

# Parenting:

## Introverted vs. EXTROVERTED Children



■ by Katie DeYoung, MA, LCPC, LMHC

Parents, have you ever experienced the following thoughts: I wonder if my daughter is spending too much time in her bedroom, should I be worried? I am concerned because my son is constantly engaged in some sort of activity and is unable to just sit and be by himself. These concerns reveal a fear that a child may be experiencing developmental or emotional issues. Rather than seeing excessive time spent in one's room or the inability to be alone as automatic cause for concern, I would like to point out the possibility that these behaviors may stem from a child's personality.

Having a better understanding of the personality traits of extroversion and introversion will provide some clarity on the above-mentioned concerns and situations. These specific traits are helpful in learning about how people see their world and also how people are best able to recharge. Thankfully God did not create everyone the same; he created various personality traits in order for his creation to glorify him and show him to the world in countless amazing ways. In hopes of providing a useful parenting resource, this article will define the traits of extroversion and introversion and then will apply this information as it relates to one's own personality and parenting style.

### Extroversion

Society today often compares extroverts with being a kind, fun, and outgoing group of people. As a result of this stereotype, I feel that extroversion can be seen as a "healthy" trait that many individuals seek to acquire. While this comparison may give an accurate description of some extroverts, it fails to address the core issues. Putting aside these assumptions and stereotypes, here is what you need to know about the extroverted child.

- An extroverted child pays attention to his outer world.
- When emotionally drained, an extroverted child recharges by being around family and friends.

This social aspect provides a necessary component to figuring out what makes this particular child thrive. On the opposite end of the spectrum, having "alone time" can prove to be very tiring for the extroverted child.



### Introversion

On the other hand, the word "introversion" has an entirely different implication. The assumption is that introverts are quiet, withdrawn individuals who refrain from social interactions at all cost. More dramatically, it may be that introverts are seen as socially awkward or social outcasts. Putting aside these connotations, let's unravel the truth about introverts.

- An introverted child focuses on his/her inner world.
- Alone time is where the introverted child rests and gets re-energized for the day ahead.

Personal engagement (being in their own head) is a way for introverts to flourish in their personalities. With this said, it can be draining for the

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introverted child to interact with a group of people (small or large). This does not mean that introverted children hate spending time with family; it may just be tiring for their personality.

### Now What?

To varying degrees, one of these personality traits is present within all individuals of all ages. As a parent, it is important to recognize which personality trait you most identify with as a way to better understand yourself, recognize how you view the world and know what is needed for you to re-energize. I also want to make clear the fact that no trait is better than the other. There is no right or wrong way to approach life as it relates to extroversion and introversion.

With that said, parents need to identify where on the spectrum of extroversion and introversion they fall into. With their own personalities in mind, parents can best move forward into gaining a clearer view of their children's behavior. It may be tempting to parent your child out of your personal feelings and experiences as an extrovert/introvert. However, doing so will not benefit your child. Be a learner of your child and allow them to flourish in their own unique personality. The beauty of this "flourishing" can be seen, for example, in Christian men and women who have owned their personality traits and have become great preachers (more extroverted) and writers (more introverted). Everyone has a role to perform in the body of Christ and our personality traits can uniquely qualify us for certain ones.

Still have concerns? Let me wrap up by sharing some final thoughts. Having a healthy balance between alone time and spending time with other people seems to be the best solution. The Bible speaks to this balance by providing examples of when Jesus performed miracles with large crowds of people, when Jesus fellowshiped with a small gathering of close friends and when Jesus went off alone to pray. Jesus was intentional to spend time alone during the busy years of his ministry. He also did not shy away from breaking bread with hundreds of people. So, encourage your introverted child to participate in family time, recognizing that, although your child may enjoy time with family, it can also be a draining experience. Help your extroverted child in developing the necessary skills he will need to spend time alone.



God has made us all different. Ask yourself these questions. Who are the extroverts in my family? Who are the introverts? How do these personality traits impact my family's dynamics and how each member might flourish? Can some of my previous areas of concern be answered by taking my child's personality trait into consideration? Taking a moment to recognize how God has uniquely shaped you and how he has uniquely created your son or daughter will equip you to help them flourish. ■



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