1-Page Book Summary of Quiet: The Power of Introverts

In Quiet, author Susan Cain contends that **whether you're an introvert or an extrovert affects every aspect of your life.** Your personality type influences your choice of partner, friends, career, and lifestyle, as well as how those choices play out—for instance, how you advance in your career or handle differences in relationships.

Researchers say a third to a half of Americans are introverts, who tend to be quiet, thoughtful, and need time alone.
However, Western society is heavily skewed toward extroverts. Our culture, including schools, social institutions, and workplaces, celebrates and is shaped around an “Extrovert Ideal”—a belief that the ideal personality type is someone who is bold, sociable, and seeks the spotlight.

Yet introverts have many underappreciated strengths, including empathy, persistence, concentration, creativity, and the ability to solve complex problems. “Quiet” thinkers are responsible for many important discoveries and artistic achievements, including Einstein's theories of gravity, Chopin's *Nocturne*, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Besides scientists and artists, high-achieving introverts include Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosa Parks, Al Gore, and Warren Buffett.

Rather than establishing strict definitions of introversion and extroversion, this book explores broad questions, such as whether introverts can be leaders, whether they should ever act like extroverts, and whether introversion/extroversion is biologically or socially determined. Further, it advocates a balance in society, school, and work that lets introverts be true to themselves and where the two personality types complement each other.

### Two Personality Types

There's no universally accepted definition of introversion/extroversion based on objective criteria, but many psychological researchers agree that:

- **Introverts and extroverts require different levels of external stimulation** to function effectively. Introverts need less outside stimulation—for instance, they prefer to work alone, spend free time alone, or visit with just one or two friends. Extroverts need a lot of stimulation, typically from social activities and busy environments.

- **Introverts and extroverts have different work styles.** Introverts focus on one task at a time, work methodically, and have a great ability to concentrate. They're not motivated by external rewards. Extroverts jump into jobs quickly, multitask, take risks, and make quick decisions. They may be motivated by factors such as competition and status.

- **They have different styles of interaction.** Introverts can be sociable but soon tire of being in large groups or parties. They listen, think before speaking, and may express themselves better in writing. They dislike conflict and small talk. Extroverts are gregarious, assertive, dominant, and comfortable with conflict. They don't like to be alone.

**Introverts are stereotyped as recluses or loners who dislike people.** This may be true of some introverts, but most are as friendly as anyone. **Another stereotype is that introverts are shy.** Although some introverts may be shy, there are key differences between introversion and shyness. Shy people dislike social situations because they're afraid of embarrassment, while introverts dislike social situations because they're too stimulating.

Introverts also may be “highly sensitive,” which is a psychological term meaning more apt to respond with strong feelings to something—for instance, to be moved by a sad story or be upset by violence.

### The Extrovert Ideal

**We've built our society almost entirely around extroversion.** In school systems, for example, this is reflected in the way classrooms are organized and taught: Desks are arranged to facilitate group projects and high levels of interaction and activity. Most teachers believe students should be extroverts.

**In the workplace, we're expected to engage in relentless self-promotion to develop and promote our personal “brand.”** To advance in many careers, extroversion usually is essential.

Introverts, as both children and adults, are constantly pushed to be more outgoing. Parents and teachers urge children to “come out of their shell” and be more sociable and to participate more in class. Adults are chided for being “in their head” too much, or seen as disengaged at work when they want to think rather than react off the cuff.

But this focus on extroversion has downsides. One downside in the business world is a preference for “Groupthink” that prioritizes teamwork above all. It's based on the erroneous belief that creativity and intellectual achievement come from collaboration. In reality, an exclusive focus on teamwork actually undercuts creativity, which requires solitude and intense concentration (two things associated with introverts).

Groupthink is responsible for three work phenomena that hinder creativity:

- **Open offices:** Many companies have implemented open-office designs with no walls or private offices and little or no privacy. However, studies have shown that open-office designs create noise, disruption, and stress, which reduce rather than enhance productivity.
**Multitasking:** Businesses prize multitasking as a way to get more done, but it doesn't work. Research shows that the brain can't focus on two things at the same time—it actually switches back and forth between tasks, which lowers productivity and increases mistakes by up to 50%.

**Brainstorming:** While businesses use team brainstorming to spur creativity, research over the last forty years has underscored that team brainstorming doesn't generate better ideas.

**Alternatives to the Extrovert Ideal, at Work and in Schools**
The way to encourage creativity and achievement while avoiding the pitfalls of Groupthink is to redesign the collaboration process so it incorporates the strengths of both introverts and extroverts. For example:

- Balance the membership of groups with both introverts and extroverts, and assign tasks in accordance with people's strengths. Incorporate both introvert and extrovert approaches to problem-solving (reflection and decisiveness).
- Use online brainstorming. In contrast to brainstorming in a group meeting, well-managed online brainstorming groups are effective at generating ideas. The online environment is more conducive to thoughtful give-and-take, at which introverts excel, because it diminishes the grandstanding that occurs in face-to-face groups.
- Create flexible work environments where people can choose to connect in social spaces or to work alone in a quiet space.
- In schools, we should teach children to work with others but also to work independently.

**Are Extroverts Ideal Leaders?**
Another downside of a focus on extroversion is the business world's unbalanced preference for bold, charismatic leaders. Many extroverted leaders are highly reward-sensitive, meaning that when obsessed with the potential for a big payoff, they may act irrationally and ignore warning signs of problems ahead. The author argues that rash decisions fueled by unbridled extroversion led to the fall of Enron and the 2008 financial crisis.

Multiple studies indicate that extroversion is overrated when it comes to effective leadership. A Brigham Young study of 128 CEOs of major companies found that those viewed as charismatic didn't perform any better than less-charismatic leaders. Further, some research shows that **introverted leaders perform better than extroverted leaders in certain circumstances**, such as when managing proactive (rather than passive) employees. Researchers concluded that extroverts are effective at leading proactive employees because they tend to listen and are more willing to implement suggestions as opposed to dominating the situation.

It's important for companies to have both extroverts and introverts in leadership roles in order to maximize employee output.

**Introversion and Sensitivity**
Introversion and sensitivity are highly correlated: one study found that **70% of people categorized as “highly sensitive” are introverts**. Research suggests there are clear benefits to being a sensitive person, such as the ability to think deeply and the tendency to have a strong conscience. The research suggested that having a stronger conscience may promote future altruism, personal responsibility, and better relationships.

One researcher theorizes that the trait of extreme sensitivity may have survived the evolutionary process because of other survival enhancing attributes associated with it, such as astute observation, the tendency to look before leaping, and the tendency to thoroughly process information.

Former Vice President Al Gore, an introvert, is an example of a leader whose sensitivity and conscience benefited society: long before most people cared about it, he engaged in a decades-long campaign to raise awareness of the danger posed by global warming. The welfare of society and even the planet may depend on the capabilities of highly sensitive people, as much as on those of bold doers.

**Stretching Your Temperament**
Studies of personality suggest that introversion and extroversion are biologically based. Introversion is associated with traits observable starting in infancy, including high reactivity to stimulation, alertness, sensitivity to nuance, and feeling emotions more intensely.

However, while your innate temperament influences you throughout your life, **you have the ability to stretch your personality beyond your comfort zone and act in ways that don't come naturally to you.** Psychologist Brian Little argues that it's worth it
to act out of character in order to pursue “core personal projects” or goals that matter deeply to you. For instance, an introvert can be a passionate teacher if sharing his subject with others is a “core project” to him.

Still, acting out of character takes a mental and emotional toll. Introverts manage this by creating “restorative niches” for themselves—mental breaks or physical spaces in which they can recharge. For example, many introverts take a break in the bathroom after giving a speech or during a long social event. You can also create restorative niches by giving yourself a relaxing weekend before a big event, take breaks for yoga or meditation, or replace a face-to-face meeting with a phone call or email.

Communicating Effectively
Introverts and extroverts are often drawn to each other in the way that opposites seem to attract. The two personality types can balance each other: one talks and the other listens; one is always ready for action, while the other wants to consider all the options. But problems can occur when a couple's different personality types pull them in opposite directions.

People often wrongly believe that introverts are anti-social and extroverts are highly sociable. In fact, the two personality types both have a need for connection but they're differently social.

Here are some key differences:

- **Downtime**: When they get home from work, introverts crave quiet...

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**Here's a preview of the rest of Shortform's Quiet: The Power of Introverts summary:**

**Quiet: The Power of Introverts Summary Introduction**

In *Quiet*, author Susan Cain argues that **whether you're an introvert or extrovert affects every aspect of your life**. Your temperament influences your choice of partner, friends, career, and lifestyle, as well as how those choices play out—for instance, how you advance in your career or handle differences in relationships. It even plays a role in daily activities, such as exercise and sleep, as well as your pursuit of passions, challenges, and downtime.

Scientists and writers dating back to the Romans, Greeks, and the Bible have studied introversion and extroversion extensively. They've even found that some animals can be identified as introverts or extroverts. The two personality types working together can create effective partnerships like, for instance, that of Martin Luther King Jr. (an extrovert) and Rosa Parks (an introvert). Her quiet defiance in refusing to give up her bus seat made her an appealing symbol King could use to rally others to the cause of integration.

**A third to a half of Americans are introverts, according to studies.** They tend to be quiet and thoughtful and prefer less stimulation. There's a good chance that you're an introvert yourself—or you live, work, or are friends with an introvert. You may not realize when you're associating with introverts, however, because many of them act like extroverts when necessary, either consciously or unconsciously. Some people don't realize they're actually introverts until a change in their lives, such as a divorce or layoff, allows them to live in a way that aligns with their true nature.

**A Nation of Extroverts**

The U.S. is one of the most extroverted nations, according to studies, and our society is skewed toward favoring extroverts. **Our culture, including schools, social institutions, and workplaces, celebrates and is shaped around an “extrovert ideal”—a**
belief that the ideal personality type is someone who is highly sociable, self-assured, and enjoys the spotlight.

We typically think of an extrovert as a person of action, who takes risks and readily makes decisions. He or she is...

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Shortform Exercise: What’s Your Personality Type?

A half to a third of Americans are introverts, according to studies. They tend to be quiet, thoughtful, and prefer less stimulation than extroverts. They also may prefer to work alone, focusing on one task, while extroverts are multitaskers and thrive in busy environments.

Where do you fall on the introversion-extroversion scale? Which personality traits, preferences, or behaviors make you believe you’re more introverted, more extroverted, or a balance of both?

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Quiet: The Power of Introverts Summary Part 1: The Extrovert Ideal | Chapter 1: A Culture of Personality

U.S. society has not always promoted extroversion as the ideal. Up until the start of the twentieth century, the focus was on character rather than personality. The ideal person was serious, self-disciplined, and moral. How you behaved in private—your virtue—was more important than outward charm or impressing others. (Exceptions were sometimes made in politics, where brashness drew admiration and votes.)

A shift from a “culture of character” to a “culture of personality” occurred at the turn of the century in response to a convergence of economic forces, including industrialization; migration from rural areas to cities; and the rise of retail giants such as Woolworths, J.C. Penney, and Sears Roebuck.

In retail, it became important to make a good impression on others with whom you had no past connection, in contrast to interacting with people in small towns whom you’d known all your life. The burgeoning retail sector needed a different kind of employee—a gregarious salesman with the ability to get along with anyone and be comfortable in any situation. Having a “good personality” became paramount. At the same time, Americans developed a fascination with celebrities, further elevating charisma over character.

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A Boom in Self-Help

Self-help advice, advertising, and psychology fueled the transition to a culture of personality. You had to sell yourself, not just products. And to do that, you had to be a performer.

At the forefront of the personality transformation movement was Dale Carnegie, founder of the Dale Carnegie Institute and author of best-selling books, including How to Win Friends and Influence People. The son of a poor Missouri farmer, Carnegie was impressed in 1902 by a traveling lecturer who had transformed himself by learning public speaking. Later in college, Carnegie entered speaking contests and eventually became such a successful speaker that others began asking him for lessons.

After college, Carnegie offered a public speaking class in New York City, which was an overnight success. Thereafter, in books and seminars, he touted...
Quiet: The Power of Introverts Summary Chapter 2: Charismatic Leadership

One hundred years after the advent of the culture of personality, we've elevated extroversion to hyper-extroversion and equated it with leadership. It permeates the self-improvement industry, business schools, corporate culture, and even churches. But charismatic leaders aren't as effective as most people think—in some circumstances, introverted leaders may be more effective.

Today's hyper-extrovert is personified by self-help guru Tony Robbins, whose high-energy workshops on building self-confidence (the $895 four-day entry-level session is called "Unleash the Power Within") draw thousands. They culminate in a voluntary walk across hot coals.

Robbins has a "hyperthermic" or extreme extrovert temperament characterized by one psychiatrist as "exuberant, upbeat, over-energetic, and overconfident"—which are traits touted as assets in business, particularly sales. Indeed, Robbins is a salesman, constantly urging attendees at his sessions to buy additional higher-priced packages.

At first, the culture of personality urged people to develop an extrovert personality to stand out from competitors. Robbins's message, however, is that extroversion not only ensures success but also makes you a better person. Selling yourself is a way of contributing to the world. In this view, what some might see as hucksterism is the ultimate in leadership.

Elevating Extrovert Leaders

Harvard Business School, which trains many nationally prominent business and political leaders, starts with a premise of hyper-extroversion. The curriculum forces students to be extroverts, in keeping with the findings of a study that verbal ability and sociability are the most important determinants of success in a corporate culture.

Participation in learning teams or study groups is mandatory, as is class participation. Students who speak up frequently and forcefully are viewed as leaders or players. Because leaders in business must confidently make decisions on incomplete information, in Harvard's view, students must take positions and defend them forcefully regardless of how confident...

Shortform Exercise: Including Introverts at Work

Many corporate cultures favor extroverts—action-oriented talkers with great presentation styles. Studies have shown that we rate people who talk the most as smarter than those who are quiet. However, ignoring or overlooking input from quiet, thoughtful people can lead to poor decisions.

Think about your colleagues at work—which do you think are introverts and which are extroverts? Whose voices are listened to most?

Quiet: The Power of Introverts Summary Chapter 3: Groupthink and Creativity

U.S. institutions, including our schools and workplaces, are structured to serve the extrovert ideal. The organizing principle is
“Groupthink,” which prioritizes teamwork above all. Groupthink practices, such as “cooperative learning” in schools and open offices and brainstorming in the workplace, are based on the erroneous belief collaboration is necessary for creativity and intellectual achievement.

The Groupthink notion that creativity is the product of teamwork has influential advocates, including prominent author Malcolm Gladwell, who wrote that innovation is “fundamentally social.” Organizational consultant Warren Bennis claimed in Organizing Genius that the “great group” has replaced the “great man.” However, in reality, an exclusive focus on collaboration actually undercuts creativity and achievement.

The Rise of Groupthink in the Workplace

The belief in teamwork above all dominates the corporate workplace. Organizing employees into teams became a popular practice in the 1990s—half of all companies used teams by 2000, while nearly all do so today. Most managers believe teamwork is necessary for success.

Some teams work together remotely while others work face-to-face, but all require a large investment in time, which can include online or in-person meetings, retreats, and team-building exercises, brainstorming sessions, working on shared documents, and keeping track of everyone’s time with shared online calendars.

To facilitate face-to-face teamwork on site, many companies have implemented open-office designs with no walls or private offices and little or no privacy. While 70% of employees work in an open setting, the amount of space per employee has shrunk by 300 square feet since the 1970s. As one CEO described it, work has shifted from “I” or individually focused settings to “we” settings.

Groupthink in Schools

The demands of business for employees who can work in teams have reshaped teaching—schools are training children via cooperative and group learning methods to fit into the culture of corporate America.

As a...
babies and was able to tell which ones would turn out to be extroverts and which would be introverts based on innate temperament. By introducing stimuli such as voices, popping balloons, or smells, Kagan determined which infants were highly reactive (crying and throwing their arms around) and which were low-reactive. Counterintuitively, he predicted the highly reactive babies were likely to be quiet or introverts as teenagers, which turned out to be the case.

He did further testing of their reactions to new things—for instance, a clown and a woman wearing a gas mask—when the children were two, four, seven, and eleven. Most of the children turned out exactly as Kagan expected: high-reactive children turned out to be introverts while low-reactive children were extroverts.

**Alertness and Sensitivity**

Kagan also found that highly reactive children are more sensitive to their environment.

Besides noting the children's behavioral reactions to strange situations, Kagan measured their heart rate, blood pressure, and finger temperature, which are controlled by the amygdala region—or emotional control center—of the brain. One function of the amygdala is to detect new or threatening things and trigger a reaction, such as ducking when a ball comes at your head. He found that highly reactive infants' nervous systems reacted strongly to unfamiliar things while quiet infants' nervous systems were unaffected.

As highly reactive children grow, parents and teachers may notice a wary reaction to unfamiliar people or the first day of preschool and may assume a child is shy. But what they're really reacting to is newness. High reactives are just more sensitive to their...

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**Quiet: The Power of Introverts Summary Chapter 5: Changing Your Temperament**
Further research by Dr. Carl Schwartz at Massachusetts General Hospital on Kagan's subjects as teenagers showed that we can stretch beyond our inherited characteristics, but only to a point. Our temperaments continue to influence us throughout our lives.

Schwartz used an fMRI machine that measures brain activity. He showed participants a fast-moving series of photos of people's faces to simulate the experience of walking into a crowded room. Some of the photos were repeated and became "familiar," while new ones were continually added to the sequence. The people who had been highly reactive as children were more sensitive—they reacted more strongly—to the photos of unfamiliar faces.

Some of the high-reactives had grown into socially engaged and friendly teenagers who were not outwardly bothered by new experiences, but their brains still reacted more strongly to the unfamiliar faces.

Our personalities are somewhat like rubber bands, able to stretch but only so far. Introvert Bill Gates can hone his social skills but he'll never be as gregarious as Bill Clinton—and Clinton will never be a solitary computer genius like Gates.

### Stretching Yourself

When the emotional center of our brain—the amygdala—reacts with anxiety to a situation, another part of the brain, the prefrontal cortex, can send a counter-message to calm down.

Thus, we can teach ourselves to react differently, although we may revert to our old reactions under stress.

Both introverts and extroverts can stretch beyond their comfort zones when it's to their advantage, particularly to further a career. For example, an introvert can learn and practice skills to be more comfortable interacting socially, while an extrovert can learn to slow down and be more reflective by cultivating friendships with introverts.

As an introvert, author Susan Cain struggled with public speaking, yet it was something her work often required her to do. To make the experience less stressful, she took a class in public speaking and also taught herself a number of stress-reduction techniques, such as:

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### Quiet: The Power of Introverts Summary Chapter 6: Sensitivity and Introversion

Since 1997, Dr. Elaine Aron, a research psychologist, has further explored the trait of high reactivity, which she has recharacterized as sensitivity. She found that highly sensitive people, 70% of whom are introverts, share a set of distinct attributes that, when recognized, can benefit society.

Aron's list of twenty-seven characteristics, based on interviews and questionnaires with people who described themselves as being introverted or easily overwhelmed by stimulation, dovetailed with Kagan's findings as well as with other research. The research found that highly sensitive people:

- Are astute observers who look before they leap
- Dislike surprises
- Are sensitive to smells, sounds, sights, pain, and caffeine
- Don't like being observed (for instance, at work or performing music) or judged (for instance, in job interviews)
- Are philosophical or spiritual rather than materialistic
- Are creative and intuitive
- Dislike small talk
- Dream vividly and often recall details of their dreams
- Love music, nature, art, and beauty
Are empathic
- Have a strong conscience
- Dislike violent movies and TV shows
- Feel emotions intensely, especially joy, fear, and sadness
- Thoroughly process information about their environments and notice subtleties

These attributes suggest that sensitive people are deep thinkers, which might be a reason they dislike superficial small talk. Another study found that sensitive people reacted particularly strongly to photos of accidents, pollution, and people who were injured, scarred, or experiencing strong emotions.

**Life-Changing Empathy**

Eleanor Roosevelt was a highly sensitive person known for her empathy for others' suffering. As first lady to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, she was often described as “Franklin’s conscience” for her efforts to raise his awareness of social problems and get him to enact policies to address them.

For instance, in 1933, she spent three months traveling the country, listening to stories of the people devastated by the Great Depression, which...

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**Quiet: The Power of Introverts Summary Chapter 7: Introverts and Extroverts Think Differently**

Introverts and extroverts think differently when it comes to making decisions, taking chances, recognizing and heeding warning signs, and solving complex problems. Both have strengths that they can leverage to their benefit when they also mitigate the downsides of their way of thinking. Companies can benefit by making sure both kinds of thinkers are involved in key decisions.

**Reward Sensitivity**

A big difference between introverts and extroverts is how they view potential rewards or benefits they might get from taking certain actions. Extroverts are often reward-sensitive, meaning they're highly motivated to seek rewards, whether job promotions, gambling winnings, or goals such as money, social status, sex, and influence. In contrast, introverts are better at controlling their emotional response to potential rewards and delaying gratification.

Some researchers believe the tendency to seek rewards—from alpha status to money and sex—is a key characteristic of extroversion. Reward-seeking drives them to be more ambitious and social than introverts. Extroverts get a “high” (pleasure and excitement) from pursuing and reaching their goals. This takes the form of a jolt of dopamine (a chemical response) in the brain. Introverts don’t experience a high as easily.

Reward-seeking gives extroverts the courage to take chances and take on challenges, but it can also get out of hand. An obsession with a big payoff can drive people to act irrationally and ignore clear warning signs.

Janice Dorn, a “financial psychiatrist” who studies reward sensitivity, has seen the downside first hand. She recalled counseling an investor who kept buying and selling stock despite continuously losing money in 2008 (the year of the big market crash)—to the point of ultimately losing $700,000. He was so excited at the possibility of ultimately making a lot of money that he ignored the warning signs to slow down and actually escalated his buying when he shouldn’t have. According to Dorn, the extroverted traders she works with are more likely to get carried away by...

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**Shortform Exercise: Are You Reward-Sensitive?**

Introverts and extroverts differ in how they view potential rewards or benefits they might get from taking certain actions. Extroverts are often reward-sensitive, meaning they're highly motivated to seek rewards, such as promotions, money, social status, sex, and influence. In contrast, introverts are less sensitive to potential rewards and better at delaying gratification.

Where do you think you fall on the reward-sensitivity spectrum? Why do you say that?

Quiet: The Power of Introverts Summary Part 3: A Different Model | Chapter 8: Asian Culture and Soft Power

The extrovert ideal isn't as "natural" or as revered everywhere as Americans might think. Whether extroversion or introversion predominates may depend on where you live or the culture in which you were raised.

In 2004, research psychologist Robert McCrae published a map of the world based on the personality traits most prominent in various countries and cultures: Asia is introverted while Europe and the U.S. are highly extroverted. While it's important to avoid stereotyping entire cultures and assigning group characteristics to individuals, it would be a mistake to ignore Asian cultural differences and introversion—there are aspects of Asian cultural style and personality the Western world can learn from.

A great deal of research underscores that there are cultural/personality type differences between East and West. For example, one study comparing children in Shanghai and Ontario, Canada, found that while shy and sensitive personalities were discouraged in Canada, children with those personalities were popular in China and were more likely to have leadership roles. In another study, Chinese students told researchers they preferred friends who were sensitive, humble, helpful, and honest, while American students wanted friends who were cheerful, enthusiastic, and gregarious. Chinese students valued moral qualities and achievement, while Americans focused on sociability.

When researchers asked Asian-Americans and European-Americans to think out loud while solving logic problems, the latter group did better. However, the Asian-Americans did much better when allowed to work on the problems silently.

In Asian culture, talk is for communicating necessary information; being quiet is a sign of thoughtfulness. The East and West have contrasting proverbs about silence. For instance:

- Those who know do not speak. Those who speak do not know. — Lao Zi
- Speech is civilization itself. The word, even the most contradictory word, preserves contact—it is silence which isolates. — Thomas Mann

One reason for the different attitudes may be group identity...

Quiet: The Power of Introverts Summary Part 4: Living and Working | Chapter 9: Fitting In

As noted in Chapter 5, whether you're an introvert or extrovert, you have the ability to stretch your personality beyond your comfort zone and act in ways that don't come naturally to you.

Introverts, in particular, often act like extroverts in pursuit of goals they care about. They succeed by using techniques such as self-monitoring and creating "restorative niches," where they can take timeouts to recharge.

Some introverts become so good at acting out of character that the people around them have no idea how out of character they really are. For instance, Professor Brian Little, by nature an introvert, pushed so hard to act like an extrovert that he seemed to have a dual personality. Before he retired, he was a Harvard University psychology lecturer and acclaimed teacher/performer who was so
popular with students that his classes were standing room only and often ended in ovations. He also was a popular speaker for a variety of organizations, including the military. However, in his "off" time, Little lived in a cabin in the woods of Canada, with few visitors other than family. He spent his time there reading and writing in solitude. Eventually, the "acting" led to burnout and now he focuses on research—among other things, studying how and why introverts often successfully masquerade as extroverts.

**Fixed and ‘Free’ Traits**

A few psychologists—"situationists"—have argued that personality traits aren't fixed—that we have various "selves" instead of a core personality and we shift or change our personality to suit the situation we find ourselves in.

However, Little believes we have fixed traits that remain fairly constant throughout our lives and profoundly influence us. Most psychologists, including Carl Jung and more recent researchers, agree with this view.

So how can many introverts act out of character so convincingly? Little argues that we have both fixed and “free” personality traits. **According to his “free trait theory,” we're born with certain traits like introversion, but we can act out of character when pursuing “core personal projects”...**

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**Shortform Exercise: What Are Your Restorative Niches?**

Even if you're pursuing a goal important to you, acting out of character for too long takes a lot of energy. To recharge, you need to create “restorative niches,” where you can relax and be yourself. They can be places you go to get away from the pressure or mental breaks such as meditation.

Think of a situation where you had to act in a way that was out of character and stressful for you—for instance, giving a speech or socializing with the boss. What aspects required the most energy and when did you start running out of energy?

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**Quiet: The Power of Introverts Summary Chapter 10: Introvert-Extrovert Communication**

Introverts and extroverts are often drawn to each other in the way that opposites seem to attract. The two personality types can be complementary: one talks and the other listens; one is always ready for action, while the other wants to consider all the options; one schedules activities, while the other pays the bills.

But problems can occur when a couple’s different personality types pull them in opposite directions. The key to a lasting relationship is understanding and accepting the different ways that each communicates, resolves differences, and socializes.

Greg, an extrovert, and Emily, an introvert, are an example. They have a generally compatible relationship, but they reached an impasse over Friday night dinners, which Greg, a music promoter, has been hosting for years. Emily, a staff attorney for an art museum and a very private person, dreads them. When she gets home, she wants to unwind alone, not entertain a crowd. She volunteered to visit her sister on Friday nights as a compromise, but he doesn't want to host the dinners by himself. Greg feels as though Emily is backing out of a key part of their marriage contract and he feels alone. He believes she's anti-social; Emily feels defensive and wonders whether he's right.

**A Key Difference**

People often wrongly believe that introverts are anti-social and extroverts are highly sociable. In fact, the two personality types both have a need for connection but they’re differently social.
Introverts prefer to socialize with a few close friends and have meaningful, in-depth conversations. Extroverts need to be surrounded by a lot of people to feel as though they're having a social impact. Whether you're an introvert or extrovert determines how many friends you have, but not whether you're a good friend. Researchers have found that introverts and extroverts are equally likely to be agreeable and friendly to other people—in other words, introverts aren't anti-social.

**Miscommunicating**

Being “differently social” leads to conflict when it means each person's needs aren't being...