



# i introvert insights

## Reflection *Before* and *During* Is as Crucial as Reflection *After*

By Peter Vogt

You're at work, doing your thing, when you get an urgent email from your boss. Your team will be having an emergency meeting ... in 10 minutes. No other details are given.

You try to wrap up what you're in the middle of, but now you're distracted, caught in the dissonance between what you're doing now and what in the world the meeting is all about, not to mention your potential role in it.

When the session begins, the discussion is even more rapid-fire than usual. You literally can't get a word in. You feel like you're watching a game of pinball.

The meeting finally adjourns and, instead of being able to debrief—either with one of your colleagues or on your own—you have to get right back to work.

Boom-boom-boom. It all just happened way too fast for you. And now your stress level has gone through the roof. And your energy level has dropped through the floor. And, worst of all, you didn't get to

meaningfully contribute to the meeting. You might as well not have been there at all.

Just another day at the office, isn't it, when you don't get the *reflection* time you need as an introvert.

It's just one of a hundred ways of illustrating a key truth for introverts everywhere: You tend not to realize how important reflection is to you until you don't **get to** reflect.

### Two Overlooked Types

Reflection—i.e., having time to think—is crucial to your health and happiness as an introvert, which is why I refer to it as one of *The 4 Pillars of Introvert Well-Being* (along with solitude, focus, and depth).

While we naturally tend to view reflection as something that comes **after** an activity, event, or experience (which is true, of course), we need to remember that reflection is also crucial to us as introverts **before** and **during** activities, events, and experiences.

We need to reflect not only to *process*, in other words, after the fact,

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# TIPS, TRICKS, AND TOOLS

## COMMUNICATION TIPS

### Use a “Cheat Sheet” to Keep Your Poise in Presentations

You’re speaking in front of a group, maybe at work or during a conference, when suddenly the unthinkable happens: Your mind goes blank. You forget what you were going to say.

In fact, you lose your place in the presentation completely.

Maybe it’s your recurring nightmare. Maybe it’s happened to you. In any case, you can prevent it—or at least bounce back from it quickly should it occur—by preparing a one-page “cheat sheet” ahead of time and having it on hand, says writer Barbara Bean-Mellinger, in her recent *Truity* website article entitled “How Introverts Can Pitch Their Work with Ease (Without Stuttering, Sweating, or Throwing Up!).”

Simply list on the paper the top-



level key points you want to make in your talk, in order and using only a few words per item.

Brevity is key, Bean-Mellinger emphasizes.

“This isn’t your presentation written out,” she says. “You’ll never pinpoint where you were or collect your thoughts from something that lengthy.”

Instead, minimize the verbiage—and maximize the font size!—so that

you can easily read your notes from a standing position.

Just to make sure your precious cheat sheet doesn’t fall on the floor and out of sight ... write it not on a loose piece of paper but instead on the page of a notebook that you carry with you, Bean-Mellinger says.

And “attach a paperclip to the page,” she adds, “so you can easily get to it even if the notebook closes.”

Now you’re ready!

## NETWORKING STRATEGIES

### Reframe Networking So That You See It as *Serving*

Whether you’re doing it for job hunting purposes, to build your business, or perhaps both, networking probably isn’t at the top of your list of favorite activities.

Among the many reasons: “Normally, the last thing on our to-do list is to talk about ourselves!” says Susanna Reay, a business coach in Henley on Thames, England, who specializes in helping introverts.

One solution, Reay says, particularly in the context of business development, is to reframe networking

from talking about **yourself** to talking about your **purpose**.

In other words, turn self-promotion into mission-promotion.

“When we need to do something for our business that we may not initially feel like doing, such as stepping out of our comfort zone and into a room of strangers, it’s important to remind ourselves why we set up our business in the first place,” Reay writes in her recent *Brand You Magazine* website article entitled “Taking the Eeek! out of Networking as an Introvert.”

That mission likely boils down to somehow sharing your talents and

expertise with people who need the solution(s) you offer, Reay says.

“Selling is serving, and others out there are looking for a guide,” adds Reay, who is also author of the book *The Introvert Way Roadmap: Use Your Introvert Superpowers to Design and Scale a Profitable Knowledge-Based Business*.

“That guide could well be you,” Reay stresses, “if only they knew about you.”

They can, of course. And people do want to know about **you**.

But what they want even more is to know what you and your cause can do for **them**.

## Mutual Understandings Buoy Introvert-Extravert Relationship

Writer Diana Park is married, she says, to the “quintessential ‘people person,’” a super-extravert who seemingly knows everyone and craves the energy he gets from his many personal interactions.

Park, on the other hand, is a strong introvert who, like most other introverts, finds that people deplete her energy.

“After being together a few years, I’ve realized that [my husband’s] extraversion—one of the things I love most about him—also exhausts and frustrates me at times. I know he feels the same way,” Park writes in her recent Scary Mommy website article entitled “I’m an Introvert with a Very Extraverted Partner—Here’s How We Make It Work.”

How do they make their marriage work from a socializing perspective? Park offers several pieces of wise advice from her perspective as the introvert in the relationship:

**“I don’t go to every event he goes to.”** It’s OK, Park says, if she stays home sometimes and lets her husband go out alone. She learned this the hard way, she stresses. In the beginning, she went to everything with her husband in an effort to not be a “bad partner.” Result: It “actually made me a bad partner ... because afterward I was grumpy, moody, and exhausted.”

**“I don’t get mad at him for going without me.”** “This was a tricky one for us at first,” Park acknowledges. “If I wanted to

stay in, I wanted him to stay in too, but that’s not fair.” Park’s husband doesn’t get mad at her for wanting to stay home, she says, so she can’t be mad at him for wanting to get out.

**“I tell him when I need down time.”** “Once I started doing this, all our arguing over going somewhere stopped,” Park says—because her husband no longer feels “blindsided” when Park needs some down time.

**“He’s the life of the party, and I won’t try to change that.”** When she does go to events with her husband, Park lets him “do his thing.” “We can respect each other’s varying social approaches,” she stresses, “and realize that, above all, it isn’t personal.”

## SELF-CARE

### Treat Some of Your Alone Time as Special Solo Dates

There’s garden variety “going out” and there is “going out” as in the slightly more formalized going out on a **date**—i.e., spending quality time with someone to develop or strengthen a relationship with them.

A date, in other words, rises to the level of a special occasion. Which is why you should sometimes treat your alone time as a *solo date*, says lifestyle blogger Jackie Em.

A solo date involves “taking yourself out, treating yourself like royalty, and spending quality time with yourself,” Em writes in her recent blog post entitled “How to Take Yourself on a Date—Solo Date Ideas to Treat Yourself.”

You can, for example, take a

class, or take yourself out to dinner, or go shopping or to a movie, or go on a hike—alone.

It can take some getting used to, Em admits. “We are conditioned to feel sorry for someone sitting at a restaurant alone,” she writes, “or when we are alone, we feel like everyone is staring at us.”

But they’re likely not.

And even if they are ... well, it’s still worth it to treat some of your alone time as solo dates, Em says.

“Although I spend a lot of time alone,” she writes, “taking that extra step and making a special evening or treating myself to something nice really does boost my mood.”



# IT'S AN INTROVERT'S LIFE

## You Don't Have to Defend Your Introverted Choices Anymore

By Peter Vogt

A few years ago, the counselor I was working with at the time did a life-altering exercise with me.

She held up a pretend chocolate ice cream cone in her right hand and a pretend vanilla cone in her left. "Pick one," she said.

*[Insert two-second pause here as I silently pondered her motive and evaluated potential countertactics.]*

"Is this a trick?" I asked.

"Nope," she replied. "Pick one."

*[Pause to think. And then...]*

"Chocolate," I said.

"Why?" she asked.

*[Pause to think, and to see if I could pinpoint the trick she was indeed trying to pull. No luck.]*

"Because vanilla is so blah and chocolate is richer," I offered.

"Wrong," she responded. "Pick again."

*[Pause for annoyance to sprout atop my attempts at sleuthing.]*

"I thought you said this wasn't a trick."

"It isn't. Pick again."

"Chocolate," I said.

"Why?"

"Umm ... because I like it better than vanilla?"

"Is that a question or a statement?"

"Because I like it better than vanilla," I clarified.

"Closer," she replied, "but still wrong. Pick again."

Grrrrrrr!

*[Picture cartoon character here with*

*smoke coming out of his ears, accompanied by the sound effect of the whistle that blew when Fred Flintstone's shift was over.]*

I couldn't figure out what she was trying to do, or why she was suddenly trying to drive me nuts in the process. (She had always seemed so kind ...)

I kept picking chocolate and coming up with a litany of reasons for my choice. "Wrong. Pick again," my counselor patiently repeated.

Finally, in desperation, I picked chocolate yet again and, when she asked why for the fifty-seventh & \$%#-ing time, I blurted out: "Because I just want it, that's why!"

"Right!" she (finally) exclaimed.

*[Pause for confusion to set in.]*

"Pete," she continued, "you don't have to justify yourself. You can pick chocolate because you want chocolate. That's enough. There doesn't need to be any further explanation."

*[Pause for realization to begin.]*

*[More pausing.]*

*[More pausing.]*

*[Silence.]*

*[Light dawns on Marblehead.]*

"Really?"

Really.

Now, I won't lie: I didn't magically grow more assertive in my choices following that session. To this day I am still working on my no-need-to-justify mindset. You don't undo decades of misguided thinking and behavior overnight.

But I have (slowly) learned to apply this critical lesson to one of the



most deep-seated parts of myself: my introversion, and the choices and behaviors that arise from it.

For years, my default has been to immediately start defending choices like, for example, declining to go to the holiday party. In my own defense (there I go again!), I've had my reasons, and you have too if you're prone to doing the same thing.

We live in an extraverted world—especially in western culture. And extraverted culture has its mores on what sorts of behaviors are right or wrong, healthy or unhealthy, to be pursued or avoided.

But you know what? You don't need to defend or justify or rationalize or apologize for your introverted preferences. Neither do I.

There comes a time in life when you need to quit playing defense—not because it isn't understandable, or even effective in some backhanded ways, but because you don't deserve to have to play defense all the time. No one does.

So stop. Pick your own ice cream and be done with it.

Starting today.

Coming soon ...

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



You **deserve** to be who you are.

You **need** to be who you are.

You **can** be who you are.

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

**You Will!**

# PRACTICAL RESEARCH

## Communication Skills Prevail in Perceptions of Leadership

Your communication skills are more influential than your level of introversion or extraversion when it comes to others seeing you as a leader, according to a recent study in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*.

In the study, more than 400 college students worked in leaderless small groups to discuss several personnel and strategy decisions facing a fictitious company. The students completed personality assessments as well, and after the sessions they each responded to the question: “To what extent did you rely on [participant ID] for leadership?”

In the meantime, trained outside observers watched videotapes of the sessions to independently rate each

participant’s communication skills using a variety of criteria.

The study’s key finding: Communication skills—not personality—were the driving factor behind participants’ perceptions of their fellow students’ leadership potential.

“For years, introverts have read and been told that they’re at a disadvantage compared to extraverts in terms of being viewed as leaders and being promoted into leadership roles,” says study co-author James Lemoine, an associate professor of organization and human resources at the University at Buffalo School of Management in New York.

This phenomenon is “especially troublesome,” Lemoine says, “because extraversion is not something that can be taught. It’s a stable personality difference.”

The study’s findings are powerful, for introverts in particular, because they reveal the importance of communication over personality in the concept of *leadership emergence*—that is, the things that make you look like a leader in the eyes of others.

That in turn is important “because communication skills can be learned,” Lemoine stresses, “which means that anyone can develop their communication skills to enhance their chances of being viewed as leadership material by others.”

**Sources:** “Inclined but Less Skilled? Disentangling Extraversion, Communication Skill, and Leadership Emergence,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, October 7, 2021 (online first publication); *Forbes* website, March 18, 2022.

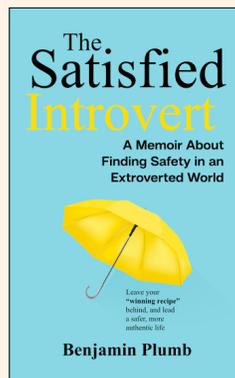
# REFLECTIVE READS

## The Satisfied Introvert Reveals the Perils of Self-Deception

In *The Satisfied Introvert*, author Benjamin Plumb harnesses the power of story—in this case his own—to offer perhaps the most important life lesson you can learn: that you can’t be someone you’re not.

You can try, of course, and Plumb did for decades. But you just can’t do it. That’s “can’t” in the context of you can’t pull it off and—more crucially—“can’t” in the context of you just can’t do that to yourself; you don’t deserve it.

Plumb theorizes that all introverts create for themselves what he calls a



“winning recipe,” some sort of process that is intended to help them succeed in an extroverted world. Thousands of potential recipes exist, Plumb says: be diplomatic, be thorough, be likable, etc.

His own winning recipe was to be

methodical. And for a while it worked, especially in “narrow domains” like school.

But in *The Satisfied Introvert*, Plumb reveals that in the long run, the “winning recipe” is actually a formula for losing, be it in your relationships, your career, or other aspects of your life.

“Hopefully,” he concludes, “my story will inspire you to learn all of this more quickly than I did.”

“As an introvert, you are at your best when you accept and enjoy who you are. You need make no apologies for being quieter than others. Your introvert traits make you an asset to everyone you know.”

Continued from page 1

but also to *prepare* before the fact and—especially tricky but frequently imperative—to *pause*: to give ourselves time to think during the fact.

### Reflecting to *Prepare*

You may not even be consciously aware of it, but one of the key ways you maintain your energy as an introvert—or perhaps “minimize your energy loss” is a more accurate way of putting it—is to be as prepared as possible for upcoming activities, events, and experiences.

That preparation, of course, involves reflection. When you have the time to think carefully about whatever it is that’s coming up for you, you invariably end up feeling more ready for it and, ultimately, doing better at it.

Suppose, for instance, that instead of receiving just 10 minutes’ notice for that emergency meeting at work, you had instead been informed about it the day before. Helpful, right? Then again, though, not always done or even possible in the real world of work ... right?

True enough. Yet still: You have options. You can email or text your boss and ask for a quick highlight on what the meeting will be about, so that you can do at least a bit of thinking to prepare. You can ask colleagues what they might know.

Even if you can’t get a hold of anyone for clarification, you can immediately stop what you’re doing and gather yourself—knowing full well that you need the time, brief as it might be, to get ready for what you may be called upon to do and consider at the session.

### Reflecting to *Pause*

If only you could have bought yourself some time, even just a few

seconds, to think during that emergency meeting.

Along the way, you had a few things you wanted to say. But by the time you figured out what they were and, especially, how you would articulate them, the others in the meeting had long moved on.

Reflecting in the moment is likely the most difficult type of reflecting for you to pull off in your fast-paced, freewheeling interactions with others. Your introverted mind just doesn’t work quickly, and for good reason. As Marti Olsen Laney points out in her book *The Introvert Advantage*, research has shown that introverts and extraverts use different brain pathways to direct their focus, with introverts’ pathways being longer and more meandering than those of extraverts.

So in the moment, having time to think is a **need**, not merely a nicety, for you as an introvert.

How do you get it? By employing time-buying techniques, not only for the moment itself but for later on as well.

At the meeting, for instance, you could have said something like “I haven’t fully thought this through, but one initial idea I have is ...”—and then shared that idea as best you could.

You also could have said something that would have given you even more time and helped you ultimately deliver a carefully considered observation. To wit: “I need to think about that. Let me get back to you before the end of the day.”

As you reflect on your reflection activities (there’s that reflection as *processing* again, after the fact!), ask yourself: “Am I consistently getting/taking the time I need to think before and during as well?”

If not, in one case or in both, think about ways you can get that time (there’s that reflection as *preparing* again, before the fact!).

And if someone interrupts with an “emergency meeting” or some such thing? Tell them “give me a minute” (there’s that reflection as *pausing* again, during the fact!)—then take it.





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## INTROVERT INSPIRATIONS

"You are at your best and contribute the most when you are completely true to who you really are."

~ Brigitte van Tuijl

"Stop trying to fit yourself into someone else's mold. ... Stop agonizing over your 'weaknesses' and start celebrating your strengths (because we introverts have them in spades)."

~ Allison Colin-Thome

"[S]ilence can be so much more than the absence of words. Among other things, it can be an opportunity for us to pause, think, and reflect about ourselves and the world around us."

~ Kevin Martz

"Introverts have spent their whole lives adjusting to fit into, and accommodate, extraverted lifestyles. It's time to expect a little in return (or maybe a lot)."

~ Amy Horton