

SOLUTIONS

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Unmasking the Truth about Introverts & Extroverts



Modern pop-culture psychology would have us believe that we all fall into one of two camps: introverts or extroverts—the former being a group of reserved, quiet and shy reclusives, and the latter comprised of energetic, outgoing and bubbly social butterflies.

While there's some small truth in this, the reality is far more complex and littered with myths and misunderstandings. No one is 100 percent introverted or 100 percent extroverted. Most people fall somewhere in the middle, or favor one over the other, but introverts can and do have qualities that are traditionally associated with extroverts, and vice versa.

The basic difference between the two groups is that introverts get their energy from the inside and extroverts get their energy from the outside—introverts embrace self-reflection and solitude and extroverts prefer social interaction and external activities. But again, it's important to keep in mind that all the ingredients that make us who we are can't be whittled down to one category. As with any easy labels, misconceptions are rampant:

Misconception: Everyone is either an extrovert or an introvert.

Truth: Most of us fall somewhere on the spectrum between one or the other, and many are in the center of that spectrum.

Misconception: Extroverts are happier than introverts.

Truth: Our society tends to favor people who are exuberant and energetic. We've associated these traits with happiness, but that's just not accurate. The reason introverts don't get overly excited or energetic isn't because they're miserable. It's because they show their happiness in different ways, and different things make them happy. Introverts, by nature, tend to keep things low-key because overstimulation exhausts them.

Misconception: Introverts are shy.

Truth: This tends to be the biggest myth with introverts—that they're shy and meek. Because introverts tend to spend a lot of time in their own head, they may come off shy. Although most shy people are introverted, not all introverts are shy. Shyness is often linked with anxiety. It's an uncomfortable state of mind, and not all introverts are uncomfortable in social situations. They may be reserved, quiet or reflective, but not uncomfortable.

Misconception: Introverts always want to be alone, and extroverts never want to be alone.

Truth: Everyone, at some point, needs alone time. Introverts may need more of it, but extroverts need it, too. By the same token, an introvert will eventually get stir crazy with too much solitude. Introverts aren't hermits and extroverts aren't social-event hoppers. They need solitude at different times and for different periods of time, but everyone needs a recharge now and then, no matter which 'camp' they fall into.



ANGER IS A FEELING

Recently in Southwest Louisiana, it seems domestic violence incidents have increased in severity and frequency. We see acts of violence in the news each day. With all the stress we have, it is of no surprise that anger-related issues such as domestic violence have increased. However, why is anger the culprit? We all experience anger at one time or another, yet only a fragment of us who do experience anger go on to act out with such violence.

First, it is important to note that there is a difference between anger as a feeling and the behaviors often associated with anger. Feeling anger is part of being human and is appropriate. How we act when we are angry is the key difference in moving from a normal feeling to a poor action. We act out sometimes for others to know how we feel, but there are better ways to express anger than acting angry.

Second, when anger is acted out, it becomes practiced and learned. Angry actions may bring about a temporary solution to the problem or relief to the situation. The relief reinforces such behavior for future use. Repeated acting out of anger comes at a cost. Angry behavior may have a short-term benefit, but over time can destroy relationships and label individuals in a negative fashion. It can leave those that we love and care about with a feeling of anguish, or worthlessness, or hurt.

Third, anger is usually expressed for a variety of emotions – fear, sadness, loneliness, anxiety, frustration, stress, and others. Events that cause any of these emotions can trigger anger reactions that have worked in the past. For example, the ever-increasing rise in unemployment is leaving families with many negative emotions which could be displayed through angry behavior. This may increase the potential for domestic violence or violence in general. It is up to us how we **identify and confront** these emotions. We can either let them overtake us or we can choose better behaviors than acting out.

Fourth, true anger is a feeling and not a behavior. In therapy, we help people learn how to choose to act if they are angry, sad, depressed, anxious, or otherwise. Each person has choices about how to act on their unique thoughts and experiences. Sometimes it takes only a brief moment to increase our healthy options, and sometimes it takes making a rule or routine about how to handle situations in a healthy way.

We have the choice to reach out and give a firm handshake, the choice to flash a smile, and the choice to give a hug. We have the choice to use good manners, the choice to be respectful, and the choice to be kind. Choose how you want to behave. So when you feel you want to scream at someone, just remember that how you act will affect your relationship with that individual and build a bad reputation for yourself. Sit back, take a breath and realize that although you may be angry, you have the choice to act on that feeling in a positive manner. If you find yourself not doing as well as you would like, seek help by contacting us at your EAP.

For caring and confidential help for personal and family problems, call Solutions Counseling & EAP.

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