

Introvert - Extrovert
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This paper presents two complementary patterns. The first is a learning pattern and is intended for use by novices in professional fields. The second is a pedagogical pattern intended for educators teaching such novices. The Introvert - Extrovert pattern speaks to those novices who believe themselves to be shy and introverted but whose circumstances in the professional world demands them to be bold and extroverted. On the other hand, Shout It From The Rooftops gives educators advice about how they can help guide their students in effective communication.

Students and novices in technical fields often forget that a large part of the job is communication in small groups and large. Often the person with the best ideas is not the one whose ideas prevail. People willing to put ideas forward forcefully will often see their ideas implemented while a person not so willing will not.

Actually, having an introverted personality type is only one reason for which you may not wish to put yourself forward in groups. Some people suffer early traumatic experiences that leads them to act in the background as a defense mechanism, for example, and there are many other possibilities. Whatever the reason, the interior forces that keep you quiet can be very powerful, while at the same time the circumstances in which you find yourself may require your active participation.

Introvert - Extrovert

You may consider yourself to be shy and introverted. You draw power from self reflection and contemplation. Working in groups costs you energy and may even cause panic. For this or other reasons you dread situations in which you must speak up loudly and forcefully. You would rather work at your desk or in your cubicle than attend meetings and give presentations.

The internal pressure not to participate in certain situations can be very powerful when reinforced by personality traits and a lifetime of practice. Sometimes extroverted people will dominate a situation, not even realizing that others have differing ideas and opinions. People tend to get rewarded depending on their "contributions," but the people with the loudest voices don't always have the best ideas. On the other hand, it is very satisfying to see your own ideas discussed, accepted, and implemented. It can be difficult to act opposite your personality tendencies and habits, but small steps can lead to larger ones.

The requirements of a professional position often require you to communicate in groups. You have ideas that you know should be implemented, but you dread having to speak up forcefully and to demonstrate why your own ideas are superior to other ideas on the table.

Therefore, teach yourself to play a role in which an observer thinks you are extroverted, bold, and outgoing. Teach yourself to recognize the situations in which this role is appropriate and to then gather your resources and turn the role on.

Your goal is not to become extroverted, but to play a role in which you seem to be extroverted and bold. The following techniques are examples of things that will help you achieve this. However, they take practice. There are two parts to this: you must **get prepared**, and you must **play the role**.

First, remember that you are not alone. Many of the people you admire as public speakers are just like you and have trained themselves to "play" extrovert. The power you draw from self reflection is not to be minimized.

Biographies of famous people can also show you what others have overcome to be successful. No one is born a super star. Each took small steps to enable larger ones. Most stumbled several times at first. A certain level of risk and exposure can be exhilarating.

How you start depends on your situation. The present author once had a debilitating case of shyness and took a "Self Defeating Behavior" workshop to help overcome it. In this case professional help was a good idea. Given the nature of the problem it was very difficult to go to the first session, but it turned out to be a relatively safe place. The fact that others there had a variety of problems they were trying to overcome was also helpful in raising self esteem.

You can also work on your own or with a group of trusted friends. Your goal is not to become comfortable overnight in these panic situations. Time and practice are the key. Start small. Each successful small step (and even some unsuccessful ones) will help give you the confidence to take the next.

Take the Myers-Briggs Personality Index assessment and find out some things about yourself. Find others with similar scores and talk about your experiences.

Join a theater group or take a course in public speaking. Many actors are introverts, actually. I started as stage manager in a small group of friends and had a single line thrust upon me for our production: "Prithee m'lord, what dost thou require?" If you do things like this for fun there is less pressure on you.

Think of yourself as an actor. Think of yourself as a robot. If you find it hard to speak to the faces in front of you, speak to the spaces between the faces. Scan from space to space. To an observer it looks like you are "working" the room. If you notice someone shaking their head approvingly, you might try addressing them in your mind.

There are other groups that you might join to help you overcome a sense of unease in public. Political groups, music groups, or discussion groups for example. If you join these, take responsibility for some aspect of the work or fun. Start small if you must, but start. Pick a situation that you think is uncomfortable, but still manageable and try it. Analyze the results, make adjustments if necessary, and then move to the next level. Reward yourself for success. Over time your experience will increase and your unease will decrease. Few people now recognize the author as an introvert.

Before you enter a situation that feels unsafe, ask yourself what is the worst thing that could possibly occur. Try to convince yourself that you can live with that and repair the damage later if necessary. You can also think before the fact about how you want to react if the worst thing actually does happen, though it seldom does. Also consider what positive consequences there might be. What is the best thing that could possibly happen. How can you make that happen?

In meetings, work from written notes. You may want to distribute these notes to other participants.

Prior to the meeting in which you want to introduce something important, send out e-mail to the participants announcing your intention. This is the "burning your bridges" approach.

Admit to the other members of the group that you are uncomfortable and not experienced in speaking. If there is one or two people in the group that you especially like and trust, let them know of your discomfort prior to the meeting and then focus on them and their response when you want to speak. Imagine your contribution in the meeting as a conversation with these few people, rather than the larger group.

If there are some ideas that you think you must get on the table in a meeting, discuss them with a trusted colleague prior to the meeting. Your goal is not to get the colleague to introduce and defend them, but to give yourself practice presenting and discussing them in a safer environment. Your colleague can then serve as your back up, and can help carry on the conversation that brings the ideas to the open.

Don't wait until you have the perfect thing to say in a meeting. Give a tentative idea and say it is tentative. If someone says it is stupid, ask why they think so. If you are put on the spot, find a way to

defer answering if you must: "I'll get back to you on that." Or "Let me put together some resources for you on that." Then do it. Here you draw on your strength to be a contributor.

If someone else says something brilliant, second it. If someone else says something idiotic, say you disagree. This is simple and can get your foot in the door.

On the other hand, take a very bold position, beyond where you would like to go, so that you can then compromise back to where you'd really like to be. Pretend that being ridiculous (rather than being invisible) is part of the goal. Likewise, Devil's Advocate is a role you can play without seeming to invest much of yourself in it.

In a meeting or before an audience, do something extravagant, ridiculous, or stupid right at the beginning. Call attention to it. Break the ice for your audience and yourself.

If someone continually interrupts you, yell at them. Or suddenly stand up to change the dynamics.

If panic steps in and you become paralyzed do something physical to break the tension. Get a drink of water. Walk over and adjust the window blinds.

If you must give a formal presentation, rehearse it several times in front of trusted colleagues. Encourage them to laugh at you to break the ice. Speak louder than you think you need to. Try to practice the presentation by shouting it. Be ridiculous on purpose.

Perhaps you can give your presentation to someone who will give you feedback on your presentation style and body language as distinct from your material. It might even be best if this person doesn't understand your material and so can focus on surface aspects of your presentation.

Find a speaker that you enjoy listening to and write down five or so things that they do effectively. Make a checklist. In preparing a talk, incorporate those elements. Treat those items on your checklist as stage directions.

If you are new to an organization and also shy, "permit" someone you admire there to adopt you as your mentor. Learn from them, both the rules of success at the new place and the little tricks of communication that you think work for them. Adopt their public persona as needed.

After a session in which you took a risk, don't forget to analyze the outcome to extract hints for the future. What went well? How could you have done better? What would you do the same or differently next time? What feedback can you get from a trusted colleague?

The key in all of this is to remember that you are not trying to change your personality. Your personality is fine and is shared by millions of others. Your goal is to act in a way that is not dominated by your personality. But it is just an act.

Remember that it is not only important for you to get your ideas into the mix. It is also important that you get credit for your contributions. This requires a certain amount of visibility. It will be frustrating if others advance because of your ideas while you get left behind.

You also don't need to do all of these things--or any of these specific things. The key is role playing. And practice. Perhaps reading this has helped you come up with your own ideas also. Perhaps you have other ideas you would like to share with the author to help improve this. Please do so.

If you do these things expect to feel drained at the end. This is expected as it takes a lot of energy initially, though practice will lessen this effect. On the other hand you will be perceived by your colleagues as a contributor. This can generate positive feedback that can help you the next time. Additionally, seeing more of your ideas implemented will give you additional internal feedback that you can draw on.

It might also help you to recognize that if you are truly an introvert, then you complement extroverts. While you gain energy from quiet reflection and expend it in public, the opposite is true for extroverts. They perhaps need advice to do what comes naturally to you.

And of course, there are inhumane working places in which the only way to get any idea across is to shout it and scream at people. Adapting to this is, perhaps, not worth the effort for you or for anyone. There are better jobs available. Life should not be a constant struggle without reward.

Shout It From The Rooftops

You are an instructor who recognizes that your students must be public people at times. You also recognize that this is not a natural way of acting for many of them. You want to help them become comfortable in putting themselves and their ideas forward.

There are a lot of requirements on you as an instructor, of course. It can be difficult to take on a new responsibility, especially one not related directly to your subject matter. It often seems like it will only take up time better devoted to the material at hand. Your teaching methodology, however, can often achieve subsidiary goals in parallel with your main objectives and little impact on time. In fact, some techniques can make the classroom more valuable for everyone, both with respect to the specific course and the wider goals of preparation for life.

Many of your students consider themselves shy. You will recognize them in class as they seldom speak up, ask questions, or volunteer for visible tasks. You know, however, that they will need to assume more public personas if they are to be successful in the real world.

Therefore, organize your courses and other student interactions with interactive exercises to draw out public participation from all your students, especially those who don't put themselves forward naturally.

The individual herself must, of course, become more comfortable in public interactions, but you can help them practice some of the things in the first pattern within your courses. While this feels at first like additional pressure on the student, if your classroom is a safe place in which to experiment and learn then it need not be dismaying to the student. Your task is to make them ready for their futures, and it is better that they get the practice with you than in situations later when an unwillingness to act can have serious repercussions. Organize your courses so that each person must participate in a visible way. Use round-robin question techniques [Beck], rather than asking for volunteers. Have the students do short presentations. Make your class a safe place for students to get practice in speaking and contributing.

You may think that a person that is shy in person would do better in e-mail lists and chatrooms where one doesn't need to worry about sweaty palms, thinking on your feet, and cracking voices. This turns out not always to be the case. Many people who are shy in person are also shy in cyberspace. If you teach online or partly online courses you need to draw out your students just as much as you do face to face. Here you can give tasks to students privately that they must respond to publicly.

Use role-playing as much as possible in your courses so that your students can get accustomed to taking on a role. This is easy to do in Software Engineering, where you need different roles anyway. If you are teaching object oriented systems and/or programming you can also easily incorporate role playing into system walk throughs. Each student plays the role of a single object.

Give them feedback privately on their presentations. Use the pattern community's technique of starting with positive feedback and then constructive suggestions for improvement.

If you use the Gold Star pedagogical pattern [Bergin], be sure to give gold stars for the things you value most. Participation is worth rewarding, especially when it comes from someone who finds it hard to do. These visible rewards encourage more of the same from your students.

Look at your own teaching style to see if you are a good role model for your students in this regard. They will learn more from you than the material you present. If you let them be passive in the classroom, they are learning a lesson that you may not want them to get. If you are extroverted (or seem to be such to your students) and one of your students is introverted you can help them by asking them to research and then teach you something you don't know. Ask them to do it orally, but informally.

Encourage the shy students to take a course in speech or theater. Organize students into groups occasionally in which the shy students can interact with each other. Try to do this in such a way that the students can recognize that there are others like themselves. Organize them into groups and assign roles in such a way that people need to act counter to their perceived personality types. In the theater group mentioned above I was participating in the background (theater manager) but was so invisible that the director neglected to list me in the production credits. To make up for this he altered the script to give me the "Prithee..." line and called me by name to deliver it. He was my Honors English professor and one of my first mentors.

Encourage (demand) that an especially shy student say something (anything) in each of the next two classes. One professor met a student between terms and began a conversation with something like "I've noticed that you have really good ideas, but we don't get to hear very much of them. I'd really like you to give us one of your ideas in each of the first two classes of the coming term." Another suggestion is to hold a lottery associated with any student presentation to determine who is privileged to ask the first question and/or lead the discussion after the presentation.

If you are a shy person who has learned these tricks, be sure to let your students know this. Let them know how, if you can articulate it.

If you can point to a well known and respected introvert that is also a good presenter, do so for your students.

If a shy student is attacked by others for ideas or presentation then it may be appropriate to join in common cause with the attacked student in defense of the idea (if it is a good one) and against ridiculing. If you do this, however, try to do it in such a way that the student isn't simply defended by a powerful ally, but is given sheltered space in which to defend him or herself.

Find out if your campus counseling center has workshops on interpersonal communication. If so, encourage your students to take these. This is true for all your students, not just introverts. Communication is one of the most important skills for your students.

Remember that your job as an educator goes beyond giving the students technical information. You need to be mentor and to guide them in ways that will enhance their lives, including their careers.

However, this assumes that you try to make your courses a safe place for learning, rather than just a place of instruction and evaluation. If the latter is true, then perhaps you should not try these techniques yet, as you might just increase the anxiety load on your introverted students. If you would like to explore the idea of a safe learning environment further, see the Pedagogical Patterns at <http://csis.pace.edu/~bergin/patterns/coursepatternlanguage.html>. In general, your students will learn more if you can make your courses a safe place in which to experiment and express themselves. This does not mean accepting bad ideas or sloppy thinking, but does accept the student as a learner, only partly formed on the path to adulthood. Be their guide, not their judge.

Some instructors believe that they should group students for projects according to Myers-Briggs types so that each person can act out his or her dominant characteristics. Some people believe in counseling students to take (and avoid) positions according to their personality types. This author believes, to the contrary, that this sort of determinism is counterproductive and positively damaging to the student's long term career and self esteem. Myers-Briggs may tell us what is easy or hard for us, but it does not tell us what is possible.

Related Patterns

Jutta Eckstein presented a paper, "Learning to Teach and Learning to Learn," at EuroPLop 2000. Her pattern "Open the Door" in that paper gives good advice to both instructors and novices on how to begin a presentation. http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/jutta_eckstein/LAndTJE.htm

Jutta also presented Incremental Role Play at EuroPLoP 1998. In it she suggests that students play the role of objects in an object-oriented system to learn principles via metaphor. It has the added benefit of bringing a shy student out into the open in a safe way. <http://jeckstein.com/pedagogicalPatterns/IncRol.pdf>

Kent Beck's "Round Robin" pattern is a way for educators to solicit input from students without letting a few dominate the interactions. See "Patterns for Experiential Learning" at <http://csis.pace.edu/~bergin/patterns/ExperientialLearning.html>

There is much of use in the Organizational Patterns community. See for example how playing exaggerated roles can be seen as valuable to the organization at: <http://www.bell-labs.com/cgi-user/OrgPatterns/OrgPatterns?WiseFool>

Gold Star appears in "Fourteen Pedagogical Patterns" by myself: <http://csis.pace.edu/~bergin/PedPat1.3.html>

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Additional information

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is based on the work of Carl Jung and assigns you one of 16 types based on four categories (Introverted-Extroverted, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, and Judging-Perceiving). You can learn more at <http://www.knowyourtype.com/mbti.html>. No endorsement of this commercial site is implied. Be careful interpreting the results of a self administered assessment. These are best administered and interpreted by professionals.

See also: Norman L. Kerth, James O. Coplien, and Jerry Weinberg, "Call for the Rational Use of Personality Indicators", *computer*, 31(1): 146-147, January 1998

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