



i introvert insights

Part of Being an Introvert Is Explaining—as in *Teaching*

By Peter Vogt

You don't have to defend, justify, or apologize for your introversion—any more than extraverts have to defend, justify, or apologize for their extraversion.

But sometimes, maybe even often in this extraverted world of ours, you do need to **explain** your introversion to other people in your life.

I don't mean explain in the context of "The Brady Bunch," where father Mike would routinely haul the word out when one of the kids got into some sort of trouble ("you have a lot of explaining to do, young man/young lady").

I mean "explain" in the context of pure teaching—of calmly opening another person's eyes to something that's new or that was previously unclear to them.

You can use classic "I" statements to express what you need, and explain why, in various situations. It's a bit of an art form, but it's one you can easily learn. And it will help you keep both yourself and your relationships healthy and balanced.

Let's look at a few examples that will give you a better sense of a) the kinds of explaining you'll be called upon to do, and b) how you can go ahead and do so in a way that's straightforward and effective.

Your Work Colleagues

Suppose you're the classic introvert who needs plenty of time to think before offering up your opinion on something, but your weekly staff meetings at work are fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants affairs where everyone is expected to essentially wing it in the moment.

While it's unrealistic to think that these meetings will suddenly become completely thought through in advance, you can talk to the powers that be (i.e., whoever sets up the meetings) and explain to them that you'd make better contributions if you could have just an inkling, beforehand, of each gathering's key points of discussion.

"I do my best work when I have a chance to think about things carefully ahead of time," you might say. "It

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TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES

Plan What You'll Say During Small Talk—Then Practice It

One of the reasons job interviews are so draining, especially if you're an introvert, is that you have to be "on" for so long. In fact, the stress starts before the first question is even asked of you.

You're being evaluated the moment you walk in the door and start engaging with whomever is there to greet you. It's small-talk time—and if you're like many introverts, you're just not into it.

All the more reason to plan a few things you can say, says executive job search strategist Meg Guiseppi, an introvert herself.

"You're likely to perform much better if you prepare bits and pieces of small talk for the interview," Guiseppi writes in her blog post entitled "Job Search for Introverts: Land the Job with Less Stress."

"Find out which people will be in-

terviewing you and look them up on social media channels for tidbits you can use to break the ice or move the conversation along."

Once you have a few ideas about what you might say, go through your small-talk interactions—out loud, advises introverted writer Sophie Baker, in her blog post entitled "An Introvert's Guide to Dealing with Zoom Burnout."

"I like to practice my initial small talk so that I don't feel anxious about saying something strange or embarrassing," Baker says.

"And I don't mean spending two minutes thinking about it," she stresses. "I literally rehearse aloud to strike the right tone for my greetings and pleasantries, ensuring I'll sound friendly and open during the real thing."



COMMUNICATION TIPS

Memorize Key Phrases to Buy Yourself Some Thinking Time

One of the typical introvert's many strengths is the willingness and ability to take the time to think things through.

But that gift can be a bit of a curse in some situations—for example, when someone asks you a question and expects a near-instant reply.

That's when "brain freeze" often strikes, says psychologist Joan Pastor, in her book *Success as an Introvert for Dummies*.

Maybe a few initial thoughts go through your head and simply get stuck there. Or maybe your brain really does temporarily shut down. Either way, it's an awkward situation you'd just as soon avoid.

Pastor offers an easy remedy for you, though: Memorize a few key phrases you can use to buy yourself the time you need to collect your thoughts and then express them clearly and confidently.

"If someone asks you a question in a meeting and your mind goes blank, you can say something like

"That's an interesting question. Can I do a little research and get back to you?" or "I have some thoughts on that, but I'd like to think them through a bit more. Can we get together later and talk about it?"

All you need in the moment, in other words, is a response that's good enough to show that you've heard the question and that you will address it.

Your more-thorough reply can then come later—once it has baked in the oven of your mind and is ready to be shared.

MONITORING YOUR ENERGY

Listen to Your Body—It's Giving You Clues About Your Energy

How do you know when you've reached your energy limit—or perhaps even pushed past it—as an introvert?

Your body will offer you an assortment of specific-to-you clues if you're willing to pay attention to them, says writer and business coach Ashley Janssen.

"It took me a while to learn my limits, but over time they became more clear," Janssen writes in her recent blog post entitled "The Introvert's Guide to Increasing Energy."

"I get a low-grade headache, one of my ears gets plugged, and my thinking feels sluggish," Janssen

says. "My clothes start to feel uncomfortable and everything seems really loud. If I really overdo it, I get a migraine (which no one wants)."

Janssen says she's learned **not** to overdo it because if and when she does, she pays a steep price for it—as so many introverts do.

"It impacts my ability to focus and engage ... with anything, really," she says.

Janssen suggests taking a few weeks to intentionally monitor what your body is telling you so that you can manage your energy more purposefully. Among the questions you can ask yourself as you go:

How does my body feel after being around a lot of people?

How do I feel the morning after an evening event?

How do I feel after multiple days in a row of meetings, events, and interactions?

How many meetings or events can I have in a day before I start to feel burnt out?

What are reasonable boundaries I can set to make sure I don't burn myself out?

Those boundaries, Janssen adds, might include the number of meetings each day or week, or even the time of day you schedule them.

RECHARGING YOUR BATTERIES

Your Downtime Breaks Don't Have to Be Long to Be Helpful

In the messy real world, it's often difficult—if not impossible—to devote, say, an entire afternoon or day to the quiet downtime that recharges your introverted batteries.

But you can still get some of what you need by taking advantage of much shorter periods of time when

and where you can, says speaker and coach Sophie Morris, an introvert herself.

In her own case, "often 20 minutes with a cup of tea or reading my book will suffice," Morris notes in her recent blog post entitled "How to Manage Your Energy Levels as an Introvert."

That quick break, she says, "will give me the energy I need to get on

with the rest of my day."

Writer Ozzie Nunez, who is also an introvert, uses a similar strategy whenever he has to attend a command-performance type of social event like a company function or a party.

Not attending at all isn't an option, he says. So instead, he makes a point of periodically stepping outside for a few minutes at such gatherings.

"Stepping out for a breather is probably the best thing one can do in such a situation, because it allows you to create space for yourself," Nunez notes in his recent blog post entitled "An Introvert's Guide to Recharging Your Social Batteries."

"That way, you won't feel drained by all the social activity occurring around you," Nunez adds. "Stepping outside periodically will ensure that you remain socially energized throughout the event."



IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

Sometimes, *Overstimulation*— Not Energy—Is the Issue at Hand

By Peter Vogt

I'm sitting, all alone, in the 25-by-25-foot lobby of the dentist's office, waiting for my kids to be done with their checkups.

This place is pretty nice—you know, for a dentist's office. It's carpeted, it features comfortable leather couches and chairs, and its brown and light gray color scheme is soothing, undoubtedly by design. It feels a lot like an outdoor-themed coffee shop, minus the aroma of hot brew and scones.

I've got my book with me, so I open it up to read a bit. In peace.

Just to my left, though, the TV is informing nobody at all about the wonders of Clorox detergent. Who knew you could be so happy about clean whites.

Just to my right and behind me, meantime—in what is technically a small separate room geared to children—a second TV is airing an old “Tom and Jerry” cartoon.

Above me, speakers play a local radio station's tunes, just in case I didn't hear Cyndi Lauper's “Girls Just Want to Have Fun” enough times in the eighties.

And directly in front of me, the two assistants who essentially run the office are either answering non-stop phone calls (ring! ring!) or are putting their headphones back on so they can, presumably, continue typing the dentist's dictations for medical records.

I'm able to get through a few words of my book. But soon I real-

ize that I can't—and won't be able to—read today, not in this situation at least.

Because there is no peace. There's too much going on from an auditory input standpoint, even though none of the sounds is particularly loud.

Discussions about introverts and introversion often focus on energy—specifically, how we introverts lose energy and how we gain it back. Makes sense.

But we sometimes overlook a related and equally important concern: the amount of external stimulation we are dealing with at any given moment.

Extraverts and introverts are wired differently from each other where external stimulation is concerned. Extraverts tend to need lots of it to feel their best. Introverts, on the other hand, need comparatively little outside stimulation before it becomes too much.

That's why, at a party for example, it's common to find introverts cozied away with one or two other people in a spot that's a bit (or a lot) out of all the commotion. (This, of course, presumes that the introverts show up for the party at all.)

It's why introverts tend to gravitate toward quiet(er) places—particularly in nature, where there is not only less sound but also much more room to dissipate it.

And it's why, if you're an introvert yourself, you sometimes find yourself overcooking because of all the hubbub going on around you.

Just know, and remember: It's not



really an energy issue you're dealing with (although you certainly can feel the drain); rather, it's an overstimulation issue.

Your solution, then, needs to focus not so much on finding ways to conserve or recoup your energy but, instead, finding ways to reduce—or even temporarily eliminate—the overstimulation that is making you want to strangle someone.

How did I do that at the dentist's office? For starters, I simply put my book away. I know from hard (stubborn?) experience that when I'm already contending with four sources of external stimulation, adding a fifth is just asking for it.

I couldn't control the televisions in the lobby, nor could I do anything about the radio or the phone calls. So I decided to simply sit there. No book. No phone. No nothing.

Soon the radio was playing Queen's “Bohemian Rhapsody.” And I noticed that one of the assistants was silently mouthing the words to “sing” along.

Ahhh. Peace.

Relative peace, at least.

Coming soon ...

My new online course that will free you to **BE** you!



You **deserve** to be the introvert you are.

You **need** to be the introvert you are.

You **can** be the introvert you are.

And with the right knowledge, the right practical tools, and the right mindset ...

You Will!

PRACTICAL RESEARCH

Introverts Are More Apt to Be Struggling During Pandemic

Compared with their extraverted counterparts, introverts are experiencing lower levels of well-being during the ongoing pandemic, according to a study published recently in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

The study involved 1,096 Canadians who completed a battery of questionnaires, including one that measured their level of extraversion and others that assessed their levels of well-being in several categories.

“Overall,” researchers Anahita Shokrkon and Elena Nicoladis of the University of Alberta found, “higher extraversion was associated with higher emotional, psychological, and social well-being.”

That finding, Shokrkon and Nico-

ladis add, “is in line with previous studies demonstrating that extraversion is associated with better mental health in general.”

Shokrkon and Nicoladis offer several possible explanations for their study’s findings.

For starters, they note, previous research has shown that, compared with people who score lower in extraversion (i.e., introverts), extraverts “are more capable of adjusting to life-changing events, such as the new circumstances the world is currently experiencing, as they use adaptive strategies such as reappraisal, problem solving, or acceptance more than people who score lower in extraversion.”

The researchers also suggest that extraverts tend to have more friends and larger social networks, which

may give them a better support system to rely on during difficult times.

As the pandemic has dragged on, some researchers have hypothesized that it is **introverts** who are—or, theoretically, should be—more likely to maintain healthy well-being. Introverts, the thinking goes, are more apt to be OK with—and used to—spending time alone and/or being socially distanced from others, as pandemic circumstances have frequently required.

But the Shokrkon-Nicoladis study points away from that idea.

Sources: “How Personality Traits of Neuroticism and Extroversion Predict the Effects of the COVID-19 on the Mental Health of Canadians,” *PLOS ONE*, 2021 (May 19, online publication); CBC News website, September 14, 2021.

REFLECTIVE READS

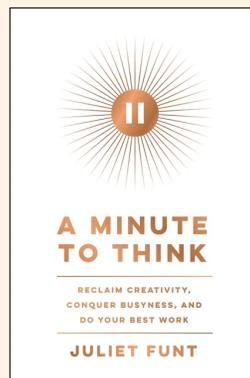
A Minute to Think Illustrates the Power of “White Space”

Juliet Funt says we could all use a little more oxygen in our lives.

Not so much oxygen in the air we breathe, but oxygen in the form of the **time** we need—yet too often don’t get or actively take—to do and be our best.

If you’re an introvert, you’ll likely be quite familiar with—and hard-wired to embrace—Funt’s key message, which she outlines in her eye-opening book *A Minute to Think*.

A fire, she once learned during a camping trip with her family, needs a bit of space between all the pine



needles and paper and wood in order to ignite. Similarly, Funt contends, we all need some “white space” built into our daily activities if we want to thrive, both at work and at home.

Those servings of white space

need not be large, Funt stresses; a few seconds here, a minute or two there is plenty. They simply need to be strategic, she says. Intentional. A purposeful part of how you go about your days.

Throughout the book, Funt offers specific—and realistic—strategies for cultivating white space in your everyday life. She suggests questions you can ask yourself, tactics you can use to conquer time suckers like email, and more.

“When people discover that white space is possible,” Funt says, “you can almost hear an audible sigh of relief. It’s a joy to watch them embrace it.”

Continued from page 1

gives me the opportunity to be fully prepared so that I can best help the team/department/organization.”

Your Friends

You enjoy spending time with your friends, but you also enjoy—and need—time to yourself, especially during those times when your life is especially hectic.

So suppose a good friend invites you over for a Saturday afternoon of football watching and popcorn eating. If your brain’s/heart’s first reaction is “no way, no how,” you can simply explain that you’re craving some quiet regrouping time.

“I really appreciate the invite,” you might say, “but honestly, I just need some downtime to breathe and recharge my batteries.”

Two things here: 1) This is a variation of “it’s not you, it’s me”; and 2) You will quickly find out who

your real friends are based on their reaction to this type of statement—they’re the ones who will respond with: “No problem. Another time. Take care of yourself.”

Your Kids

It turns out that your kids can wait sometimes—and that if they do have to wait, they won’t die.

So suppose you’ve had a horrible day at work, and that you’ve just arrived home after a 45-minute commute in a raging snowstorm. Your kid meets you at the door and starts talking about ... well, talking about something he/she is excited about. You just have no idea what, because your brain is crispy fried.

You’ll be tempted—and it would only be human—to yell “WAIT!” (or worse). But instead, you could say something like this: “I know you’re excited, hon, but I need five minutes—just five minutes—to sit and get myself together for you.

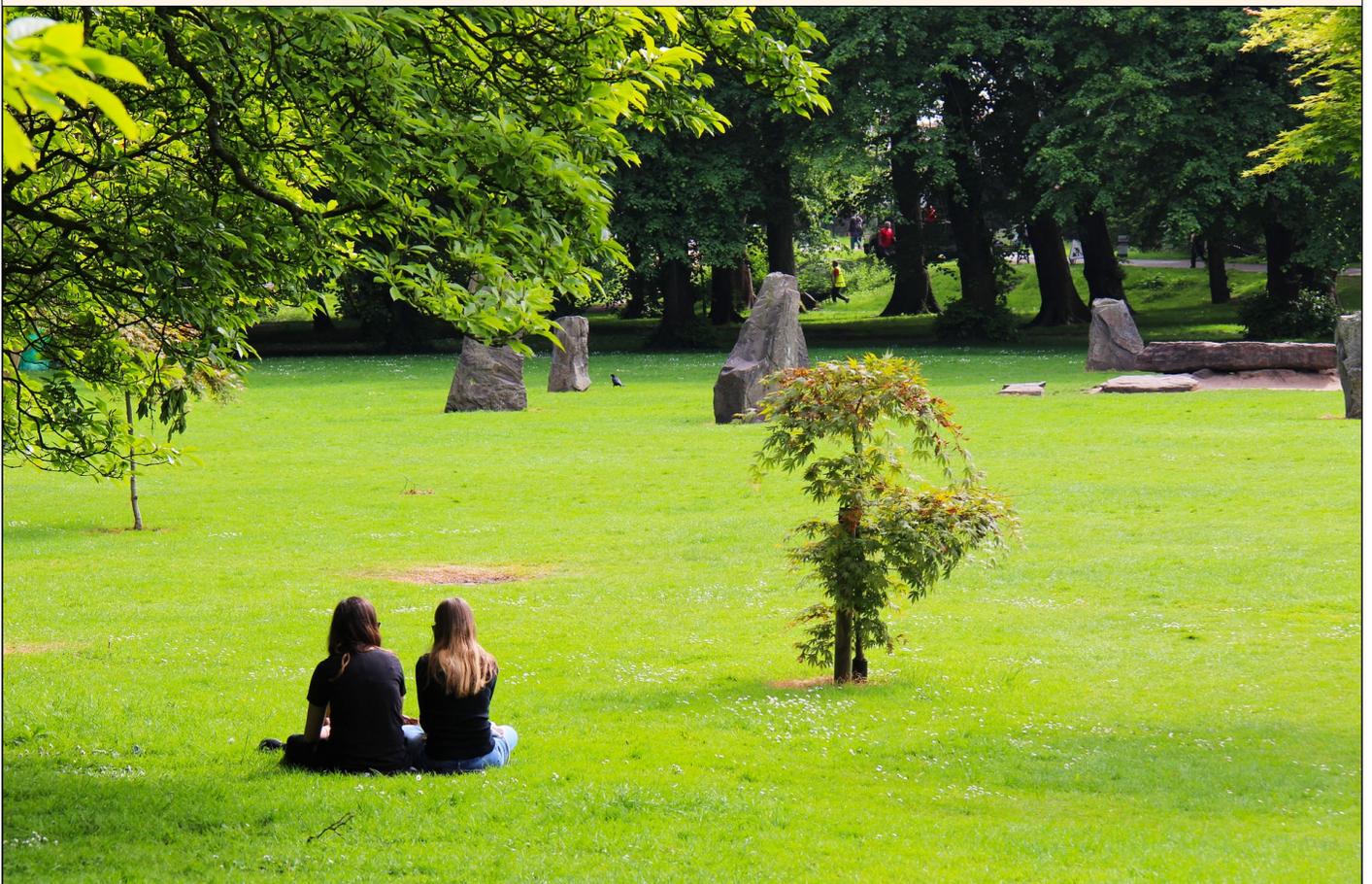
Then I’ll be able to give you my full attention instead of phoning it in. Sound OK?”

Your Significant Other

Only one key thing to remember here: Though your significant other already knows you and your introversion quite well, he/she isn’t a mind reader.

So explaining your introversion in this context is less about educating and more about reminding your significant other, in the moment, of how you’re feeling and what you need. “I’ve just got to decompress for a few minutes before we talk” might be all you have to say. You just have to say **something**.

You’ll be surprised by what people are willing and able to handle if you give them a reason. Not a justification or a defense or an apology, but a mere explanation—one that will make sense all around.





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INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

“The key with getting your introverted needs met is to never feel guilty for what you need in order to be at your best. Your career and your family will benefit tremendously when you give yourself permission to have your introverted needs met.”

~ Dawn Goldberg

“The truth of the matter is, as an introvert, you have a superpower, and that is thinking by yourself. Thinking. Thinking.”

~ Nneka Unachukwu

“While it might not seem possible, we have to prioritize our self-care like our lives depend on it—because they do.”

~ Julie Lowe

“As we become more aware of the vastly different experiences we all have of consciousness, I hope that we will come to appreciate the beauty of those with little to say. Perhaps in their silence lies an inner universe of profound depth waiting to be tapped by those who have the time and inclination to listen.”

~ Josh Chandler Morris