

Extravert or Introvert?

Which better describes your child?

Observant of all events or engages in deep concentration?

In a new situation, talks easily to others or is more reserved?

Likes to play with several children or prefers to play with one or two friends at a time?

Interrupts others as their thoughts flow or needs “wait time” before answering new questions?

Your answers to these questions begin to reveal a preference your child may have for *extraversion* or *introversion*. According to the Jungian Type, each of us has a preference to be Extraverted or Introverted. It describes the source, direction, and focus for one’s energy. Extraverts are energized by the outer world and Introverts are inner directed.

Consider yourself: Are you energized more by interacting with other people or with thoughts and ideas? Where do you like to focus your energy--in the outer world of people and things or in the inner world of ideas and thoughts? Do you get your energy back by spending time around others or by having time to yourself? Just as you have a preference, so also does your child.

Being aware of a child’s preferences to Extravert or Introvert can help you make better educated guesses about how your child prefers to communicate and learn. It can help improve your parent-child relationship. “Type” is thought to be inborn. The challenge for parents and caregivers is to understand, respect, and appreciate these inborn differences of individuality. Learning about one aspect of type-- Extraversion vs. Introversion can improve your parenting abilities and help your child reach a more harmonious fit with situations at home, day care, church, school, and later in life.

Listed here are clues to deciding if your child has a preference to Extravert or Introvert. Go through the list and check items from each list that you think fit your child. (You will probably check items from each list, but you will likely find that your child has more characteristics from one list than the other.)

Knowing your child’s preference can help you in your interactions with your child. Young children have little or no control over their preferences. When a situation requires them to behave counter to their natural way, they may become stressed and frustrated.

Children Who Prefer Extraversion

- G Think out loud
- G Show energy and enthusiasm for activities
- G May easily be distracted by events and actions
- G Are attracted to action and activity
- G May act before they think
- G May say things before thinking them through
- G Like variety and action
- G Interrupt and finish other’s sentences when excited and want to share their ideas
- G Think out loud while talking to others

Children Who Prefer Introversion

- G Keep thoughts to self
- G Watch first, then try task or activity
- G Can ignore distractions
- G Like to spend time alone to get re-energized
- G Like to observe or think about things before trying them
- G Pause before answering new questions
- G Enjoy individual or small group activities
- G Start conversations from their point of view
- G Think ahead and then respond to others

The extraverted child is drawn to interact with the world and may touch things first and think to ask for permission later. Extraverts want to experience activities and enjoy talking about these experiences. They learn better if they are able to talk through their thoughts. The extravert draws energy by actively interacting in the world.

Introverted children prefer to observe before interacting. "Let me watch first," seems to be the motto. These children may not share their ideas until they have finished thinking. They draw energy from within themselves.

An extraverted child tends to speak while thinking. If an extraverted child makes a comment, parents might want to determine if it is a final thought before they react to it. The parent might say, "Is this your first thought or last thought?" Depending on the answer, you can then react.

Parents don't always know what to do with the energy of an extraverted child. Telling an extraverted child to "sit quietly" or "calm down" when something exciting is about to happen is much like trying to stop a speeding train with a hand signal. A better way is to encourage the extravert to talk about the pending event.

Introverted children frequently want to be left alone for awhile when they come home from day care or another activity. Parents who don't understand this may ask countless questions in an attempt to draw the child to share. The child may be drained from interacting and need time alone to re-energize. If the child is forced to answer questions, the responses may be simple: "No," "I don't know," or "Nothing." Some parents can become disturbed and think the child is avoiding answering or having problems. After a time of privacy, an introverted child may talk endlessly.

Introverted children are sometimes labeled "stubborn." Because introverts do their thinking internally, they need time to process new information. Their silence can be misinterpreted as willfulness. However, the silence may only be the time the child needs to internalize the new information. Giving an introverted child time to think before expecting an answer shows understanding.

The introverted child is likely to hold back when faced with something or someone unfamiliar, while the extraverted child is more likely to approach the situation without hesitation. The introverted child tends to be shy,

quiet, and less intrusive than the extraverted child. The introverted child is slower to respond orally and may be underestimated intellectually.

The key is observe YOUR child. As a parent, you know your child better than anyone else. Adjust your parenting strategies so you can really parent your child the way s/he needs to be parented.

Introvert Example

Jason's parents told the day care provider their son had always been slow to warm up when he was in unfamiliar territory. They suggested that with gentle nudging Jason would gradually take part in group activities. They suggested that he be allowed to sit on the sidelines and watch until he felt ready to join. Pushing and prodding him had always caused Jason to become even more withdrawn. Once Jason felt comfortable, he would participate. Over the following weeks, Jason's caregiver invited him to play ball or build blocks with another child in a small group, but she did not insist. "When you're ready, Jason," she would often say. Within a few months, Jason had made two new friends and was playing more readily in larger groups of children. Jason's parents understood and accepted his preference for Introversion. They and the child care provider were able to support Jason in his adjusting to a new experience.

Extravert Example

Kari is an active and energetic child. Kari is an Extravert. Her mother finds shopping with Kari can be stressful. Kari wants to touch everything, seems to run from one thing to the another, wants to try out all the toys in the store, and even starts conversations with strangers who are in her vicinity. Kari is energized by the variety and action of the store and the people in it. Kari's mother found that it helps to talk with Kari about what she expects before entering the store. She involves Kari by asking her to help locate the items they need to buy. Kari's mother allows time for them to browse throughout the store so Kari gets a chance to see what's new. Kari's mother knows that extraverts may act before they think so she keeps Kari in her view constantly both to protect her and keep store owners and other shoppers happy.

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