

READING

Personality

Why the world needs introverts

Mahatma Gandhi was an introvert, as were Van Gogh and Albert Einstein

'It's good to be **sociable**! It's good to be confident! It's good to be loud!' In her book *Quiet*, Susan Cain points out how deeply this belief is held by society. Very often the qualities of extroverts – being **active** and **lively**, making quick decisions and working well in a team or group, for example – are valued more than the **shy**, serious and **sensitive** qualities of introverts. Susan Cain calls this attitude the 'Extrovert Ideal'. In her book she looks at the way society places such value on the Extrovert Ideal that many modern schools and workplaces are built around it. Desks in classrooms are pushed together so that students can work in groups more easily. In Europe and the USA, employees are frequently put in shared offices so that they can work in teams. Students and employees are also expected to be confident and **talkative**.

Why are the needs of introverts ignored in this way when introverts have so much to offer? Introverts need less excitement around them than extroverts, it's true, but that doesn't make them less exciting people. Many of the world's greatest ideas, art and inventions have been produced by introverts. The Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi was an introvert, as were the artist Vincent Van Gogh and the physicist Albert Einstein.

Then there was Rosa Parks, who started the US civil rights movement in 1955 by bravely and quietly saying 'no' when a white passenger wanted to sit in her seat on a bus.

Famous introverts in modern times include Angelina Jolie and Mark Zuckerberg. Jolie, a hugely successful actor, supports charities that help people in war zones. She describes herself as an introvert, saying she loves to spend time alone or with small groups of people because it helps her develop as a person.

And despite the huge success of his social networking site, co-founder of Facebook Zuckerberg remains a private person who doesn't like speaking in public.

But let's not forget that we need extroverts too. Because of course, introverts can come up with great ideas, but they also need help in communicating those ideas to the world. Songwriters need singers. Designers need sales people. In other words, extroverts and introverts need each other.

Exercise 1

Read the article and answer the questions.

- 1 What is the attitude that Susan Cain calls the 'Extrovert Ideal'?
- 2 How do people organise classrooms and offices to make them better for extroverts?
- 3 How are extroverts useful to introverts?

Exercise 2

Complete the definitions with the personality adjectives in bold in the article.

- 1 _____ people talk a lot.
- 2 _____ people are easily upset and feel emotions deeply.
- 3 _____ people like spending time with other people.
- 4 _____ people do a lot of things or move around a lot.
- 5 _____ people are full of energy and enthusiasm.
- 6 _____ people are not confident, especially with new people.

