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## The Gifts of Introversion (or being quiet)

by Maureen Chapman, M.A., R.C.C

Very few people are *completely* extroverted or introverted, but for those who are closer to the introverted end of the spectrum, please read on.

Extroversion has been seen as the ideal personality type. What we are now recognizing is that introversion is also a normal variation of personality. Research shows that the brains of introverts are more active than those of extroverts. This explains why introverts limit how much comes in, while extroverts go where the action is. In brief, these mostly biologically determined traits can be defined as:

Introverts, if given the choice, devote their social energy to small groups, preferring coffee with a close friend to a party full of strangers. They prefer to think before they speak, have a more deliberate approach to risk, and enjoy solitude. They feel energized when focusing deeply on a subject or activity that interests them. When they are in overly stimulating environments (too loud, too crowded, etc.) they tend to feel overwhelmed. They seek out environments of peace and sanctuary; they have an active inner life and are at their best when they tap into its riches. They need privacy and time to be alone. They can be socially engaging and funny but being with a large group of people for too long is emotionally draining for them. Introverts draw their energy from quiet and looking within.

Some of the most successful introverts in history include Einstein, Bill Gates, Spielberg, Eleanor Roosevelt, Zuckerberg, Abraham Lincoln, JK Rowling, Gandhi, Michael Jordan, Meryl Streep, Steve Martin, Dr. Seuss, and Barack Obama.

Extroverts on the other hand tend to relish social life and are energized by interacting with friends and strangers alike. They're typically assertive, go-getting, and able to seize the

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## Caught in the Middle: Supporting the Child Through Parental Divorce

by Nancy Michel, M.A., R.Psych.

Last week I learned that a young couple I know had recently separated. I remembered their wedding and the promising future they imagined together. I don't know the circumstances of their separation but I do hope that they have tried hard to make their marriage work; that knowledge will be important to their children. I also hope that they are committed to working on an effective partnership as co- parents to their two young girls. I hope that they are supported by other significant adults- family and friends- who can help challenge them to see their daughters' experiences and feelings as separate from their own.

No man is an island. We need other people to support and to challenge us. There is no time when this is truer than during separation/ divorce. The process of divorcing is understandably emotional and the presence of effective "support" people can be critical.

A parent undergoing divorce needs to be reminded of these truths:

1. The relationship change in the child's family concerns the marital relationship, not the child's relationship with either parent. Parents need to be reminded to avoid framing the separation as "What your father has done to us" or as suggesting that "Your mother doesn't care about us".

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Denis E. Boyd & Associates Inc.

202 - 1046 Austin Avenue, Coquitlam, BC V3K 3P3

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## *The Gifts of Introversion...continued from cover*

day. Extroverts are great at thinking on their feet; they're relatively comfortable with conflict. Given the choice, extroverts usually prefer more stimulating environments that give them frequent opportunities to see and speak with others. When they're in quiet environments, they're prone to feeling bored and restless. They are actively engaged in the world around them and at their best when tapping into its energy. Extroverts draw energy from others.

### **One could ask "Why does it matter what you are"?**

It matters because introversion and extroversion lie at the heart of human nature. They are the "north and south of temperament." When you make life choices that are congruent with your temperament—and allow others to do the same—you unleash vast stores of energy. Conversely, when you spend too much time battling your own nature, the opposite happens: you deplete yourself.

There is pressure in North America to live up to extroverted standards. Thus, introverts may attempt to mold themselves into individuals who possess these characteristics because that's what they been told will help them achieve success, happiness, wealth, and popularity. Thus, individuals who should truly feel at ease to embrace their introversion, are made to feel as if they are flawed in comparison to their more extroverted peers. And who can blame them? If society emphasizes grades based on class participation and employers favour those that can deliver a stellar presentation, it seems as though the only way to "win" is to take on traits that feel foreign and unfamiliar to half of the population.

Being told for most of their life, by their parents, the school system, friends, co-workers or partners that they need to be "bolder, socialize more, talk louder, talk quicker, think on your feet, do team sports, etc." can create a sense of shame that they are flawed and inadequate. The realization that a natural trait such as introversion has been perpetuated for over a century as a sign of pathology or disappointment is an epiphany to people who possess these "quiet" and "inward" traits. The fact is, few people until recently seemed to know or understand how important introversion is to our society.

Many individuals who have presented with symptoms such as low self-esteem, depression, or anxiety may struggle because they are introverts who have spent too much time and energy comparing themselves to those who are extroverted. They end up concluding they are flawed. If it is seen as the norm to be extroverted, individuals may not understand why those characteristics do not come naturally to them or why they feel so uncomfortable in certain situations. Attempting to be someone that they are not can result in internal conflict and difficulties in relationships with peers, parents, partners and work.

When they can stop looking at extroversion as the ideal to be achieved and realize that extroverted traits are as natural to some people just as introverted traits are natural for themselves an inner acceptance can be achieved. There should not be the internal critical dialogue of which one of the two styles is inferior or superior. Each has its own powerful and rewarding merits and it is as important for introverts to see the value in the extroverted nature just as it is for the extrovert to see the same in the introvert.

What is needed is for those who have the gift of introversion to recognize and embrace their qualities, while at the same time gaining a greater understanding of how to peacefully navigate a world designed for extroverts.



## *Marriage Can Be Miserable...*

*by Denis Boyd, M.A., R.Psych.*

When a couple marries, they can be truly miserable if they follow a few simple rules!

When life is busy and stress levels are high, it is important to "do one's own thing." Take time to unwind and relax; this is far more important than conversing with your spouse.

If a conversation should happen to break out, be sure to *react* and *avoid understanding* what is being said to you. Feel free to be upset or annoyed; it is their fault, and they enflamed the discussion on purpose.

When your spouse gets irritated with something you have said or done, be sure to get angry with them for being irritated and ruining your day. Ignore why they were upset in the first place.

It is predictable that you will have a difference of opinion with your spouse. Be sure to dig in and lock down with your point of view. Collaboration and compromise are highly overrated.

There is nothing quite like a good power struggle to get one fired up. Who do they think they are to be disagreeing with your opinion which makes perfect sense?

Feel free to yell and repeat yourself several times. Or if you prefer, shut down, withdraw, and speak only in monosyllables for several days.

If perchance you should say or do something they dislike, that's their problem, not yours. If they do something to annoy or upset you, hold a grudge as long as possible so as to teach them a lesson.

Be sure to buddy up to your children and take their side when your spouse is being strict. If on the other hand you are the strict one, lay down the law with the kids and ignore your spouse's point of view.

You are quite happy just the way you are. Why change? On the other hand, your spouse needs to change in so many ways. Be sure to let them know, as often as possible, what changes you want them to make.

Don't worry about telling them when you are going out with friends or how long you will be out. This would be a major hassle. Your spouse, on the other hand, should ask your permission to do something on their own.

Having a miserable marriage is easy, no really!!



## *Caught in the Middle.... continued from cover*

2. It is destructive to the child to hear any criticism of their parent. Most parents understand this but may fail to protect the child from criticism. Parents are often surprised at what the child has overheard; they need to be reminded that at this stressful time children are typically highly vigilant, listening carefully for clues about the changes they are experiencing in their family. Some parents speak negatively about the other parent without regard for the impact on the child but few do this intentionally. Sometimes parents fail to insist that other significant adults including grandparents are not critical of the child's other parent.
3. The child deserves to have his (her) relationship with each parent protected and supported. When parents are living together, the child benefits from unique aspects of his relationships with each parent. It is important to remind a divorcing parent that he or she needs to allow the child to continue to enjoy the benefits of each of those relationships.
4. What does change upon divorce is the opportunity for the child to experience the buffering effect parents have when they are present together. Children sometimes complain about one parent to the other. It is important to remember that the child may be perceiving pressure to choose one parent over the other or to be critical of one to the other. It is important to listen to the child but also to reinforce your valuing of your child's relationship with each parent; for example, by reminding the child of the qualities or positive intentions of the other parent.
5. Parents can understandably feel and act defensively during divorce. Being critical of the other's parenting can escalate into long term battles. Parents need to be reminded to resist the tendency to criticize or micro manage the other parent- that typically only increases conflict without any positive change to the parenting behavior in question. Conflict undermines the opportunity to work together effectively in the future, that is to collaborate on more important parenting decisions or practices.
6. While parental divorce is traumatic to all children, wise and consistent parenting can help the child adjust to the change in his family. Introducing a new romantic partner to the child before he has had time to adjust typically backfires and undermines any future prospect of a positive relationship between the child and his parent's new partner. It is also true that when a new partner has become involved in the child's life, his other parent needs to allow the child to feel comfortable in his relationship with that new "significant adult". It is important to remember that the child did not ask for his home life to be complicated by parental divorce. The child has the right and need to feel comfortable with and to be supported in positive relationships with the adults who are present in his life.

Family and close friends undoubtedly experience their own disappointment when people they love experience separation and divorce. However, it is important for divorcing parents to be challenged to act in ways that respect the child, protect his relationships with both parents, and free him from making decisions or expressing opinions that may be rooted in his desire to protect his parents rather than being genuine expressions of his own thoughts and feelings.

My practice includes working with families dealing with divorce, and it is not uncommon to see children and teens who are essentially emotionally crippled by the acrimony in the relationship between their divorced parents. I recall one personable 11 year old who was agonizing over which Middle school to enroll in- her father wanted her to go to one Middle school while her mother was insisting she should attend another Middle school. Rather than being able to consider the relative benefits of either school's program, this child was attempting to make the decision that would result in less guilt over disappointing one of her parents. It is not unusual in my practice to meet teens who have been growing up in the shadow of their parents' ongoing conflict. Research proves that their memories of growing up, no matter how enriched the material benefits or opportunities they experienced, will be overshadowed by their memory of anticipating and experiencing continuous conflict between their parents.

Parents experiencing divorce sometimes need to be challenged to make decisions that support their children's' emotional well-being. Divorcing parents may be unable at times to see how their behaviors are undermining their child's adjustment and they can benefit from the wisdom of another adult they trust. You may be that person, the one who protects the child from undue and even unending emotional distress. You may be essential to supporting the child's adjustment to the changes in his family, so that he can ultimately experience his family as a secure and supportive foundation to his development.



## Helpless Love

Once upon a time all feelings and emotions went to a coastal island for a vacation. According to their nature, each was having a good time. Suddenly, a warning of an impending storm was announced and everyone was advised to evacuate the island.

The announcement caused sudden panic. All rushed to their boats. Even damaged boats were quickly repaired and commissioned for duty.

Yet, Love did not wish to flee quickly. There was so much to do. But as the clouds darkened, Love realised it was time to leave. Alas, there were no boats to spare. Love looked around with hope.

Just then Prosperity passed by in a luxurious boat. Love shouted, "Prosperity, could you please take me in your boat?"

"No," replied Prosperity, "my boat is full of precious possessions, gold and silver. There is no place for you."

A little later Vanity came by in a beautiful boat. Again Love shouted, "Could you help me, Vanity? I am stranded and need a lift. Please take me with you."

Vanity responded haughtily, "No, I cannot take you with me. My boat will get soiled with your muddy feet."

Sorrow passed by after some time. Again, Love asked for help. But it was to no avail. "No, I cannot take you with me. I am so sad. I want to be by myself."

When Happiness passed by a few minutes later, Love again called for help. But Happiness was so happy that it did not look around, hardly concerned about anyone.

Love was growing restless and dejected. Just then somebody called out, "Come Love, I will take you with me." Love did not know who was being so magnanimous, but jumped on to the boat, greatly relieved that she would reach a safe place.

On getting off the boat, Love met Knowledge. Puzzled, Love inquired, "Knowledge, do you know who so generously gave me a lift just when no one else wished to help?"

Knowledge smiled, "Oh, that was Time."

"And why would Time stop to pick me and take me to safety?" Love wondered.

Knowledge smiled with deep wisdom and replied, "Because only Time knows your true greatness and what you are capable of. Only Love can bring peace and great happiness in this world."

"The important message is that when we are prosperous, we overlook love. When we feel important, we forget love. Even in happiness and sorrow we forget love. Only with time do we realize the importance of love. Why wait that long? Why not make love a part of your life today?"

by Author Unknown

<http://academictips.org/blogs>

### WORKSHOPS

#### **Boys Issues**

by Chris Boyd, M.A., R.C.C.  
Wednesday, October 19th  
7:00 - 9:00pm

*This workshop will explore common issues experienced by adolescent males and how to enhance your connection with them and help facilitate positive change in their lives. The presentation will provide some psychoeducation on adolescent development and introduce a range of practical strategies and techniques.*

*Topics include: gaming, drugs, bullying, low self esteem, low motivation and intense emotions*

#### **Girls Issues**

by Brooke Lewis, M.A., R.C.C.  
Wednesday, November 16th  
7:00 - 9:00pm

*This workshop will explore issues faced by teen girls today and how you, as parents, can help your young women navigate these fun yet challenging years.*

*Topics include: Basics of the teen brain, bullying, self-harm and technology*

Location: St. Thomas More Collegiate, Burnaby  
Cost: \$15/person or \$20/couple

Please call the office at 604-931-7211 to register.

Check out our website for more upcoming workshops.

### DENIS BOYD & associates PSYCHOLOGISTS & COUNSELLORS

#### **Denis E. Boyd & Associates Inc.**

202 - 1046 Austin Avenue  
Coquitlam, BC V3K 3P3

Tel: 604-931-7211 Fax: 604-931-7288  
info@denisboyd.com  
www.denisboyd.com

Diana Ayres, M.A., R.C.C. 12224  
Erika Bardal, M.A., R.C.C. 3662  
Jean-Claude Bazinet, M.A., R.C.C. 1034  
Chris Boyd, M.A., R.C.C. 4066  
Denis Boyd, M.A., R.Psych. 0399  
Joanna Boyd, M.C.P., R.C.C. 11495  
Maureen Chapman, M.A., R.C.C. 2470  
Rick Hancock, Psy.D., R.Psych. 1494  
Simon Hearn, Ph.D., R.Psych. 1194  
Deborah Kors, Ph.D., R.Psych. 1465  
Don Lasell, M.A., R.C.C. 1083  
Brooke Lewis, M.A., R.C.C. 3332  
Alivia Maric, Ph.D., R.Psych. 1044  
Nancy Michel, M.A., R.Psych. 0477  
Angela Post, Ph.D., R.Psych. 1546  
Joan Schultz, Ph.D., R.Psych. 1724

Note: R.Psych (Registered Psychologist)  
R.C.C. (Registered Clinical Counsellor)