

Introvert is not a dirty word

My customer showed a shameful expression on her face, as if I had caught her doing something forbid-den and she immediately apologised, adding that it wasn't "sooo bad". She was responding to my question in a personal and professional assessment as to whether she considered herself to be more extra-verted or introverted; she said she was the latter. High time to raise a lance for introverts, and not just because I myself belong to this underestimated species..

Peter Näf

It's understandable that more extraverted people find it difficult to deal with the occasional reserve of introverts, especially when they come under pressure. But it must give pause for thought that many of my introverted clients describe their own characteristics as a weakness and believe they have to apologise for it, while they see extraversion as a strength without reservation.

Of course, nobody is exclusively one or the other. We always have both aspects in ourselves, simply in varying degrees. And both character traits have their positive and negative sides. What leads to this one-sided, unfavourable perception of introverts?

Introverted does not mean unsociable

Introverts are sometimes perceived as unsociable or withdrawn because of their need and ability to be alone. I myself am a sociable person and love interacting with others - after all, as a coach I work with people every day. But I regularly need to withdraw, whether physically or just mentally, in order to process my impressions and harmonise them with my inner world.

Among other things, this makes it difficult for me to immediately take a stand in discussions or

make spontaneous decisions. I used to be ashamed of this as I found myself difficult to deal with. Now that I know that I form my opinions in silence and that I can only make a good decision after an in-depth dialogue with myself, I no longer expect anything from myself in this respect that I can't offer.

Finally, the positive side of this characteristic is that it is often the introverts who see the solution to a problem. This is probably because they listen more than they speak and can compare and categorise the ideas of others from a certain distance.

Develop self-confidence

Since I have made peace with my introverted nature, I understand better what sometimes makes it difficult for others to deal with me. And I am able to clearly express my peculiarities and the associated needs; I encounter understanding almost exclusively.

A contribution to productive co-operation between introverts and extraverts - because both are always needed - would be if introverts understood themselves better and accepted their nature. This would allow them to explain themselves and enable extraverts to get to know their sometimes irritating, quieter fellow human beings better.

In this regard, I recommend the book by Susan Cain: "Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking". It was a bestseller in the USA 10 years ago and has lost none of its relevance since then.

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