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ENGL 1121 College writing and critical reading

16 April 2023

### **It's not bad to be an Introvert**

“Do you not like people?” “Why are you always by yourself?” These are questions I get quite often from friends and family. Although I can see why people often conclude that I spend a lot of time by myself, I just can’t come to an understanding of why people always think I dislike the presence of others. Of course, I like people, I have friends that I enjoy talking to every day. I’m always with a small group of people when I’m out in public. I just feel much more energized when I spend time by myself. First impressions with people are very important this is what determines the way people think and see you, so when people encounter someone who seems very shy and quiet or seems to enjoy being by themselves, they make the automatic assumption that the person does not like social interaction or people in general. But that is not always the case, so when a person just seems to enjoy spending time on their own, usually in a more quiet setting it doesn’t typically mean they dislike the presence of others they are just what we call introverted. Introvert’s energy runs off of more calm and quiet setting typically alone, rather than in a more busy setting with a lot of people.

I am a introvert, at least I would consider myself one. I enjoy being around people but it does make me very exhausted. So I usually have to recharge myself by doing my own thing in my own space. I’ve always been a introvert, growing up I constantly had to change schools. I was never at a place long enough to be able to make friends which caused me to stay to myself

and not really branch out, so I always chose to sit in the back of the classroom, preferably in a corner, where I would just think to myself, listen to music, or silently draw. I tried to stay out of people's way most of the time, but I do enjoy it when people try to include me in their activities. It just became my routine whenever I went out in public or school.

I've always liked being by myself and doing things in my own time, so it has always been very comforting to me, so going out of my way to make friends was really my top priority. It was always if someone comes up to me I'll talk to them, but I won't go up to them since I'm kinda shy. I didn't find it to be a bad thing since I'm mostly always out of people's way and I didn't have a problem making friends being the way that I am until I started middle school, which was when things really started to change for the worse. The shift to middle school was very rough but looking back on it I'm not too surprised. Middle school is usually the time when kids start to figure out their identity and so they are constantly changing.

Middle school was a weird time. I transferred to a prep school where I would be staying until high school. I was happy to be able to stay at a school for longer than just a year, I was excited to be able to make friends that I can actually keep instead of leaving mid-way through the year. But because I had kept myself for so long making friends or even going up and talking to someone was terrifying, this is when I learned I had developed a mental disorder called Social anxiety or SAD. This is a disorder that can be found in some introverts usually caused by a traumatic experience. This makes it harder for me to interact with other people in fear of being judged, and getting put in embarrassing situations. Due to these circumstances I just found comfort in doing my own things, I don't mind making friends it would just take me a while to be

able to open up and be more comfortable with someone. About half way into the school year I was approached by this boy in my math class he was a year older than me and a lot taller which make him seem very intimidating. He came up to me with a very concerned and disgusted look and asked me, “Do you not like people?” “Why are you so quiet it’s really freaky and weird.” I was super shocked to hear him say this which made me feel really insecure and embarrassed knowing that my other classmates could be thinking the same thing. It really had me thinking to myself, I didn’t think that I was being weird in any sort of way, or viewed as weird to other people. I just have a hard time talking to people with my anxiety, and I just found comfort in being by myself.

Things started to change after that comment. I started becoming more self conscious knowing that other people might be thinking the same thing. I tried really hard to go out of my way to talk to people and interact with them in any way I could but at the end of the day I would just be extremely drained, it didn’t feel natural to have so much social interaction in a day; But yet I still continued to do it thinking that this will change the image that my classmates had on me. This continued until one day an Asian girl from my grade asked me to sit at lunch with her she seemed very shy and awkward when she was talking to me but I was just happy to have potentially made a friend so I agreed to come sit with her during lunch. While sitting at lunch I was too shy to actually start up a conversation so we sat there for a couple minutes in complete silence until she broke the silence with a question. She asked me how I was super social, and that if she were to try to be that social she would be so tired since she was introverted as well. That was the first time I met someone who felt the same way I did and I started to tell her what had happened with the older boy in class that had approached me. It felt really nice to know that it

was normal to be introverted instead of feeling like an outcasts. It was nice to know I wasn't alone and that there were many people who experienced the same things I did.

The moral of the story is never try to make people feel as if they don't belong in a place just because they are a little different than you. Like being an introvert. Being an introvert is just as normal as not being one, at the end they are human too, they might not express themselves physically or verbally like everyone else but they do like to express themselves in their own way and in their own time. They are people too and like everyone else they enjoy spending time with their friends for a certain amount of time before they get tired and want to be by themselves. Introverts are not like their opposites extroverts they crave alone time rather than people time. The next time you see someone who might be a little quieter than the others feel free to try to include them in what you are doing. If a friend or family member of yours who might show signs of being an introvert seems to be burnt out, remember to give them their space.