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Relationship Communication Success for Introverts



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“Introverts treasure the close relationships they have stretched so much to make.”

— Adam S. McHugh

“Introverts...prefer to devote their social energies to close friends, colleagues, and family. They listen more than they talk, think before they speak, and often feel as if they express themselves better in writing than in conversation. They tend to dislike conflict. Many have a horror of small talk, but enjoy deep discussions.”

— Susan Cain

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Eight Signs of a Romantic Introvert

Introversion can be defined as “the tendency of being predominantly interested in one's own mental life.”(1) When it comes to matters of the heart, an introvert may think, act, and communicate in ways that are different than those who are more extroverted. Sometimes her or his intentions are misunderstood, or overlooked.

Here are eight signs that you may be a romantically inclined introvert. Although this section focuses primarily on dating and courtship, many of the ideas examined below apply to committed romantic relationships as well.

Of course, each individual is unique, and some introverts may exhibit few or none of these signs. Nevertheless, the characteristics identified below are consistent with multiple studies and writings on the topic of introversion. (2)(3)(4)(5)(6) Many introverts are likely to have at least a number of the following traits*:

*It's also important to point out that introversion and extroversion, despite many writings to the contrary, are best examined not as “either/or”, but rather as a spectrum. Each of us is somewhere along the introvert-extrovert continuum, with many tending closer toward one side or another. Significantly, we're capable of changing and evolving along this continuum depending on environment, circumstances, and most importantly, our own personal development. With willingness to learn and grow, a more introverted person may become more naturally expressive and outgoing (such is the purpose of

this book), while a more extroverted individual may become more naturally thoughtful and reflective.

1. Looking to Meet “The One”

Introverts often adopt a more thoughtful, introspective approach to courtship, and tend to take romantic relationships seriously, often from the outset. Instead of “flirting around”, “casually dating”, or “playing the field”, many introverts focus primarily on finding “the one” partner who is right for her or him, and then settling down. For introverts, the “game” of courtship and dating involving multiple prospects is often tiresome. When someone who may be the right partner appears, and a committed relationship forged, dating rituals are quickly left behind with a sigh of relief.

2. Seeking Trust & Dependability in a Mate

Many introverts look for reliability from relationships in general, and romantic partnership in particular. Reliability, along with trust, fulfill the core needs of many introverts: safety and security for the more emotionally oriented, and predictability for the more analytically oriented. (6) Most introverts, of course, seek a combination of all of these needs.

To be sure, many extroverts desire safety, security and predictability from a partner as well. However, instead of being primary and central needs, they are more likely part of a mix of other qualities sought by extroverts

(especially during courtship) such as fun-loving, spontaneity, adventuresome, social savvy, charisma, etc.

3. In Courtship, Hinting and Hoping to Get Noticed

When I was young, one of the adult tutors who volunteered at my school was an intelligent but quiet man. Years later, I learned that he was romantically interested in one of the teachers. But instead of expressing himself directly, he hoped to catch her attention with his volunteer work, which lasted for quite some time.

Some introverts express their romantic interest in a higher context manner, which simply means that they tend to hint, imply, or put themselves in an opportune situation, and hope to get noticed.⁽⁷⁾ An introvert may be active in the hinting and positioning, but passive in waiting for the romantic prospect to take notice and respond.

Of course, this indirect approach to courtship may or may not yield desired results, and could generate mixed-messages and misunderstanding. For some romantic introverts, this is a source of hidden longing, disappointment, and heartache.

*“And I know it's only in my mind
That I'm talking to myself and not to him
And although I know that he is blind
Still I say, there's a way for us...”*

— from the song “On My Own”

4. Spending Time Thinking / Reflecting About Love

Being more introspective by nature, many introverts spend time thinking and reflecting about romantic relationships, far more so than their extroverted counterparts, which tend to focus more on action. This analytical process may include the period prior to dating, when one contemplates the qualities of an ideal mate, as well as during courtship, when chemistry and compatibility of the relationship are evaluated closely (more on this in point #8).

5. May Enjoy Fantasizing About Romance

Since research suggests that certain introverts tend to be fantasy prone, it is not surprising this characteristic applies to romantic fantasies as well. Some introverts enjoy fantasizing about, or “losing oneself” in romance, whether the fantasy is based on a real life scenario or fiction. This is especially true for introverts who are more emotionally oriented, and may apply to some cerebral introverts as well. Forms of fantasy engagement

may include, and are not limited to reading, writing, entertainment viewing, internet surfing, gaming, art making, or just regular daydreaming.

From romantic interludes to sexual fantasies, these are parts of the rich and multi-faceted inner world of the introvert.

6. Prefer to “Take it Slow” in Courtship

Once an introvert begins to date a romantic prospect, she or he may prefer the relationship to progress slowly but steadily. In many ways, this is healthy and plays to the introvert’s strengths: The opportunity to get to know the partner better, and observe whether the relationship will progress satisfactorily over time. For some introverts, a fast and intense romance – like loud noise and bright lights – can feel overwhelming. It’s better to take things slowly and steadily, in order to forge a more reliable relationship.

7. Even in a Happy Relationship, Need Time to Recharge

For many introverts, even when they’re in a satisfactory romantic partnership, it is still important to have alone time, both to recharge one’s batteries, and reflect on the progress of the relationship. For introverts, this is an important aspect of relational health, as having “downtime” provides the inner retreat necessary to reorganize and rejuvenate, before reaching out again.

8. Processing What Went “Right” or “Wrong” After a Date or Dispute

During courtship, it's natural to want to process details of a positive or negative romantic outing after the experience, and consider what might have gone “right” or “wrong”. Both extroverts and introverts do this. However, whereas an extrovert may do so publicly, often as a form of socialization with others, introverts tend to do this either quietly within oneself, or privately with one or two confidants. In some cases, an introvert may risk over-analyzing a relationship. However, since most introverts prefer to observe and reflect before they speak and act, this internal process is an important tool to help make better sense of, and feel more at ease with navigating a relationship.

There's more to this excerpt!

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