

Apparently There Are 4 Kinds of Introversion

August 25, 2020

It's hard to believe now, but introversion was once a mostly misunderstood personality trait. Now, it's the subject of countless books [and articles](#) and listicles (and, more recently, [parodies of listicles](#)). And as more regular, non-scientist types started to talk about introversion, psychologist Jonathan Cheek began to notice something: The way many introverts defined the trait was different from the way he and most of his academic colleagues did.

“When you survey a person on the street, asking them to define introversion, what comes up as the prototypical characteristics ... are things like *thoughtful* or *introspective*,” said Cheek, a psychology professor at Wellesley College. And yet neither of these things are part of the definition of the trait according to scientific literature. In the bulk of the research on personality psychology, introversion is usually defined by [what it is not: extroversion](#). If extroverts are assertive and enthusiastic individuals who thrive in highly stimulative social environments, then introverts are the opposite, so the academics' way of thinking about it goes. What everyday introverts think about it doesn't really factor in.

This is actually a problem that was identified at least as early as 1980, when one [study](#) found that the “scientific” and “common-sense” definitions of introversion didn't quite match up. And the more Cheek and his colleagues, including graduate students Jennifer Grimes and Courtney Brown, thought about it, and the more [self-described introverts](#) they interviewed, the less correct this one-size-fits-all definition seemed. There's not just one way to be an introvert, Cheek now argues — rather, [there are four shades of introversion](#): social, thinking, anxious, and restrained. And many introverts are a mix of all four types, rather than demonstrating one type over the others. (Scroll to the bottom for a quiz, borrowed from Cheek, to find out your own type.)

Taken together, the first letter of the four types spells out *STAR*, which is what Cheek named his model. He designed it by surveying about 500 adults, ranging in age from 18 to 70, asking them about things like their preference for solitude, or how inclined they are to daydream. The uniting principle of all four kinds is, of course, [a tendency to turn inward](#) rather than outward — but beyond that, [it gets more complicated](#).

...