

Quiet by Susan Cain

Discussion, Chapters 4-7

Discussion Warm Up: What genre of reading/books do you generally gravitate toward? What's your favorite type of book to read?

Is Temperament Destiny...

1. The author pointed out we have dissonant or clashing aspects of our personality, and that we change over time. Is that true for you? Are there times when you've been more introverted, or extroverted?
2. Talk about the difference between "high-reactive," and "low-reactive," especially as it applies to children. (p. 102-103)
3. "Every behavior has more than one cause." Is that a cautionary statement? Why?
4. Theory of Gene-Environment Interaction (p.109)- "people who inherit certain traits tend to seek out life experiences that reinforce those characteristics." Does this lead to a tendency to become entrenched in our personality style? A defense strategy, or a limitation?
5. Suggestion for teaching extremely low-reactive (extroverted) kids values: channel their fearlessness into productive activities (p. 110). Would you agree? Give examples.

Beyond Temperament...

6. In brain scans of shy kids and later as adults, the footprint of temperament remained the same. Would your experience support this, is temperament biological more than environmental?
7. The "rubber-band theory" of personality suggests we are elastic and can stretch, but we will come back to rest, and can only stretch so much. Do you agree?
8. Discuss this difference between extroverts and introverts: their preference to stimulation. Where do you see this playing out? (p. 123)
9. What's your optimum level of stimulation? Do you find yourself consciously or unconsciously trying to situate yourself in a favorable environment?

Franklin was a politician, but Eleanor spoke out of conscience...

10. The author gives many examples of introverts. Talk about Eleanor Roosevelt's personality and how it complimented her husband's.
11. The author cites a "2010 University of Michigan study that college students today are 40 percent less empathetic than they were thirty years ago, with much of the drop having occurred since 2000." (p.140) Discuss what's behind this trend and its implications.
12. High-reactives were said to have thinner skin, are more sensitive to their environment. Think about how this applies to bullying in our culture. Are introverts more often targets for bullies than extroverts? Or are they just more sensitive to the actions? How could this impact how we react to bullying in school or our culture?
13. Consider the story of Al Gore and his congressional hearings on global warming in the 1970s—he was puzzled when no one paid attention. Talk about what the author said is behind this lack of attention.

14. “Congressmen can be wonderful people—exuberant, fearless, persuasive—but they’re unlikely to feel alarmed by a photograph of a tiny crack in a distant glacier. They need more intense stimulation to get them to listen.” (p. 150) What other issues have we seen this play out? Can we assume there are more extroverts than introverts in elected offices?

Why did Wall Street crash and Warren Buffett prosper...

15. If extroverts are more “reward sensitive,” how can we use this information to motivate students? Would the same method work for introverts? What’s your experience with success in motivation?
16. The author talks about the internal reward system—feeling a “buzz”—that can drive extroverts. What examples were given when that caused problems, such as with over confidence?
17. “in organizations... when it comes to making group decisions, extroverts would do well to listen to introverts—especially when they (introverts) see problems ahead.” Discuss examples of when this suggestion has or has not been adhered to.
18. If the reason introverts outperform extroverts in academics is because as introverted Einstein stated, “It’s that I stay with problems longer,” how do we change this? If IQ is equal for both groups, is it possible to slow extroverts down? Or should that be our goal?
19. This chapter focused a lot on recognizing our warning signs on the “reward-sensitivity spectrum.” (p. 170-172) Where do you fall on the spectrum? Why is this important to know?
20. Are your family members or co-workers different in reward-sensitivity? Do you pause and reflect on warning signs, or follow the herd (Warren Buffet reference)? Why is it important to have a mix of reactions in any decision making group?
21. In order for a mixed group to function effectively, what is the responsibility of introverts? What is the responsibility of extroverts?
22. How could the lessons in these chapters be applied to education? Or the systems that support education? What will you look for or do differently going forward?