INTROVERT OR EXTROVERT

Summer is a time for socializing. From cookouts with friends, to chatting with your neighbor, the warm weather encourages people to come out of hibernation and interact with one another. For some people, this is a welcome change. For others, socializing is very draining.

Likely you’ve heard about the personality types “introvert” and “extrovert” and you understand that extroverts like to socialize and introverts like to be alone. That general definition is true, to a degree. Socializing is energizing for extroverts, while introverts find socializing to be tiring. But the terms are actually much more nuanced and most people fall somewhere in between depending on the day and the circumstance.

No matter where you fall on the extrovert-introvert spectrum, there are pros and cons to the accompanying behaviors and emotions. Are you an introvert who wishes you could build your professional network, but dread talking to new people? Or are you an extrovert who can’t stand working from home so you struggle to be productive? While you may not be able to change your inherent personality, you can adopt new habits if your current behaviors aren’t meeting your needs. Here’s some tips on how to move in the direction of your unnatural personality:

- **Identify your personality type.** It doesn’t take a fancy psychological evaluation to figure out if you’re an introvert or an extrovert. Just pay attention to what activities energize you and what activities are more draining. Do you feel exhausted after spending the day with lots of people? Do you look forward to a party – the bigger the better? Notice how you feel before, during, and after social occasions.

- **Identify your goals.** There is no need to move in the direction of the opposite personality type so long as your natural personality is serving you well. But if it’s holding you back from achieving certain goals, it may be time to bust out of your comfort zone. Identify your goal, then brainstorm the steps needed to achieve that goal – highlighting the steps that require you to be more of the opposite personality type. Then you can plan when and how to adjust your approach.

- **Consult with your opposite.** If being introverted or extroverted is not natural to you, but you want to adopt those behaviors in certain circumstances, consult with someone of the opposite temperament to give you some pointers. If you’re headed to a professional networking mixer and you’re dreading it, talk with someone who is more comfortable in that situation and ask how they conduct themselves. Then figure out which of those behaviors are reasonable to replicate and plan for what you can manage.

- **Honor who you really are.** Although we may want, at times, to move in the opposite direction of our natural personality type to achieve certain goals, it is never a good idea to try to become someone you’re not. First off, that’s impossible. Second, you’re great just how you are! Introverts and extroverts both have great qualities and we all benefit from having both types of people in our lives.

A special note to introverts: We live in a culture that values and rewards extroverts, which can leave some introverts with feelings of inadequacy. If you’re an introvert, remind yourself that there is no “better” way to be. Introverts have as many positive qualities as extroverts. They listen. They spend time thinking and generate insights. They are observant, creative, and approachable. Whether you’re an introvert or an extrovert... you do you!

If you feel like your inherent temperament is holding you back, call Family Services EAP to consult with one of our therapists. Your employer has made Family Services EAP a resource for you AND members of your household and immediate family. **We are here to support you.** Contact: 978-327-6666, info@FamilyServicesEAP.org, or submit an online inquiry today.