



## Tips for Parents: Introverts

Sharon Lind

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Sharon Lind, a private consultant for affective, gifted, and parent education, led an informational seminar for parents of profoundly intelligent children on the topic of introverts. The following list of tips were compiled from that discussion.

### Characteristics of Introverts

- Have two personas – private and public
- Are private people who enjoy doing things by themselves and who reveal inner most thoughts to only a few
- May talk a lot to people whom they feel comfortable with, but are quieter with others
- Refuse to discuss the day's events until later, even days or weeks
- Are thorough thinkers
- Rarely interrupt and hate to be interrupted
- Learn by watching and mentally rehearsing
- Become grouchy if around people too long, especially after contact with many people
- Have a strong sense of personal space
- Seem to enjoy being sent to their rooms to sit alone
- May find it difficult to share what they are feeling
- Are humiliated easily – they do not want to appear foolish

### Tips for Living with Introverts

- Celebrate diversity in your home – diversity of intellect, emotional make up, physical attributes, ethnicity, psychological makeup, whatever.
- Honor and acknowledge introverts' need for privacy. Be sure they have a place they can go that is all their own and where they will not be intruded upon. This need for privacy is exacerbated by long term exposure to others ( i.e. school or work).
- Honor their need to process the days events before sharing their feelings and understand that sharing may happen with only one person.
- Honor their need for personal space (around their body). It will be larger than for most other people.
- Respect their need for time to think, observe, or mentally rehearse before they try something new.
- Respect their discomfort with interruptions.
- Help them to develop an authentic external or social persona. Help them decide in advance what they will say to strangers in new situation and what personal interests or feelings they feel safe sharing with others.
- Help introverts understand that others may perceive of them as rude, stand-offish, arrogant, shy, or even unapproachable. They may need to explain their behaviors or needs. (i.e. I always room by myself at conferences because I need the alone time to reenergize.)
- Remember that introverts can be very sociable with other introverts, family members and close friends.
- Keep in mind that being an introvert may bring with it some internal conflicts
  - > Between providing for themselves and providing for others
  - > Between the strong need to be compassionate and being unable to spontaneously reach out
  - > Between retaining privacy and seeming open
  - > Between meeting own needs and sustaining a relationship with and meeting needs of an extravert
- Help introverts to find ways to refuel – to find what works best for them (i.e. being out of doors and among nature, meditation, music/TV/movies, shower/bath, solitary exercise, video/computer games, reading, art, dance, being in own space with own things, etc.)
- Give detailed feedback privately and allow them time to respond.



### **Providing for the Introvert in the Classroom and at Home**

1. Allow for personal space or territory for privacy/thinking and to restore energy
2. Provide own room, corner; headphones; picture, object, window – something to focus on unobtrusively
3. Provide time with little or no interruptions
4. Allow for internal processing time
5. Offer depth and intensive learning
6. Help child create the public persona
7. Allow child to compete with self rather than with others
8. Teach how to stop thinking and start acting

### **Changes Adults Need to Make for Introverts**

1. Forms of feedback
  - Private, giving time for child to respond
  - Detailed, with rationalizations
2. Assignments
  - Allow for more thinking time
  - Allow for concentrated effort – do not jump from subject to subject
  - Offer alternatives to oral presentations
3. Teaching/parenting style
  - Honor child's need for space and privacy
  - Give time for thought
  - Ask child what is best for him/her
4. Expectations
  - Not everyone has to be an extravert