Is Depression More Common in Introverts?

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The Link Between Introverts and Depression

With depression affecting the lives of so many every day, there is increased interest in understanding the condition, as well as the factors that could potentially contribute to it. If you can have better information regarding the diagnosis, you can take the most beneficial steps to reduce its influence.

How do behaviors and actions change the diagnosis? Do exercise levels impact depression? What about the diet or sleep patterns of the person? If someone thinks more depressed thoughts, will they become depressed?

What about the factors that are not so easily modifiable? What about your birth order? What about your height or hair color? What about your personality characteristics that have been static throughout your entire life? Is it possible these could be feeding into depression?

Understanding Introverts: What Is Introversion?

Consider the case of introversion. Introversion is a personality trait; in fact, it is one of the “big five personality traits” along with:

- Openness to experience
- Conscientiousness
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism

Each of these traits falls on its own continuum. This means extreme introversion will be on one side with extreme extroversion on the other end.

The majority of people will fall in the middle of the spectrum, having some signs of introversion and some signs of extroversion. These characteristics may shift depending on the environment and scenarios, but remain relatively unchanged across the lifespan.

Unless you are the far end of the continuum, being an introvert is not a bad thing — just as being an extrovert is not a bad thing. Signs of introversion include:

- A preference for privacy and time alone.
- A sense of caution and being guarded when meeting new people.
- Preferring few meaningful connections as opposed to many superficial relationships.
- The ability to entertain themselves.
- Doing better one-on-one or in small groups than large crowds.
- Feeling drained or tired from insufficient alone time.

People who take introversion to an extreme will be those that seek isolation, have little contact with the outside world, and lack a sense of trust with anyone.

Are Introverts More Prone to Mental Illness?

The question remains: does introversion cause depression? The simple answer is no, but there is more to the story.

Depending on their personality traits, many people are susceptible to depression and other mental illnesses. Extroverts can have depression just as introverts can, but some findings indicate introverts are more likely to have depression. This could be due to several factors like:

- **Depression scales sometimes measure happiness in relation to desire to socialize and engage in many activities.** Introverts will score low here even though they are happy.
- **Social pressure from family members or peers.** This will make introverts feel there is something wrong with them if they do not enjoy interaction with many people.
- **The overall culture someone lives in can impact their view of introversion.** Western cultures might expect people to be more social and outgoing, where eastern cultures might place more value on quiet introspection.

Another factor linking depression and introversion could be the type of introversion a person has. Researchers have divided introverts into two groups, with the first being more desirable than the second.

- **Group one:** These introverts are quiet but confident. They are self-regulating and able to accomplish self-imposed tasks with hard work and sustained concentration. They prefer spending more time with themselves and their thoughts than with others.
- **Group two:** These introverts are shy with low self-esteem. They will have poor communication skills and experience fear in social situations. This group prefers to be alone because they might not like or trust other people. Group two is more prone to depression and anxiety than group one.

Some people are born into group two, while others will shift there due to a lack of understanding from the extroverts in their life. If you know someone who tends towards introversion, it will be your task to meet the person with patience and understanding rather than forcing them into another direction.

Trying to force an introvert into being an extrovert is like trying to force a lefty to write with their right hand. The process will be painful and frustrating.

Tips for Introverts

If you feel like your introversion is related to your depression, you might be in luck. Solutions exist to move away from depression and towards the happiness and wellbeing you seek. Here’s how:

Practice Self-Acceptance

As mentioned, the lack of understanding from the people or the culture around you could be nudging you towards depression. Here, the remedy is self-acceptance; being comfortable and confident with yourself and your abilities will always beat back depression.

List the aspects of yourself and your introversion that you appreciate. Think about the pressures that extroverts must feel to always fit in and perform for others. Realize being an introvert is a pretty rewarding experience to have.

Stretch Your Comfort Zone

As important as it is to accept the core of who you are, it is equally important to take active measures to stretch

past your comfort zone. Everyone, especially introverts, is at risk of constantly shrinking comfort zones.

By continuously working to push your zone, you will ensure yours does not collapse. With luck, you might find yourself moving towards the middle of the introvert/extrovert continuum.

Recognize the Need for Professional Care

Regardless of your personality traits, someone with lasting symptoms of depression needs to seek professional mental health care. By going to a therapist, you can learn more about the influence of introversion on your life, the influence of life on your introversion, and the role depression plays as the cause or effect.

Use therapy as your first line of attack to completely understand your symptoms before deciding to move forward with medication.

Is there a link between depression and introversion? Yes. Is it clear? Unfortunately, no.

Rather than seeing this as a negative, though, let this information motivate you to truly understand and accept yourself while you continue to stretch towards the goals that will make you a better person. Introversion could be your greatest asset instead of your biggest liability.