

Ep #22: What Every Extrovert Needs to Know About Introverts



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With Your Host

Rachel Cannon

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Welcome to *Loudmouth Introvert*, a podcast for helping creative introverted entrepreneurs thrive, despite living in a world that's designed for extroverts to succeed. If you're ready to make more money and build the creative business you've been dreaming of, you're in the right place. I'm your host Rachel Cannon.

Have you ever wondered if you might have been an extrovert if things had been different in your life? I certainly have. I can remember being in school and thinking that I wished I had the guts to try out for the school musical, but when it came right down to it, I just didn't have it in me to be on stage. All I could think about was "what if I mess up?" I changed schools twice - once between elementary and middle school, and once between middle school and high school. You know, during those glorious years where girls are vicious to each other? Right, well I walked into two environments where the cliques were already established, and because I was an introvert, I didn't make friends right away. It worried my mom (an extrovert). She would ask me if I'd made friends and when I said no, she'd ask why, and I'd say "Nobody talks to me." And, as if she had no idea that this might be difficult for someone, she'd say "Well then you talk to them! Use that mouth! I don't understand it, you talk all the time at home." Sure mom. Okay mom. Even now that she works in my office with me, we struggle with these issues. If I'm working on a task, I need as few interruptions as possible, and she does not understand why I have to close my door after she's come in several times to ask me something. When I've explained it to her - how it derails my concentration and it takes me so long to get back to where I was in my train of thought - she's frowned in disbelief.

So why is it so difficult for extroverts to understand us? Why is it an "us" and "them" dynamic? Why is it that kids who are introverted are told to speak up, but kids who are extroverted are rewarded for their personalities? I've talked before about the way our culture is set up for extroverts to succeed, but even in unpacking all of that, people are still

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asking me “Is it even true that you’re an introvert? What if that’s just how you feel because of what happened when you switched schools and had such a hard time making friends? Do you think maybe you’re not an introvert anymore?”

What they’re confused about is that introversion is just one part of what makes up my personality. Just like their extroversion, it’s my temperament. Oddly enough, my mom knew this about me when I was a baby. She has told me on many occasions that I hated loud noises when I was little, and even hated being in a bathing suit around anyone other than my family (both of these are still true). But then there are some kids who aren’t phased by new people, experiences, or noises, and they completely adapt to them with no issue. At some point, we’re expected to “grow out of” our introversion into happy, healthy extroverts.

Well here’s a truth bomb that all introverts want extroverts to know: We’re happy. We’re healthy. We’re introverts.

Knowing that there is nothing wrong with me for being an introvert makes it difficult to understand why this hasn’t been more of a conversation in our culture. Nobody tells extroverts “you need to get more into your shell. In fact, I’d like for you to bottle that noise up.” No, they say things like “she’s such a performer!” Or “what a ham!” And reward them with attention.

In preparing for this episode, I felt like there were SO many directions I could go with this topic. What does every extrovert need to know about introverts? Like a million things. But it was that idea that I’m an introvert

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because of some trauma that happened to me at a crucial age, and that I should be “over it” by now (“it” being my introversion) that really kept coming back to me. I wanted to know if the ideas of introversion and extroversion were more than just beliefs we have about ourselves.

Is it really a real thing to be an introvert?

In reading a fabulous book called *The Secret Lives of Introverts* by Jennifer Granneman, I found my answer, and I think it's where we begin the conversation with our extroverted friends.

(1) Introversion is actually in our DNA. This is the part of all of this that fascinates me, because on top of being a creative, I'm also kind of a science nerd. So, our DNA is coded with genetic and biological factors that create our temperament. And introversion and extroversion are temperaments. They are as intrinsic to us as our fingerprints, eye color, height, weight, etc. There are, of course, varying degrees of each - just like there's not one shade of blue eyes the world over or one texture of hair for everyone who's blonde. Our temperament dictates how we respond to our environment. Remember how I said I always hated loud noises, even as a baby? Nobody has to tell an infant “you hate loud noises so you should start crying right now,” it just does. Nobody has to tell me “the sound of heavy metal music irritates you to the point that you want to hit someone,” it just does.

These genetic and biological factors in our DNA are encoded in us long before we are born, and they're what make us “us” once we're born. Here's

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another nugget to blow your mind: anxiety is also encoded in your DNA. There's even evidence that some depression is linked to genetics. So while it's easy for some to say "speak up!" Or "calm down!" they believe it's that simple because the coding for introversion or anxiety doesn't exist in their DNA.

Where people get it wrong is in thinking that these temperament and personality are the same thing, and that temperaments are fixable because our personalities are broken. If you wondering what all of that means for introverts, it's this: your personality is the result of your temperament + life experiences. A personality develops over time, where as our temperament is with us long before birth and stays with us all of our lives. So there is no "growing out of it"...Introverts will be introverts our whole lives because it's a genetic factor.

(2) Our brains are actually wired differently from Extroverts'. Everyone's brain has a reward center, which is controlled by dopamine. Extroverts have more active dopamine in their brains, and as a result, when they pursue a reward, they do not pay the same price as an introvert would for doing that. What I mean by that is this: the amount of energy spent for an extrovert is worth the amount of dopamine released before, during, and after the pursuit of the reward. For introverts, sometimes the reward just doesn't match the amount of energy we expend to get it. Since we aren't energized by rewards, overstimulation like concerts, parties, attention, and socializing can be exhausting or irritating for us.

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Introverts literally, biologically process rewards differently than extroverts. You know the rule around here: energy spent is energy lost. Unless we know we are investing time and energy into something we consider to be very rewarding, we're probably going to feel stiffed when it isn't. What are some of the rewards I anticipate most? Soaking in the tub. Sleeping in. A quiet night at home with nothing to do but watch Netflix. Dinner with a small group of close friends. That's not to say I don't enjoy the occasional big to-do, but as I've said before, the weeks of mental preparation I have to do in order to feel excited and energized with the day finally arrives is...a lot...

So when I'm "blessed" (so to speak) with someone else's version of a reward - a noisy movie, a shallow conversation that seems to have no end, an electronic device that keeps dinging and pinging, a heavy metal song - because I've done absolutely nothing to gear up to receive that blessing, I get irritated. And snippy. And it causes friction between me and others because of how I react. I can control how I react, but I can't control that those things irritate me. It's not that I mean to be rude, although I think it's very rude for someone to be completely unaware that their reward is making you want to stab them, but the instant disruption to my nervous system is difficult. It's challenging to pause long enough to gather myself and sweetly say "That's a little loud, would you mind turning it down?" Because all I want to do is please for the love of God make it stop!

(3) Not all Introverts are alike. If you haven't already noticed, I am very into figuring out what makes people tick. Maybe I should have been a psychologist, but honestly? I don't think I could have handled listening to people talk all day. I would be a zombie by the time I got home. But, I digress. I definitely knew that not all introverts were the same, because I've been mistaken as an extrovert on many occasions, and I have friends who would never be mistaken as such because they're just cool with not talking

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at all. What I found to be very fascinating in my research for this episode, and specifically in *The Secret Lives of Introverts* by Jenn Granneman, is the idea that there are essentially four types of Introverts, and we can be predominantly one type or a blend of types. The four types are:

Social, Thinking, Anxious, Restrained - or STAR, for short, and this was developed by a psychologist named Jonathan Cheek.

Let's start with the Social Introvert: Despite what it sounds like, it does not mean you can pass as an extrovert. It means you are more introverted when it comes to social scenarios. Small groups are your jam, and a Saturday night at home is your idea of low-key heaven. I see myself in this type, but I do also enjoy the occasional big event. What extroverts should know is that this does not mean anti-social or shy. Those are not the same thing as introversion.

Next is the Thinking Introvert: This type of introvert has a rich inner fantasy world. They're often lost in thought, being introspective and self-reflective. Large groups don't phase them. Unlike the Social Introvert, a Thinking Introvert doesn't see social activities as a drain, and so is likely to spend a lot of time with friends, even if they occasionally pull a solo night in. What extroverts should know is that Thinkers aren't delusional, flaky, or out to lunch. They're very in-touch with reality, they just spend a lot of their time imagining possibilities. I can see myself a little bit in this one, but I'm not really what I would consider a daydreamer.

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Anxious Introverts avoid socializing because they lack the self-confidence required to navigate high-energy settings. Unlike the Social Introvert, a quiet night at home doesn't offer any solace...they're likely to spend the evening living and reliving what went wrong or what might go wrong. They're haunted by missteps from years ago that nobody else even remembers. Okay, honestly I see myself here, but more in the turning thoughts over and over in my mind than in the lack of confidence in my social skills.

And finally, the Restrained Introvert is like a cruise liner. It takes some effort to get them going. Their pace is slower, they are very deliberate with their words and actions. But once they're going, it's smooth sailing. A Restrained Introvert has never gotten out of bed at the first sound of their alarm. In fact, they've probably set several, equally spaced out at 15 minute intervals, to give themselves time to ease into their day. Or so I've heard.

Obviously, I'm a mix of three of these kinds of introverts, but I most identify with the Social Introvert type. I genuinely love to be at home. I don't count a weekend spend in pajamas as a loss, ever. No, in fact, that is a total win for me.

In conclusion, I think what all Introverts (social, thinking, anxious, and restrained) would like for Extroverts to know is this: We are equal. I don't even like the word different, because I feel like that establishes one type as the norm, and the other as the deviation from the norm. So while there are differences in our respective temperaments, one is not better than the other. While our society certainly rewards one more than the other, the truth is that it's time for that to change. So how can you, as an extrovert help to move our culture in the right direction? Here are some suggestions:

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If you are friends with an introvert, married to an introvert, in a relationship with an introvert, or work with an introvert:

Cut them some slack. Don't assume that because you consider something to be a reward, that everyone around you should, too. I can guarantee you your introvert does not have any interest in watching that action movies with explosions, car chases, and gun fights with - heaven forbid - surround sound. If you go to an event with them, tell them it's okay to leave when they get ready, and DON'T make them feel guilty for not wanting to stay out with the crowd.

Learn what makes your introvert tick. Since you're observing what they don't like, and not shaming them for it, you should make an effort to find out what they do consider to be a reward. Rest is a BIG one for us. No matter what type of introvert yours is, they will need regular quiet time to recover. Don't take this personally. It actually doesn't have anything to do with you, and they're not being rude by wanting to be alone. They just physically need time to process their day so that they can show up as their best selves when they're with you.

Create opportunities for quality time with your introvert. For us, it is always about quality over quantity of time together. Feeling like our introversion is appreciated by the activities you plan goes a long way in helping steer our culture in the right direction.

And finally, be willing to give your introvert time and space to be alone. Bonus points if YOU determine that this will be a regular part of your routine, and you make it easy for them to find their alone time to rest, recharge, and recover.

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I hope if you're an introvert, you'll share this episode with your favorite extroverts so we can all be included in the conversation! Changing our culture can't be one-sided effort. We need extroverts to work with us to highlight all of the ways we are invaluable parts of our society. The only way to do that is by being willing to invite them to our quiet party. And if you're an extrovert, I applaud you for listening to this entire episode. Drawing attention to the ways we're respectively biologically encoded with our temperaments means that we have incredible opportunities to rely on each other, rather than feeling like we all have to fit into one singular mold.

And creative introverts, I don't want you to miss out on an incredible opportunity to step into your full capabilities as an entrepreneur. I'm hosting a 2-day virtual workshop in March called 6-Figure Secrets for Creative Introverts. Remember, as we've established in this episode - Introversion is NOT a weakness. We simply have strengths that are distinct, but we are bombarded with messages that tell us that the only path to success is by becoming an extrovert. This workshop is going to teach you the ways I've been able to build a successful business without having to transform myself into someone I'm not (and quite frankly, don't want to be). I want you to experience the same kind of success - from creating meaningful work in your creative business, to establishing deep connections with your clients, and ultimately, create real profits for yourself and your business. Nobody else is teaching people like US how we can use our strengths as creative introverts to build lasting success, but I'm here to show you how - and as always, I will keep it 100% real with you and share all of the bruises I've had along the way. Mark your calendars now for March 10th and 11th, register for your seat at rachelcannonlimited.com/workshop now.

Hey, y'all, if you love the show and you find it useful, I would really appreciate it if you would leave me a rating and a review on Apple

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