, soft power has been used by the likes of **Mother Teresa** and **Mahatma Gandhi**. It is with soft power that allows for the quiet traits to shine through and make introverts show their convictions.

# PART FOUR: HOW TO LOVE HOW TO WORK

## WHEN SHOULD YOU ACT MORE EXTROVERTED THAN YOU REALLY ARE?

People are labeled as introverts or extroverts based on the way they act or behave in certain situations, but it begs the question: Is there really a fixed personality trait? Cain mulled over this question and wondered if we can be a little of both.

The person-situation debate emerged because of this very same question. On the “person” side of the debate, proponents believe that personality traits exist and they are based on physiological mechanisms that stabilize across time. Proponents of this argument include researchers who used fMRI machines and conducted skin conductance tests to study introversion and extroversion.

On the other side of the arguments are the “situationists”, who believed that the generalizations about people and the words we use to describe them are misleading because there is no “core self”; that there are only variations of selves. The leading advocate of this theory is **Walter Mischel**, who argued that there are **no fixed personality traits** and that situational factors are predictors of people’s behavior.

The situationists have prevailed in the debate for the next few decades, but new variants of the theory emerged that even Mischel acknowledged that personality traits exist but they occur in patterns. For example, some people can be docile with authoritative figures but aggressive with subordinates. Both sides have come to a comfortable compromise, but it doesn’t make things easier to understand. The even bigger question that arose is: Should we manipulate our behavior to fit in?

Should introverts strive to mix in with people during the weekdays and be their true selves during the weekends? Should extroverts do the same, only in reverse? Harvard Professor Brian Little, an introvert who can speak in public effectively, provided an answer. He called it the **Free Trait Theory**.



Little believes that fixed traits and free traits really do co-exist and he is a shining example of the theory. According to the theory, we are born with a personality trait, but as we grow, we adapt other traits and act out of character in order to do “core personal projects”. It becomes necessary to switch traits for the sake of work, love life, or social advancement. He added that when introverts are involved in these core personal projects, they are comfortable because they value what they are doing. Extroverts do the same, but it’s particularly relevant to introverts who are living in a world who values the Extrovert Ideal.

What’s interesting is that studies show that introverts are very good at acting like extroverts. These extremely great actors are called “**self-monitors**” and they are highly skilled at modifying their behaviors because of **situational** or **social demands**. Although the Free Trait strategy is a great compromise, it can backfire if it’s overdone. It should only be used judiciously, otherwise, you can end up in an uncomfortable or even disastrous situation.

# THE COMMUNICATION GAP

## *How to Talk To Members of the Opposite Type*

It's evident that introverts and extroverts are on the extreme ends of the temperament spectrum, but oddly enough, they are drawn to each other and they get along very well as friends, business partners, and most especially as lovers. It makes sense because one complements the other. But what is the relationship dynamics of these two different personalities?

Berlin psychologists Jens Aspendorf and Susanne Wilpers conducted a study to try and understand the effect of different personality traits on students' relationships with their families and peers. The results of the study confirmed that extroverted students have an easier time making friends than introverted ones. However, the study also revealed that students with the most harmonious relationships are not necessarily those with the highest extroversion. This means that although extroverts love to socialize, they don't always get along with those that are closest to them or are extroverts like them.

In introvert-extrovert couples, the differences can cause a rift in the relationship, especially if one doesn't understand the two personalities all that well. **Introverts crave downtime while extroverts require company.**

It's particularly hard for extroverts to understand introverts especially if the latter prefers silence over spending time with the partner. No matter the difference, the reality is that it's possible to work through them. The first step is to meet each other's needs and consider them as legitimate needs that must be fulfilled, regardless of how different the couples are, personality-wise.

Introverts are generally uncomfortable with anger and in order to minimize aggression, they go quiet or their tone goes flat. On the other hand, extroverts raise their voice in an attempt to engage the quiet introverts, hoping that they could work out their problems in such manner. If one is conflict-avoider and the other is confrontive coping, then it's natural to expect friction. So, how can two completely different people reach a compromise?

It's a matter of understanding that the behavior from both parties is not an act of disrespect or aggression. The introverts are shutting down not because they don't care, but because they want to minimize the conflict. The extroverts are

forceful and let their anger fly because they believe it is an honest expression of emotions they feel. To make the relationship work, they also need to change their **assumptions** about **anger**.

# ON COBBLERS AND GENERALS

## *How to Cultivate Quiet Kids in a World That Can't Hear Them*

Parents tend to think that there is something wrong with their introverted child because their behavior is unusual when compared to someone who is extroverted. A child who prefers to go home and read a book or build model cars is perceived to have a puzzling behavior when most of the other children would rather go play on the soccer field. Some may even say that the kid might be suffering from depression.

According to Dr. Jerry Miller, this problem has less to do with depression, but more with poor “parent-child fit”. This means that parents fail to see their introvert child in a different light – the one where the child’s abilities shine through.

Introversion is too worrisome to parents that they find drastic ways to change their child. They may be well-meaning and caring parents, but seeking treatment for a child who’s physically and mentally healthy, is the wrong way to approach the situation. Parents see it as a problem when in fact, it’s not. They fear that they are not preparing their child well enough for the **demands** of the **society** that an intervention is needed to make some changes. These changes are unnecessary and could very well be **damaging** the child’s sense of self.

Parents need to be a little more **mindful** and **understanding** of their child’s personality and step away from their own preferences. They need to be **empathetic** and look at the world from their *quiet child’s eyes*.

Introverts reach out to people and converse with them, but they relate to them in their own ways. So, if parents try to force a preferred way to act or behave, this makes introverts uncomfortable. Parents should take cues from their introverted children. If they see them being stressed about something, especially in something they are not comfortable doing, then the parents should step back and understand the situation.

Understanding introversion can change the way parents approach and relate to their introverted children. Awareness of the differences between introverts and extroverts is the first step, but the following steps would require a clear and thoughtful understanding of the complex introvert dynamics.

Many parents will have a steep learning curve when it comes to understanding different temperaments because culture and society have long favored one temperament over the other. It's important to remember that temperament of an introvert child is inherited, but it can also be influenced by a number of environmental factors.

One of the best things parents can do is to let them experience different situations and let them determine what they like and don't like to do. Exposing them gradually to new people and situations and respecting their limits is a great way to determine what makes them happy or uncomfortable. From there, parents can develop a deeper understanding of their child's temperament.

# CONCLUSION

In a world where the Extrovert Ideal exists and persists, introverts are like second class citizens who are **undervalued** and **underappreciated**. This book can help break incorrect notions about introverts and their temperaments. The insights in this book are valuable, not only to parents but to everyone who knows and interacts with introverts on a daily basis.

Introversion is not a disease or a sickness that must be treated. There's no need for radical intervention with the sole purpose of rectifying what's perceived as incorrect behavior. Introversion is just another type of personality trait that's different from what society perceives as the ideal.

If you are living with and loving an introvert, you'll learn the right approach to communicating with them, especially in times of conflict. Introverts have their own way of relating to situations and people, so if you understand that, you can begin to appreciate why they do the things they do and you'll learn to let them be.

If you are a parent with an introvert child, this book will help you appreciate the times he or she wants to be alone. You'll have a full grasp of the importance of silence and solitude in the functioning of the introverted child. Their brilliance shines through in that moment of solitude.

If you are a teacher in a classroom full of gregarious students who participate with full zest and enthusiasm, consider yourself lucky, but don't forget to nurture and cultivate the shy and quiet students who will grow up to be great thinkers of the future.

If you are someone who works with introverts, this book will help you understand that appearance can be deceiving. Introverts act out of character from time to time because they have to be pseudo-extroverts to achieve something they are passionate about. At times, they do this simply to fit in, but the time, effort, and energy that they expend doing this are extremely exhausting to them. Understand that they perform better alone, so you need to respect that.

Introverts are intricately complex. They come across as mysteries and they can really be puzzling, but they are some of the **most brilliant people** in the world and they can be fun to be with if you only take the time to understand

how their minds work. With a greater awareness and understanding of how the introvert mind works, people will actually have a renewed sense of appreciation for the quiet types. **Their contribution to society is astonishing and their efforts should never be undervalued.**

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