

Are you an Ambivert?

By Denise Gaskin, Ph.D.

I like people who are extroverted. And I'm quite fond of introverts too. I'm just not either of them. I consider myself an ambivert which is someone who scores low in both extroversion and introversion on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or MBTI. If I were to re-phrase this in a more positive way, it is someone whose personality has a balance of extrovert and introvert features. Before I say more about the life of an ambivert, let's talk about what it means to be an introvert or an extrovert.



Introversion v. Extroversion

The first pair of psychological preferences on the MBTI are introversion and extraversion. Think of it as describing your favorite world- is it the outer world of people and things or the inner world of ideas and images? An extrovert prefers an outer world while the introvert prefers an inner world. The MBTI is based on C. G. Jung's work and this first pair of preferences explains different attitudes people use to direct their energy. By the way, introversion is not the same as being shy. Shyness implies discomfort or lack of confidence with others. Introverted people are not typically uncomfortable with people, they just need a lot more alone time than extroverts.

An Extrovert likes getting energy from active involvement in events and having a lot of different activities. They get excited to be around people and like to energize other people. They are very action

oriented and like to make things happen. They often talk out loud about problems and like to hear what other people have to say in order to understand an issue better. This type is seen as "outgoing," a real "people person," and are comfortable in groups, and have a wide range of

friends, and generally just know lots of people. The extrovert is comfortable acting before they've figured out all the details first. An extrovert in a work setting has an edge in leading teams and is comfortable engaging with and motivating a wide range of colleagues.

An introvert gets energy from dealing with ideas, pictures, reactions inside their own head, in other words, they have a rich inner world. They often prefer doing things alone or with a limited number of people they feel comfortable with. These are the people who take time to reflect so that they have a clear idea of what they will be doing before they act. Words used to describe introverts are "reflective," and "reserved." They prefer to know just a few people but will know them well. Sometimes introverts spend too much time thinking and reflecting and do not move into action quickly enough. An introvert at work is good at leading proactive teams and their keen listening skills mean they hear more ideas and leave colleagues feeling more valued.



Power to the Ambiverts

What is the power of the ambivert then? An ambivert is more inclined to listen to others' needs and is less likely to appear overconfident or over-excited. They are supportive of a team, listen carefully to the ideas of each member, and can show confidence in presenting an idea to stakeholders in a convincing way. The ambivert, it turns out, is quite good in sales positions because of their ability to listen deeply, connect with the client, while also being able to close the deal.

Someone who is an ambivert fits into both the extrovert and introvert categories and can hop over to either side depending on what they need to accomplish. You probably know someone

like this, or maybe you are one. You can spend several hours alone reading or working on a project and then switch gears and join a group for a lively discussion. You may even be the leader of this engaged group, grappling out loud with ideas and encouraging everyone to have a voice in the process. You may feel energized at the end of the discussion (extrovert trait) or need to go off and recharge your batteries like a solid introvert would do.

The ambivert enjoys others, but still needs time alone. This person can be outgoing in the right context, like the group discussion above. They can be on teams after working independently and can process either out loud or internally.

Power to All

There are times when it is key to have strong extroverts around. If you want to have a fun time at a party, you'd better have a few extroverts otherwise the high introverts will lead the group to silently reading in their respective corners. And if you want a detailed analysis of your business's financial data that is meticulously audited, that work may have been done by someone who scores high on introversion.

The point is not what personality type you are, instead figuring out how to use what you are to reach your highest and best self. If you are a true introvert, then you will thrive in situations where you have more time to reflect and be alone. You will suffer with work that involves you always thinking "on your feet" and being in meetings all day. An extrovert would likely be miserable if they were forced to sit alone most of the day, working quietly by themselves. They need interaction with people, and they are very comfortable with throwing ideas around without first having a deep understanding of the material.

And if you score as an ambivert, you may have a tough decision to make about kind of work suits you best because you could spend a chunk of time alone or work with people all day. Maybe you need a balance of the two so you will want to look for a career that can give you both. The workplace needs all three types to succeed. But I will give a special shout-out to my fellow ambiverts!

If you want to learn about your type, check out organizational psychologist Adam Grant's and his article posted on ideas.ted.com.

<https://ideas.ted.com/quiz-are-you-an-extrovert-introvert-or-ambivert/>