

Quiet

Notes...

I enjoyed reading **Quiet by Susan Cain** – this is why I thought it was relevant...

About 1/3 of the people you know are introverts or pretending to be extroverts. Yet schools, workplaces, and religious institutions are designed for extroverts. Cain is a Harvard trained lawyer and wrote this book, because she believes there is a bias against introverts and the bias leads to a waste of talent, energy and happiness.

First - **what is introversion?** According to Research psychologist Elaine Aron –introverts tend to be keen observers and notice subtleties that other miss, they look before leaping, will cross the street to avoid 'small talk', describe themselves as intuitive and creative, prefer and use solitude to recharge.

Introversion is quiet.

The book is divided into four sections. In the **first section of the book**, Cain explores *how our communities came to see extroversion as a virtue*. She takes us through the rise of public speaking beginning with the Chautauqua movement of 1873 and Dale Carnegie leadership courses in the early 1900s. Today, the extroversion ideal prevails. It is exemplified in the heavily attended, Tony Robbins (UPW) workshops that showcase the virtues of salesmanship. We see it when Cain meets with Harvard Business school students who note: "the school is predicated on extroversion, your grades and social status depend on it". And Cain points out that many evangelicals equate Godliness with sociability.

Studies show that introverts prefer to recharge and innovate in solitude, but solitary activities have given way to group work which Cain believes, kills creativity. "If you want the wisdom of a crowd", she writes, "then gather it in writing first and if its creativity you are after, ask ...to solve problems individually before sharing ideas".

Steve Wozniak, cofounder of Apple, designed the personal computer alone. He didn't huddle, or meet up afterwards to brainstorm. He worked alone. If you are an artist and you are creative, Wozniak notes, then work alone. Solitude is an important key to creativity. Group think is not. Yet group think permeates our educational systems.

In **section two**, Cain explores *temperament*. Are we born introverts or extroverts? Developmental psychologists, Kagan, Schwartz and Aron have explored temperament. 4 month old babies were exposed to novel stimuli such as voice recording, balloons popping, bright colors, and strange smells. Babies either lay there seemingly unmoved or pumped their fists and kicked their legs in response to the stimuli. Kagan hypothesized that that the babies who pumped their fists, had highly reactive amygdala (the part of the brain that helps you to sense fear, emotion) and would grow into thoughtful, cautious and reflective teens rather than too cool for school children and this is exactly what they found as they followed the 4 month olds into teenager years and into adulthood. Schwartz found that the temperament continued into adulthood but many introverts, learned how to be sociable and adopt many aspects of the extrovert ideal. MRI studies of them as adults show that they had increased reactivity when shown noxious images when compared to extroverts. Schwartz concluded that whether you are born with a hyperactive amygdala or not, you still have free will to shape and stretch your personality and this applies equally to introverts and extroverts.

But certainly the answer can't be to simply point out the differences,, rather, how can we be more inclusive and collaborative. How can the table lamp light of introverts mesh with the bold Broadway lights of the extrovert? FDR was an extrovert and a consummate politician. His wife Eleanor was an introvert. However together they were able to accomplish many things. For example, quiet Eleanor managed to arrange for Marion Anderson to sing 'my country tis of thee' in front of the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday in 1939 after Ms. Anderson was denied the ability to sing at Constitution Hall due to her race. Eleanor leaned on FDR's extroversion and bold power to make it happen. Many who knew her would say that whenever they heard her quiet voice say 'Now Franklin....' Things were about to happen.

Rosa Parks is another introvert who ignited a nation by quietly saying no. Her extrovert voice was of course the Rev. Martin Luther King. "Make the most of the introverts' strengths, these are the people who can help you to think deeply, strategize, solve complex problems and spot canaries in your coal mine" Cain writes that had we had more introverts promoted to managerial roles, or in the board rooms, we would not have seen the financial crisis of 2008. Instead of accelerating, we may have put on the brakes.

In **section three** Cain travels to Cupertino, California where she explores '*soft power*' and the differences between Asians and Westerners. Not all cultures emulate an extrovert ideal. Research psychologist Robert McCrae maps out Asia as introverted, Europe as extroverted and Americans are the most extroverted people on the earth. Many of the Asian students that Cain interviewed at Cupertino High School, when asked what leader they admired, named Gandhi. They admired his quiet power. But quiet power is not just the ability to create change, it also pertains to 'quiet persistence'. 'It's not that I'm smarter', Einstein said, 'it's that I stay with problems longer'.

Section 4 -'*When should you act more extroverted than you really are?* You've likely met extroverted personalities who seem reticent to hang out after work, colleagues who race home after social events or leave early to go home and relax alone. They actually seem ok with watching the ball drop on New Year's at home without much fanfare even if they have opportunities to go to a party. Brian Little, research psychologist refers to scenarios such as this as the 'Free trait theory', in which we are born and culturally endowed with certain personality traits, but we can and do act out of character in the service of 'core personal projects'. If you are passionate about doing something professionally or personally that you love, you can come off extroverted in the moment, as it pertains to that specific area of your life, but once you are done you retreat to your usual quiet self.

Cain wraps up by cautioning teachers (parents), that we should be on the lookout for cobblers who could be generals as it pertains to introverted children whose "talents are often stifled, whether at home, at school or on the playground". If you are a teacher enjoy your gregarious and participatory students, but don't forget to cultivate the shy, the gentle, the autonomous, and the ones with single handed enthusiasm for chemistry...or nineteenth century art.'

“Don’t think of Introversion as something that needs to be cured. If an introverted child needs help with social skills outside of class teach her or recommend training outside of class just as you would with math or science. Think about introverted kids as having a different learning style. Remember that it’s impossible to gain mastery without knowing how to work on one’s own. Have our extroverted students take a page from their introverted peer’s playbooks. Teach all kids to work independently”

In closing, these are my favorite Cain quotes: The ‘secret to life is to put yourself in the right lighting’. ‘Respect our loved ones need for socializing and your own for solitude’ and ‘spend your free time the way you like, not the way you think you are supposed to’.