

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Praise for <i>The Introvert Teacher</i>	
Foreword	
Dedication	
Acknowledgements	
Introduction .....	1
How to Use This Book .....	4
<b>Section I: Understand Yourself</b>	
Chapter 1: Introversion and Extroversion .....	9
Chapter 2: Introvert Care .....	21
Chapter 3: The Social Dance .....	27
Chapter 4: Highly Sensitive People .....	35
Chapter 5: The Value of Introverts .....	39
Chapter 6: Co-operation between Introverts and Extroverts .....	47
<b>Section II: Care for Yourself</b>	
Chapter 7: Care of the Body, Soul and Spirit .....	57
Chapter 8: The Importance of Quiet Thinking .....	67
Chapter 9: Time Management .....	75
Chapter 10: Decisions .....	89
Chapter 11: Habits .....	97
Chapter 12: Purpose and Aim .....	103
Chapter 13: Feedback .....	113
Chapter 14: Wealth .....	121
<b>Section III: Understand Your Learners</b>	
Chapter 15: Personality Tests .....	127
Chapter 16: Motivation .....	141
Chapter 17: Asian Values .....	153

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 18: Distilling Information .....	157
Chapter 19: Discipline .....	165
<b>Section IV: Care for Your Learners</b>	
Chapter 20: Learning as a Teacher .....	173
Chapter 21: Understanding Yourself as a Teacher .....	177
Chapter 22: Learning Environment .....	191
Chapter 23: Before Your Session .....	205
Chapter 24: Field Trips .....	215
<b>Section V: Platform Skills</b>	
Chapter 25: First Impressions .....	223
Chapter 26: Audience Participation .....	229
Chapter 27: Breathing and Using Your Voice .....	237
Chapter 28: Body Language .....	243
Chapter 29: Rapport .....	253
Chapter 30: Story-Telling .....	265
Chapter 31: Personas .....	277
Chapter 32: Mental Practice .....	281
Chapter 33: Position .....	285
Chapter 34: Visuals.....	291
Chapter 35: Board Skills .....	299
<b>Section VI: Useful Resources</b>	
Chapter 36: Organisation .....	307
Chapter 37: Lesson Flow and Planning .....	311
Chapter 38: Activities .....	327
Chapter 39: Assessment .....	335
Chapter 40: Administration .....	343
Chapter 41: More Useful Resources .....	351
<b>Final Thoughts</b> .....	359

# PRAISE FOR *THE INTROVERT TEACHER*

“*The Introvert Teacher* exemplifies what education should be like: Thought-provoking, useful and life-changing.”



—**EUGENE SEAH**, Chief Coach, Trainium Academy  
[www.eugeneseah.com](http://www.eugeneseah.com)

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“Well researched and meticulously written. Easy read for the busy executive. As an introvert who has been in the training arena for over a decade, I find that Remus’ book offers a good measure of assurance and encouragement. He also offers many practical tips on how to do my job better.”



—**MERVIN YEO**, Networking Evangelist, Speaker, Author  
[www.mervinyeo.com](http://www.mervinyeo.com)

PRAISE FOR *THE INTROVERT TEACHER*

“The role of the teacher is a sacred one – to uplift, to edify and to motivate through the sharing of wisdom and the giving of energy. In this book, Remus pulls the curtains open and unveils what goes on behind the scenes within an introvert. He offers useful advice to introverts in this noble and demanding vocation, encouraging them to attend to their own needs so that they can care for the people they love.

For non-introverts, Remus writes beautifully about the inner world of introverts, their experiences and their world views. I highly recommend this book as a useful resource for all introvert teachers. In fact, I would say that this is a must-read for anyone who works with, lives with, loves and hopes to authentically influence the introverts in their lives.”



—COEN TAN, Authenticity and Influence Coach  
[www.coentan.com](http://www.coentan.com)

# FOREWORD

The classroom is a very public place, yet it is also a place where our personal feelings, motivations and personalities are ever present. How dare we teach? This is often somewhere at the back of our mind. What gives us the right to be standing there educating, training, guiding? Introverts will certainly be ready to question themselves more than extroverts.

Wherever we are in the world, there is no preponderant type of teacher/trainer personality. The introvert teacher with a personality that is not outward, who is not 'gung-ho' or 'in your face' (to cite a phrase describing some interesting aspects of modern life), may cower inwardly at their own temerity in presuming to be a teacher. This book, however, is of interest to all teachers because there is an introversion-extroversion spectrum, a continuum in teacher personalities that encompasses us all. A teacher is rarely constantly at an extreme of introversion or extroversion. We are where we are, but our behaviour can be consciously shifted within the spectrum, depending on the circumstances.

This book will resonate with all who are interested in teaching and with all teachers/trainers. It contains highly valuable insights for all educators, whether introvert or extrovert or somewhere between the two types. The contents of the book have been born of an Asian teaching environment and refer significantly to the Asian teaching situation, but they are valid and have real value for teachers anywhere.

The teacher who is more aligned to introversion is not an exception and does not carry a burden of social stigma or disadvantage. Teaching, after all, has a special attraction to deeper thinkers, to steadfast and tenacious personalities, to those who ponder and plod rather than those who loudly race to goals. Introverts are well represented among the myriad of personality types working in the teaching profession.

## FOREWORD

This book avoids the commonly met theory–practice divide, for example, the divide between pedagogical theory and practical teaching, between applied linguistics and the teaching of English. The book is set out in six sections containing 41 chapters, beginning with the nature of introversion and extroversion, then examining issues arising from personality types and educator–learner interactions and going on to relevant practicalities and techniques for lessons and their delivery.

Remus shows us that introversion empowers for the teaching situation. I can vouch myself, being towards the introvert end of the spectrum, being a plodder and certainly not a burning extrovert, that Remus offers helpful insights and thought–provoking knowledge.

Remus and I have experienced together the busy classroom environment in Singapore, a modern and highly competitive society. We have both independently recognised that we are towards being introvert teachers rather than extrovert teachers, a fact making it all the more satisfying when we achieve good learner outcomes. We feel happy in our personalities and teaching styles. We have confidence in our abilities that are reinforced by the reflection, contemplation, awareness of self, observation and carefully considered thinking of the introvert teacher.

I well recall teaching and counselling learners, and also interacting with course enquirers and teachers as academic director, when introversion readily gave way to more extroversion, and it was then that I became very aware of the continuum that Remus describes. I would be secure in the knowledge, whether in one–to–one situations or teaching in the classroom, that a high pace and intensity did not define me, and that exhaustion and a sudden energy slump, part of the cost of being a more extrovert teacher, would not be a price to pay. I am delighted that Remus has researched these issues so well for this book.

REMUS ZHONG

A celebration of introversion, almost a contradiction in terms, is what Remus has laudably conceived and successfully achieved.

The TESOL College library is stocking *The Introvert Teacher*, and the College thoroughly recommends it for teachers/trainers anywhere and for the library of any teaching/training institution.



**DR. ALAN RICHARDSON**

The TESOL College

Scotland

October 2016

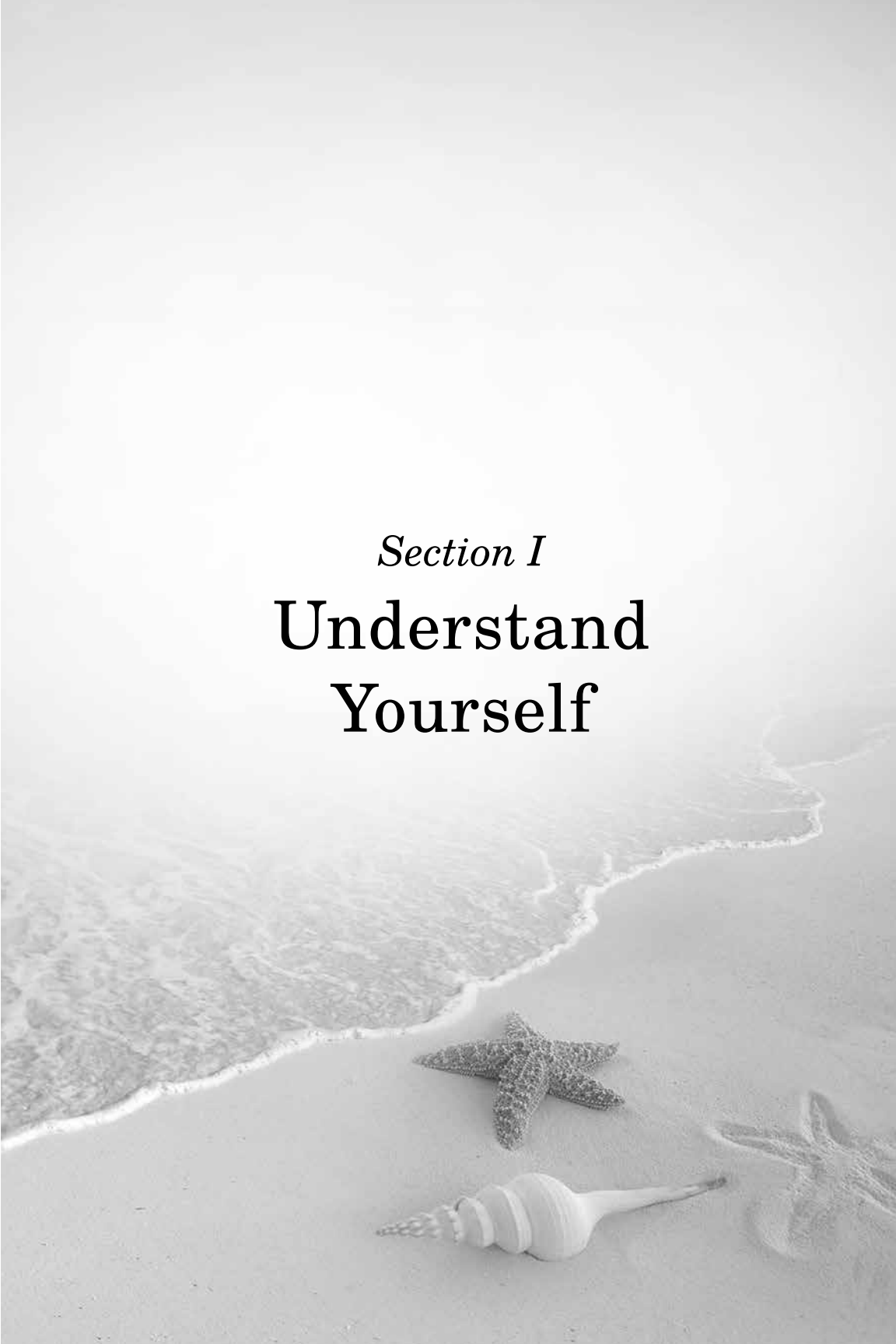
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*To you who teach,  
wherever you are  
in the world.*



*Section I*  
**Understand  
Yourself**



“Introversion,  
when embraced, is a  
wellspring of riches.”

—LAURIE HELGOE, author of *Introvert Power*

# INTROVERSION AND EXTROVERSION

*I remember one common theme throughout my childhood: Whenever I was at a large family gathering, I slipped away after being in the main hub of activity for a while. I was content to read in a corner or simply explore my immediate surroundings in silence. Thankfully, my parents did not mind and they let me be.*

.....

## What Is Introversion?

**I**ntroversion is a major personality trait, one that has been identified in many personality theories.

For example, at the core of the Myer-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), one of the most popular personality tests in use today, is the concept of whether an individual is an introvert or an extrovert. The test also explores other personality traits that both introverts and extroverts may have.

**The term means '(an) individual with (an) inwardly-directed personality'.**

What exactly, then, is an introvert?

The Chinese call introverts *ge xing nei xiang zhe* (个性内向者). Literally translated, the term means '(an) individual with (an) inwardly-directed personality'. This is a rather succinct summary of what an introvert is: He is someone whose main focus is aimed towards his inner self.

The Oxford dictionary defines an introvert as *[a] person predominantly concerned with their own thoughts and feelings rather than with external things.*

Interestingly, in the Oxford dictionary, there is a second definition: *A shy, reticent person.* This is a common view of introverts, though, as we will see in a moment, it is not necessarily an accurate one.

The defining characteristic of an introvert is in the way he generates and replenishes his energy reserves. An introvert does so in solitude, with minimal external stimulation.

## The Introversion/Extroversion Spectrum

There have been numerous articles written about introverts in recent years, likely due to the increase in the number of studies on this personality type.

One of the features of introversion is that it isn't a trait that stands alone. It exists on one side of a spectrum, with the opposite trait being extroversion (of course).

So, we have individuals on different areas of the spectrum, meaning that some introverts are more introverted than other introverts, and some extroverts are more extroverted than other extroverts. There is no such thing as a pure introvert or a pure extrovert.

If you'd like to find out where you are on the spectrum, you may want to go to [www.quietrev.com/the-introvert-test](http://www.quietrev.com/the-introvert-test). The website is maintained by Susan Cain, author of the bestseller *Quiet*.

## Introvert Characteristics

The following scenario may be familiar to many introverts:


James was invited to a friend's birthday party. When he arrived, he got quickly overwhelmed by the loud music and flashing lights and, almost on autopilot, sought a quieter part of the house, where he sat on his own.

From there, he kept mainly to himself, all the while observing the other partygoers and avoiding eye contact so that he would not need to make meaningless small talk with anyone he did not know.

Introverts tend to keep to themselves, not because they dislike the company of others but because being around large numbers of people, loud noises and bright lights drain their energy quickly.

This is often the reason that they are usually not too keen on attending large parties, especially ones where they hardly know anybody.

Introverts have a dread of small talk – an activity they find meaningless and superficial – and rapid-fire conversations. They prefer to have deep discussions and plenty of time to think before they verbalise their thoughts.



**Introversion  
is not a  
deficiency,  
symptom or  
problem.**

Some traits of introverts include:

1. Needing more personal space and time on their own (“downtime”).
2. Having a few deep interests.
3. Preferring that people approach them instead of their having to approach others.
4. Being more inclined towards listening than speaking.
5. Being often full of thoughts.
6. Preferring deep conversations to small talk.
7. Being more reserved in expression.
8. Liking to work alone or only in small groups.

Of course, these traits are very general and may not apply to every single introvert in the world. They will also vary in degree for different introverts and at different times.

For example, you may feel more sociable in the morning after a good night’s rest and approach your colleagues for a conversation and some small talk. By the afternoon, after getting some work done, you may feel a little tired and be less inclined to continue talking, preferring to continue to work on your own.

Your change in energy level is often the main deciding factor in your interactions with others. And that's all right.

## Myths about Introverts

Let's take a look at some commonly-held stereotypes about introverts:

1. Introverts are shy.
2. Introverts are antisocial and/or socially awkward.
3. Introverts do not like people or to be around them.
4. Introverts are generally not as happy as extroverts.
5. Introverts miss out on life and are no fun to be with.

Any of these sound familiar? Come on now, be honest. Many of us have probably heard of at least a few of these, and because they are so widely spoken of, we have come to believe that they are at least partly true.

Let's clear the air a little. Introversion is not a deficiency, symptom or problem. It is a facet of personality (which we'll talk about a little more in Chapter 15 on 'Personality Tests'), and is of no less importance than extroversion.

### Myth 1: Introverts are shy

Shyness is possibly the trait most associated with introverts. It is so commonly mentioned that it has become part of a dictionary definition for an introvert (look in the Oxford dictionary).

Introverts are usually less gregarious and enthusiastic in social situations. They are also often more reserved and withdrawn, traits that are often associated with shyness.

However, shyness is primarily a product of fear and anxiety. It is characterised as a feeling of discomfort (of varying degrees from minor social awkwardness to debilitating social phobia) when a person is unsure of how other people view him or his behaviour.

Shy people often fear embarrassment, rejection or humiliation in social situations and see social situations as threats to their well-being.

Shyness is not a preference for the individual in the way introversion is, and can afflict both the introvert and the extrovert. As odd as it may sound, there are shy extroverts, and you may even know one. However, it can be overcome through patience, a willingness to experiment with social situations and/or therapy.

In a slightly embellished example, a shy person may think, ‘That lady looks like an interesting person. I’d like to talk to her, but I’m afraid that she will reject me when I introduce myself to her and that others will laugh at me when that happens.’

An introvert may think, ‘That lady looks like an interesting person. I’d like to talk to her, but I am getting really drained by this party and I don’t have much energy left.’

Both the shy person and the introvert do not approach the interesting-looking lady, but they hold back for different reasons. Though there are certainly shy introverts, not all introverts are shy. It is not easy for someone on the outside to determine whether someone is truly shy or simply an introvert who is running low on energy.

## **Myth 2: Introverts are antisocial and/or socially awkward**

The word ‘antisocial’ is flippantly thrown around. It is currently used to label someone who does not engage much in social gatherings, and this person is therefore considered not ‘normal’ in a social sense. People who are labelled ‘antisocial’ are looked upon negatively because there is a connotation that they may be ‘too good to join us’ or ‘proud’ or ‘rather be alone than spend time with their friends’.



**Many introverts are actually extremely socially adept and charming once they are comfortable with their conversation partner.**

Introverts, reserved and withdrawn though they can sometimes be, certainly do not fit into any such category. Another objection thrown up against introverts is that they are socially awkward.



**To an  
introvert,  
size does  
matter.**

Though this can certainly be the case for some, many introverts are actually extremely socially adept and charming once they are comfortable with their conversation partner. It is when they are over-stimulated that introverts attempt to conserve energy and may cut conversations short and be less inclined to observe social niceties.

Their main thought when they are low on energy may simply be to find some place quiet to get away from the hubbub of activity. Unfortunately, they sometimes unintentionally step on a toe or two on their way out.

In such situations it is not that introverts are unable to handle social situations with grace, but that they are too tired to do so.

### **Myth 3: Introverts do not like people or to be around them**

This is a statement that is terribly untrue, and it shocks some introverts to find out that this is a common stereotype about them.

Of course we like people. We are people ourselves, and we need social connection just like everyone else.

The main difference is in the type of social connection we enjoy. Introverts often prefer not to be part of large social gatherings, but enjoy small ones. To an introvert, size does matter.

Large group gatherings can be exhausting. Having to keep up with so many words requires a lot of mental energy, and introverts can easily become overwhelmed within a short period of time in such an environment.



The other thing about large group gatherings is that there is seldom any long-term central conversation, and when there is, either one person dominates it or everybody is trying to say their piece without really listening to what other people are saying.

At some point, it breaks into smaller pockets of conversation, which suits us fine until one of the other conversations starts to pick up volume and distracts the one we are in.

On another note, one of the other issues we have with meeting people, especially new ones, is the empty small talk that mortifies many of us. Given a choice, we would much rather have deep, meaningful conversations with a single person or perhaps a very small group of two to four individuals we are at least slightly familiar with.

So, introverts like to hang out and talk and do stuff with other people, just in quieter settings with less external stimulation and with fewer people.

We are great at one-on-one meetings with familiar faces. Catching up with a friend over coffee or tea at a quiet local café is an enjoyable experience for many of us and fills our need for social connection without causing us to overextend ourselves.

Because of our preference for listening and being with familiar people, we tend to have and maintain a few closer friendships rather than a larger network of more casual acquaintances. There is nothing wrong with either 'system'. They are merely the result of our preferences.

#### **Myth 4: Introverts are generally not as happy as extroverts**


Happiness is perhaps most often represented by one of the most iconic images of popular culture today: The 'smiley' face. Because of the extrovert ideal in the culture (more on this later), the happy person is portrayed by the media and ingrained in our thoughts as a person with bright eyes, a wide grin, a hearty laugh and a skip in his step as he warmly greets passers-by along the walkway to his destination.

It is true that extroverts tend to be more exuberant than introverts, but an outward display of joy is not the only kind of happiness there is.

There are numerous degrees of happiness: From satisfaction to serenity to pleasure to cheerfulness to gladness to joy to glee to exhilaration to ecstasy to euphoria to bliss.

While one may dwell mainly in a 'lower' degree of happiness, it does not make him/her unhappy. It is inaccurate to think that only the 'higher' degrees of happiness make for true happiness.

For example, when we see monks pondering in silence or meditating, we do not see excited displays of happiness. Yet, we feel that their serenity and balance bring them a kind of happiness that many of us long to have. There is happiness in silence and non-display, too.



**Introverts  
may live a  
life of fantasy,  
intrigue and  
mystery - all  
in their  
heads.**

I have, on occasion, had people come up to me wondering why I was so quiet and looked so unhappy, concerned that something was wrong. Many of these times, I was simply deeply concentrating on my internal world, putting words together, crafting thought sequences and patterns and imagining vivid, captivating scenarios. I was far from unhappy. In fact, I was having fun.

The words of J. K. Rowling come to mind: 'Of course it is happening in your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?'

Introverts may live a life of fantasy, intrigue and mystery – all in their heads. They may seem to be outwardly less-than-happy, but do not doubt that their imaginations are running full-screen-blockbuster-grade thoughts and that they may be having the time of their lives, invisible to everyone else.

## **Myth 5: Introverts miss out on life and are no fun to be with**

This is an intriguing one. There is a reason for extroverts to think this way – they are wired differently from us.

The activities extroverts enjoy are often not the same ones that introverts take pleasure in. This is because introverts do not need much external stimulation, which may result in them being generally less enthusiastic about higher-adrenaline activities.

That being the case, many introverts feel guilt over declining invitations to parties and gatherings, and fear that they are ‘missing out’ by not being there. By ‘missing out’, they feel that they are now not part of the ‘in’ crowd and are not going to be fun to be around the next time they join in (we’ll discuss this further in Chapter 3 on ‘The Social Dance’).

The internal world of an introvert is often elaborate and complex. If an extrovert could see how colourful and vibrant the mind of an introvert is, he/she would no longer believe that introverts are no fun.

The main reason that more extroverts are not aware of this is that introverts do not generally open up easily or invite just anyone to have even a glimpse into their rich internal world. Clearly, both personality types would benefit from better communication (more on this in Chapter 6 on ‘Co-operation between Introverts and Extroverts’).

A manifestation of this lack of communication is in group discussions, where introverts tend to be passed over for contributions when they take a little longer to gather their thoughts and craft what they wish to say. However, if given a chance to open up, the introvert’s listeners are often intrigued by the depth of their thoughts and the breadth of their perspectives.

**The world today is an extrovert's paradise, with plenty to do and get caught up in.**

Extroverts with introvert friends often enjoy the opportunity to discuss things in greater detail with them. Their introvert counterparts are appreciated as good listeners and observant advisers, who may prefer not to attend large events or try extreme sports, but are more than happy to sit down at a café after a little shopping or exercise.

## Understanding Introversion in the Modern World

The world today is an extrovert's paradise, with plenty to do and get caught up in. Without getting too far into history, much of this has to do with Western society's obsession with big dreams and larger-than-life personalities.

As the world becomes more westernised, these values inevitably become part of popular culture. Today, we are so inundated by them that our behaviour and mindsets have started to align with them.

Leaders in today's world are often appointed based on how well they speak, how quickly they make decisions and how well they can build rapport with people. Products gain popularity through widespread advertisements, attractive packaging and catchy slogans. Even services have to be made to appeal to the mass market through careful targeting, meticulous data analysis and extensive conceptualisation before they can be introduced for sale.

Is any of this wrong in and of itself? Certainly not! It is merely how the modern world works. For good or evil, it will continue to change, and what we can do is to be updated and adapt to it.

Since that is the case, let us, as introverts, recognise this, accept it and roll with it, not with a feeling of disenchantment or disappointment, but with a spirit of graciousness and a sense of adventure. After all, we have some really good things going for us as introverts (flip to Chapter 5 on 'The Value of Introverts' to see what they are).



Scan this code to connect with  
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becoming a confident, successful introvert!

[www.remuszhong.com/introvert-speaker-singapore](http://www.remuszhong.com/introvert-speaker-singapore)

# FINAL THOUGHTS

**Y**ou are a teacher. The lives you touch and the impact you have will be impossible to quantify.

You may never know what sort of change started because of a word you said, an action you took or some wisdom you shared.

However, you will be in the thoughts of those you've taught. They will remember you. They will think upon what you've given to them and they will transform because of you.

You've gotten this far because you've always taught out of your vast experience and from the heart. Your learners are grateful for your hard work and strong spirit.

There are going to be times when you feel down and out. There will be days when you are stressed and tired. There shall be periods when you are going to be so busy that you'll forget to eat and drink (and periods when you eat and drink to forget that you are so busy). You are not alone. May you find comfort in the smiles of your learners, the hugs of your family and friends, and the support of your peers.

Within the pages of this book, I have attempted to distil years of thoughts and experiences into words. I hope you will find the book useful on your journey as an educator. If you do, I would love to hear from you. You can reach me at [remus@remuszhong.com](mailto:remus@remuszhong.com).

As you grow, may I ask that you also help others to do the same? Feel free to share excerpts and practical advice from this book with them. Even better, pass it along or lend it to them (if someone lent this to you, remember to return it to them, won't you?).

It has been a privilege to write a book that can motivate and assist you. May you go forth and inspire the future, fellow teachers!