

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking

By Susan Cain

Note: If page numbers are listed for reference, they correspond to the paperback version. Depending on which format book you are reading, your page numbers may be different.

Consider sharing Susan Cain's TED Talk at the beginning of the first session:
[Susan Cain: The power of introverts | TED Talk](#)

SESSION 1 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Introduction: The North and South of Temperament

Q1. Describe the "Extrovert Ideal."

Q2. What are some characteristics of introverts and extroverts?

Q3. (Page 12) Is there a difference between being an introvert and being shy? What do you think about this concept?

Q4. (Page 13-14) Did you take the informal quiz? Did anything surprise you with your results on where you fall on the introvert-extrovert spectrum?

Chapter 1: The Rise of the "Mighty Likeable Fellow": How Extroversion Became the Cultural Ideal

Q5. Susan Cain researched the history of how extroversion became the cultural ideal and how introversion became a bad concept. She wrote about Dale Carnegie, a shy pig farmer who became a teacher of public speaking. She also wrote about Carl Jung; the "inferiority complex"; child guidance experts in the 1920s; and Yale recruitment. Did anything in this history of the importance of extroverts strike you in particular?

Chapter 2: The Myth of Charismatic Leadership: The Culture of Personality, a Hundred Years Later

Q6. Had you heard of Tony Robbins (the author and motivational speaker) before reading "Quiet"? What do you think of the author's description of the Unleash the Power Within (UPW) seminar? Do you think this type of seminar has benefits?

Q7. Susan Cain introduces us to the Harvard Business School (HBS). "If you're preparing alone for class, then you're doing it wrong. Nothing at HBS is intended to be done alone." Also, the HBS model of leadership places a high premium on confidence and quick decision-making. What do you think about the kind of environment that the HBS promotes?

Q8. (Page 49-50) The author describes the HBS exercise on survival (Subarctic Survival Situation) – ranking the 15 items to survive in order of importance. One group had a person with extensive experience in the northern backwoods. He had a lot of ideas but expressed them too quietly. His classmate recalled that their action plan hinged on what the most vocal people suggested. Can you remember a time when the opinion of the most dynamic or talkative person prevailed to the detriment of all?

Q9. (Page 51) The author makes several statements about talkers – do you agree or disagree? Do you have any specific examples?

- We perceive talkers as smarter than quiet types
- We see talkers as leaders
- We rate quick talkers as more capable and appealing than slow talkers

Q10. Describe how Rosa Parks was an introvert. What stood out to you in her experiences?

Q11. Is there anything you would like to discuss these sections that has not been discussed already?

SESSION 2 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chapter 3: When Collaboration Kills Creativity: The Rise of the New Groupthink and the Power of Working Alone

Q1. Steve Wozniak built a prototype of his computer. Describe the process – was it a group project or was Wozniak primarily working by himself?

Q2. What is the "New Groupthink"? Why are students working more and more in groups? Do you think groupwork stifles or increases productivity and ideas?

Q3. Have you experienced this New Groupthink firsthand – either in the workplace, or with a child's education, or in another setting? Would you be willing to share your experience?

Q4. What is "Deliberate Practice"? Do you think Deliberate Practice is the key to exceptional achievement?

Q5. Do you think contemporary workplaces have the right working conditions for exceptional performance? What did you think about the author's statements on open-plan offices and open-plan workers?

Q6. What do you think of the study on brainstorming, which showed individuals (not groups) brainstormed more ideas and ideas of higher quality than groups? Also, what do you think about brainstorming performance getting worse as groups get larger?

Chapter 4: Is Temperament Destiny?: Nature, Nurture, and the Orchid Hypothesis

Q7. What is the difference between "temperament" and "personality"?

Q8. Jerome Kagan devoted his life's work to a study of emotional and cognitive development of children. What were some of his findings? What do you think of the study?

Q9. What is the "orchid hypothesis" or the "orchid children" introduced to us by David Dobbs?

Q10. What are your overall thoughts of the ideas presented in Chapter 4 (Is Temperament Destiny?: Nature, Nurture, and the Orchid Hypothesis)?

Q11. Is there anything you would like to discuss these sections that has not been discussed already?

SESSION 3 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chapter 5: Beyond Temperament: The Role of Free Will (and the Secret of Public Speaking for Introverts)

Q1: (Page 117) The fMRI results showed that both groups of children who are now adults (both high-reactive and low-reactive) reacted to the pictures, but the formerly shy kids reacted more. In other words, the footprint of a high- or low-reactive temperament never disappeared in adulthood. This means, we can stretch our personalities, but only up to a point. Our inborn temperaments influence us, regardless of the lives we lead. Were you surprised at these results? Why or why not?

Q2: (Page 122) Esther, the tax lawyer, thought her extrovert colleagues had a superior understanding of tax law, because they could present to the rest of the law firm extemporaneously. She thought with more experience, she, too, could "wing it." But as she became more knowledgeable, she still couldn't do it and needed time to prepare. Have you experienced a similar situation, which stems from where you are on the introvert-extrovert spectrum?

Q3: (Page 124) Susan Cain gives the example of the introverts and extroverts playing a game at different noise levels, and each group finding their "just right" volume. When the introverts switched the noise level to the louder volume preferred by the extroverts, the introverts underperformed and took longer. The extroverts also performed more poorly when they switched to the quieter noise level preferred by the introverts. What did you think of this noise level example? How is this applicable to our workplace?

Q4: (Page 126-129) Susan Cain took a course to conquer her fear of public speaking – at the Public Speaking-Social Anxiety Center of New York. The class was based on desensitization training, which involves exposing yourself to the thing you're afraid of, over and over, in manageable doses. What do you think of this type of training? If you have ever taken a course to conquer the fear of public speaking, what type of useful (or less useful) tips did you learn that you'd like to share?

Chapter 6: "Franklin was a Politician, but Eleanor Spoke Out of Conscience": Why Cool Is Overrated

Q5: (Page 138-140) The book lists some of the amazing things that Eleanor Roosevelt did to fix the social problems around her – listening to ordinary people tell their hard-luck stories (40,000 miles in 3 months), orchestrating government programs for half-starved miners of Appalachia, including women and African-Americans in FDR's programs to put people back to work, arranging for Marian Anderson (a Black woman) to sing at the Lincoln Memorial. Do you think Eleanor Roosevelt would have accomplished as much if she was not so sensitive?

Q6: (Page 141-142) Susan Cain describes what it means to be thin-skinned metaphorically and literally. How does being thin-skinned apply to introverts and extroverts? Have you or someone you have known ever taken a lie detector test?

Q7: (Page 145-149) Explain some of the theories on how the highly sensitive survive evolution.

Q8. Is there anything you would like to discuss these sections that has not been discussed already?

SESSION 4 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chapter 7: Why Did Wall Street Crash and Warren Buffet Prosper?: How Introverts and Extroverts Think (and Process Dopamine) Differently

Q1: (Page 157-161) What is "reward sensitivity"? Give an example. Are introverts or extroverts more susceptible to reward-sensitivity?

Q2: (Page 162) The financial crash of 2008 was caused, in part, by uncalculated risk-taking and blindness to threat. Do you think the outcome would have been any different if there were more introverts at the helm?

Q3: (Page 164) What does FUD stand for? What does Susan Cain say about FUD in this chapter?

Q4: (Page 171-172) Did you take the quiz to find out if you are reward-oriented, threat-oriented, or both? If yes, did anything surprise you?

Q5: (Page 172-173) Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi had a line of research called "flow." Psychological theories usually assume we are motivated by the need to eliminate an unpleasant condition (hunger or fear), or by the expectation of some future reward (money, status, prestige). But in flow, a person could work around the clock for days on end, for no better reason than to keep on working. What do you think about this concept of flow?

Q6: (Page 176-177) What are some qualities of Warren Buffet that has enabled him to prosper?

Chapter 8: Soft Power: Asian-Americans and the Extrovert Ideal

Q7: (Page 181-185) Susan Cain describes the school atmosphere in Cupertino, California, which in some cases, respected or even admired introversion. What struck you as unusual? What struck you as refreshing?

Q8: (Page 186) What do you think of Robert McCrae's map of the world that is based on personality trait levels: dark for extroversion (Europe, the U.S. if included) and light for introversion (Asia)? Do you think it is a grand exercise in cultural stereotyping?

Q9: (Page 190) Susan Cain concludes that in the West, we subscribe to the Extrovert Ideal, while much of Asia, silence is golden. Would you come to a similar conclusion, based on your experiences – either in your neighborhood, school, workplace, or travel?

Q10: (Page 192) Mike Wei, an Asian college student at Stanford, concluded "People who don't talk or seem as weak or lacking." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain.

Q11: (Page 197-200) Some of the examples in Gandhi's life may portray him as a deeply passive man. But Gandhi believed in "firmness in pursuit of truth" – focusing on an ultimate goal and refusing to divert energy to unnecessary skirmishes along the way. He believed restraint was one of his greatest assets. What struck you about Gandhi, either what was presented in this book, or what you know from other sources?

Q12: What does "soft power" mean to you?

Q13: Is there anything you would like to discuss from these sections that has not been discussed already?

SESSION 5 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chapter 9: When Should You Act More Extroverted Than You Really Are?

Q1: (Page 206-207) What is Situationism? What do you think about this concept?

Q2: (Page 212-213) Describe the concept of "self-monitoring."

Q3: (Page 214) Did you answer the questions to determine how strong a self-monitor you are? Did anything surprise you?

Q4: (Page 214-215) Do you think it is ethical to be a high self-monitor? Or is self-monitoring an act of modesty? Or something in between?

Q5: (Page 219) *Quiet* talks about "restorative niches," the places introverts go or the things they do to recharge their batteries. What are your favorite restorative niches?

Chapter 10: The Communication Gap: How to Talk to Members of the Opposite Type

Q6: (Page 227) Many personality psychologists believe that human personality can be boiled down into five characteristics: introversion-extroversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, conscientiousness, emotional stability. What do you think of this? Have you taken a psychology course or have any more insights into this?

Q7: (Page 230) What are some of the different ways that introverts and extroverts resolve conflict?

Q8: Chapter 10 discussed the story of Greg (extrovert) and Emily (introvert). Greg wants to host an elaborate dinner party every Friday night, and Emily wants none of that. What were your takeaways on how Greg and Emily could change their behaviors to resolve their conflict?

Q9: If you're in a relationship, how does your temperament compare to that of your partner? How do you handle areas in which you're not compatible? What are your best tips?

Q10: Is there anything you would like to discuss from these sections that has not been discussed already?

SESSION 6 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chapter 11: On Cobblers and Generals: How to Cultivate Quiet Kids in a World That Can't Hear Them

Q1: Chapter 11 contained two stories of parent-child relationships:

- (1) The story of Ethan (the introverted child) and his extroverted parents, who are convinced that something is wrong with him and brought him to child psychologists
- (2) The story of Joyce (mother, extrovert) and Isabel (daughter, introvert), where Joyce learns to adapt to Isabel's needs

Which parts of these stories resonated with you?

Q2: (Page 248-250, 255-263) What are some of the recommendations to do for an introverted child?

Q3: If you have children, how does your temperament compare to theirs? How do you handle areas where you're not temperamentally compatible?

Conclusion: Wonderland

Q4: The Conclusion summarized many of Susan Cain's main points of *Quiet*. What resonated with you the most?

Q5: What are you going to take away from reading *Quiet*? Are there any changes you plan to make?

Q6: Is there anything you would like to discuss from these sections (or book in general) that has not been discussed already?

Note, at the back of the book are various resources for readers:

- Public speaking for introverts
- Tips for parents of an introverted child
- Tips for educators