

Further Reading, A Benefit of an Introvert Learning Style, 'Quiet', Susan Cain

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- from 'Quiet', Susan Cain

"Imagine that you've been invited to Newman's (a researcher's) lab to participate in one of his studies. You're there to play a game: the more points you get, the more money you win. Twelve different numbers flash across a computer screen, one at a time, in no particular order. You're given a button, as if you were a game-show contestant, which you can press or not as each number appears. If you press the button for a "good" number, you win points; if you press for a "bad" number, you lose points; and if you don't press at all, nothing happens. Through trial and error, you learn that four is a nice number and nine is not. So the next time the number nine flashes across your screen, you know not to press that button.

Except that sometimes people press the button for the bad numbers, even when they should know better. *Extroverts, especially highly impulsive extroverts*, are more likely than introverts to make this mistake. Why? Well, in the words of psychologists John Brebner and Chris Cooper, who have shown that extroverts think less and act faster on such tasks: *introverts are "geared to inspect" and extroverts "geared to respond."*

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But the more interesting aspect of this puzzling behaviour is not what the extroverts do before they've hit the wrong button, but what they do after. *When introverts hit the number nine button and find they've lost a point, they slow down* before moving on to the next number, as if to reflect on what went wrong. But *extroverts not only fail to slow down, they actually speed up.*

This seems strange; why would anyone do this? Newman explains that it makes perfect sense. If you focus on achieving your goals, as reward-sensitive extroverts do, you don't want anything to get in your way – neither naysayers nor the number nine. You speed up in an attempt to knock these roadblocks down.

Yet this is a crucially important misstep, because the longer you pause to process surprising or negative feedback, the more likely you are to learn from it. If you force extroverts to pause, says Newman, they'll do just as well as introverts at the numbers game. But, left to their own devices, they don't stop. And so they don't learn to avoid the trouble staring them in the face."