

# INTROVERT INFLUENCE: EXPANDING YOUR CIRCLE



The world needs introverts, and introverts need extroverts. God made people for community and to be interdependent. We can be personally enriched and sharpened by being in connection with those who are different from us. Big things get done by working together. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

With their natural tendency to listen, observe, think deeply, plan, and thoughtfully respond, introverts can be insightful problem solvers and quiet influencers. But in a culture that values “outloud” individualism, introverts may get overshadowed. They may not know where to begin in building connections with those beyond their tight circles and miss bringing to bear their much-needed insights and gifts. Introverts can build their connections and their influence. As one who leans more toward introversion, I’m known among my work acquaintances, mentors, and friends as someone who is highly networked. But before we get to how to build connections as an introvert, we must know what an introvert *is*.

## **PRINCIPLES**

Introverts are people with a personality type whose physical energy increases through quiet, solitary activities and find that the stimulation of large social gatherings tends to drain their energy. So though it’s possible for them to enjoy and not shy away from or fear social encounters or even gatherings like a concert, sports event, conference, or community celebration, the stimulation depletes them and they prefer to have some alone time to replete their physical energy. When they do have social encounters, they prefer that it be meaningful, with a few.

Baton Exchange

Both introverts and extroverts are people created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-28), are given charge of Creation as God's stewards and co-laborers, and are proclaimed to be created "very good." (Genesis 1:31) They were created marvelously and with purpose. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." (Psalms 139:14 ) Both are essential parts of the Body of Christ and have different gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit for building it up (Ephesians 4:16) Susan Cain, the author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, notes that 33 to 50% of Americans are introverts.

Introverts naturally possess attributes and behaviors that the bible calls all Believers to that may be more difficult for the extrovert, including the tendency to listen before speaking. See Ecclesiastes 5:1-3, James 1:19, Proverbs 10:19, 21:23, 17:28-29.

Introvert or extrovert, your motivations and methods for building connections must be redeemed. Add value to the relationship. Connect people to others with no strings attached. Value people's time, position, role, authority, capacity, etc. Treat people the way you want to be treated. You need to have a profound respect for the individual, no matter their status.

Though I feel very comfortable leading and speaking to groups of people, I'm not a life-of-the-party type of person (and I'm very comfortable with that too.) Over the years I've had business development and nonprofit leader jobs. These roles have required identifying, initiating, and building relationship with people that I didn't know. I can remember going to networking events as part of my business development job and feeling the urge to go to the bathroom several times before I got myself out into the fray of things. Reflecting, I think the context was the trigger for the nervousness. I actually love initiating and connecting with a stranger over coffee to hear their story and get to know them, but typically not in a context with hundreds of people. And when I'm catalyzed by the focus of a strong motive, nerves seem to be a minimal factor.

What I've discovered about myself is that my genuine interest, curiosity, and quiet, sincere demeanor was a strength that allowed me to be very good at building rapport quickly with people. It somehow built trust. Many introverts exhibit this set of tendencies. Recognize it as a strength and allow it to give you confidence.

For an introvert to expand their circles, they need to first recognize that they were created "good," are accepted and loved by God. They are also essential and uniquely wired to bring God's redemptive influence to those around them, including their culture, communities, and workplaces. And they expand their circle in a redeemed, God-honoring way.

### **PRACTICE SKILLS**

*How* can an introvert expand their circle of connections? Start with "why?" Why do you want to expand your connections? Is it required for your job? Essential to a cause you want to move forward? For the richness that varied relationships bring? Use your "why" as the motivational catalyst.

Don't cloister. When you're in a group of people, resist the urge to stick with people that you already know and feel comfortable with. Let them know you are hoping to meet some new people and ask them if they know anyone at the gathering that they recommend connecting with.

Focus on having a good connection or conversation with two or three people at a gathering rather than trying to talk to as many people as you can. Then follow up with them afterwards. Try to be genuinely interested in people.

Small talk. Most introverts hate it, but many people just don't feel comfortable going deep with someone that they just met. So, you'll need to learn how to do it. I've found it helpful to start off conversations by introducing myself, then focusing on the things that I have in common. You're both sharing a common space, time, and likely interest (that specific gathering.) So good questions to ask include, "How did you hear about this place or event? Why are you interested in it? What do you hope to get out of it? Have you been here before? Do you know others here?" Using a topical question-asking tool like [F.O.R.M.](#) to stimulate conversation can also be useful. (Family & Friends, Occupation, Recreation, Motivation) Practice self-awareness of your intensity and duration of engaging with deeper questions. People appreciate thoughtful questions, but I know that if I find someone who is willing to have a meaningful conversation, I may "latch on" and monopolize their time at a gathering. You don't want to do that either. Finally, don't underestimate the role of prayer, the Holy Spirit, divine appointments, and God giving favor.

Suzanne Verity, author of the article, *8 Tips for Social Success*, (<https://www.webmd.com/balance/social-life-success>), offers ideas on social interactions. Here are a few:

1. Find a group that meets regularly to talk about things you're interested in, like a book club, a walking group, or a service organization.
2. Show up on time so you can meet people one-on-one rather than try to break into huddles that form later on.
3. The best way to boost your confidence and expand your social circle is to talk to lots of new people a little at a time. It shows you are comfortable with different people, which, in turn, draws others.
4. It's enough to be nice, kind, and open. Most of us like to meet someone who is genuinely interested in us. Don't worry about being "interesting".
5. Volunteering on a regular basis with the same organization is a great way to meet people who share your passions and interests and build relationships over time.

You can be friendly and interesting without being gregarious or outgoing. But you do have to get going, to show yourself friendly and interesting.

## **BARRIERS**

There can be a variety of barriers to expanding one's circles. Knowledge and skills-based barriers are common to both the extrovert and the introvert. The skills mentioned above can be practiced. Another barrier is social anxiety.

### **Social anxiety as a barrier.**

God created Adam and Eve as social creatures with perfect relational harmony and trust between themselves and Him. In clearly seeing Him, they clearly understood themselves, because they came

Baton Exchange

from Him and reflected His image. God is holy, love, and truth. He related to them from those. There was no blame, shame, fear, or anxiety. When they rebelled against God, a breach of trust occurred and relationship with God, each other, and within themselves was distorted and clouded. With a clouded relationship with the One Who is Truth, they were more prone to believe lies about Him, each other, and themselves. With lies and mistrust came blame, shame, fear, and anxiety. And blame, shame, fear, and anxiety tend to feed lies and mistrust. What was whole became incomplete. What was very good, became corrupted. What was clear, became distorted. The brokenness separated individuals from the benefits of community, new relationships, and the richness that those had the potential to bring. And so here we are today, susceptible to doubt, lies, mistrust, fear, and anxiety.

Social anxiety- and shyness- are emotions of distress typically rooted in fear, whereas introversion is a personality preference and not emotionally driven. The fear could be of negative social judgement or humiliation. These fears may create physical reactions in the body. Those with social anxiety may avoid social interactions because of those fears and the stress they trigger, rather than avoid them because they simply drain their social energy like that for an introvert. Getting to the root causes- and solutions- of one's social anxiety is one key to overcoming it as a barrier to social engagement. Sometimes the root causes are lies we believe about ourselves, others, or God. Working to replace those lies with the truth of Who God is and His truth about us is an important part of gaining freedom from social anxiety. He loves us (Romans 5:8), accepts us (Ephesians 1:6), doesn't condemn us (Romans 8:1), and has a purpose for us (Jeremiah 29:11). As lies are replaced with His truth, fear with His love, rejection with His acceptance, and doubt with His certainty, we will begin to experience freedom in the prospect of social interactions, for "there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment." (1 John 4:18)

Introverts can expand their circles of influence, being enriched by those different than they. And as they do, God can work through them using their gifts and insights to bless and influence others.

---

### **Ask Your Mentor**

1. Did you grow up in a family of introverts or extroverts or both?
2. In what ways do you push yourself beyond what you are typically comfortable with to improve your emotional, spiritual, and physical health?
3. What's your favorite way to recharge?
4. How do you talk to yourself when you need to go meet strangers? How do you talk to God?
5. What does it look like to trust God in social situations?
6. Can you share stories or experiences of when you had to be assertive in a work context?
7. How does one accept and own their introversion?
8. Have you ever had to deal with social anxiety? How did you work through it?

### **Go Do Ideas**

1. Reflect on barriers. What might yours be? Knowledge and skills? Opportunity? Social Anxiety?
2. What about you do you think makes God smile fondly? Ask Him.
3. Listen & Obey. "God, what would you like for me to do from this article?"
4. Trust God? What would it look like to trust God in applying what you have learned?
5. What's something that you enjoy doing or want to learn? Find a group of people who are doing it and check it out. Check out [www.MeetUp.com](http://www.MeetUp.com), [www.Nextdoor.com](http://www.Nextdoor.com), Facebook, LinkedIn, [www.Eventbrite.com](http://www.Eventbrite.com), and other social media platforms that connect people, search for your interest and for groups meeting in your area.

### **Go Deeper: Further Conversation & Study Ideas**

Baton Exchange

1. Introvert versus insecurity or social anxiety assessment? What questions would you use to sort out the two in a person? Do you typically suffer from social anxiety? How does one reject insecurity?
2. Have you ever participated in something in order to intentionally grow your connections? If so, what? How did it go? What did you learn?
3. What value do you see in those who are extroverted?
4. What annoys you about others who are introverts? Extroverts?
5. What introverts do you admire and why?
6. Do a google search on "introverts in the bible" and dig into what you discover.

### Sources & Resources

Article- Is it wrong for a Christian to be an introvert?, <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-introvert.html>

Article- <https://www.topresume.com/career-advice/networking-tips-for-introverts>

Article- <https://www.webmd.com/balance/introvert-personality-overview>

Article- How can a Christian overcome social anxiety?, <https://www.gotquestions.org/social-anxiety.html>

Article- Introvert Vs Extrovert, <https://biblereasons.com/introvert-vs-extrovert/>

Article- Understanding Introverts: A lesser known fact or two, <https://summersorensen.com/2017/02/10/understanding-introverts-a-lesser-known-fact-or-two/>

Article- 23 of the Most Amazingly Successful Introverts in History, Inc. Magazine, <https://www.inc.com/magazine/202304/diana-ransom/the-sba-after-ppp.html>

10 Reasons Why Networking Is Essential For Your Career, Bianca Miller Cole <https://www.forbes.com/sites/biancamillercole/2019/03/20/why-networking-should-be-at-the-core-of-your-career/#1889443f1300>

Video- Susan Cain explains why introverts are underrated, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j00zK54ZpPg>

Video- 5 Signs It's Social Anxiety and not Introversion, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcaUxLvOfxQ>

Book- Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking, Susan Cain

Book- Social Anxiety: The Social Anxiety Cure: 7 Steps to Freedom from Social Anxiety, by Gerald Confienza

Book- How To Be An Introvert In An Extrovert World, by Michele Connolly

Book- The Art of Conversation: How to Communicate Effectively by Refining Your Social, by Stephen Haunts

Website- Extraversion and introversion, Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extraversion\\_and\\_introversion#cite\\_note-17](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extraversion_and_introversion#cite_note-17)

Assessment- Myers-Briggs, Introvert or Extrovert?, <https://brainfall.com/quizzes/myers-briggs-are-you-extroverted-or-introverted/>