

Valuing and developing your introvert



So here we are with the cover taken away, the friend who was always there is nowhere to be seen. You are on your own, exposed, vulnerable, with nothing to stop you experiencing the full range of emotions in the raw. Just as a child feels the depths of emotions in an unsophisticated and transparent way – so now are you. You can find yourself experiencing feelings and responses that you would never have believed you were capable of. It can feel like a complete meltdown. In fact, this is often at the heart of a breakdown.

The chances are that this moment of exposure seems to have come ‘at the wrong time’. In her hour of greatest need, she is at her most vulnerable, full of unresolved and powerful emotions, and now we are asking her to be strong and make life work. What to do?

5.1 Back to basics

We have gone full circle. When we passed through those three s’s – security, self-worth and significance – how deeply did those factors impact on our introvert? Most of the emphasis in our childhood would have been put on the extrovert. If we came through our childhood and gained 50% of the security that was available from our parents, the chances are that this level of security was primarily felt in our extrovert. Now God wants to work security, self-worth and significance into our introvert.

In the first five years, the wet cement was being poured. Our stance from those early years seems to have been confirmed by subsequent life events. It can seem an impossible task to change it – but it can be done. It is never too late but we must set out with determination to do so. This isn’t about tinkering with the externals and or simply making behavioural adjustments but a ‘root and branch’ approach. We must not hold ourselves responsible for the environment we grew up in but we are responsible to do something about the effects of that environment.

security	self-worth	significance
belonging	value	function

Let’s go back to those foundations. The introvert needs to be made secure. With big sister gone she needs another reference point. Someone who will completely understand her, who isn’t going to disappear. Someone bigger than her, who will be an ever-

present rock in her life. She needs to know she is safe, that she belongs. Our heavenly Father is all of that and can bring that security, by his Spirit, directly and through his children. Knowing this provides a framework, a context. The little introvert learns not to panic, or curl up, but to start to make her own choices - the first one being to accept that she is safe even when she doesn’t feel it. If you know as an introvert that you are loved just for being here then, when you are asked for something you feel you cannot deliver, you won’t react in a negative or defensive manner.

The introvert needs to know her value. If she knows that someone believes in how good she is, and holds her to it, then she can afford to reach out, to grow and mature, and become the ‘loving leader’

in her relationship with her extrovert. She will need to accept discipline. She could be all over the place, simply responding to the pull of raw emotions but ultimately, she will have to discipline herself. The introvert must take responsibility for herself to make good choices, knowing all the time that in Jesus she has the power to do so. She knows the truth about herself – even if her feelings are telling her the opposite – and she can discipline herself to make decisions that are consistent with that truth. That is how she will grow. Good patterns will become established and she will find that the positive things that she was told about herself really were true because now she is experiencing them for herself. Let yourself be loved as an introvert - and don't make negative comments about yourself!



Within that little girl are areas of unexpressed creativity, imagination and ability that have never seen the light of day. Now opportunity must be created for those to be expressed. How many people feel that they are 'useless' and 'pathetic' simply because they haven't discovered and explored the wonder of what lies within their introvert? Discover the qualities within and cultivate them. Our parents might not have known how to live in their introverts but in God's family we have a second chance to experience the security, self-worth and significance that God gives. Once a person knows that they are safe and loved for who they are then they are free to perform to the best of their ability.

5.2 Settle your value

Intrinsic value

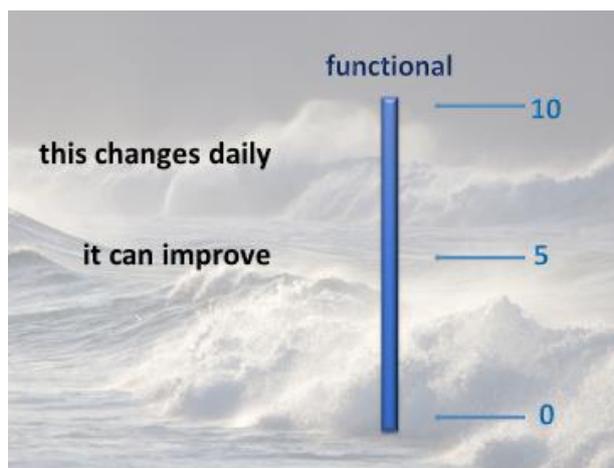
We each have an intrinsic value – and this, of course, includes our introvert. We are 10 out of 10, and nothing can ever change that. This is how God views us. This is the value he has set on us. Although we speak of someone 'giving us value', this is not possible. We already have that value to maximum capacity. What we mean is that someone can make it easier or harder for us to believe that we have value – but we have it anyway.



Functional value

We also have a functional value. This reflects how well we use who we are to accomplish what we are meant to do. The functional value should always be a measurement of how well we are using who we are as opposed to how others might view success or even what they are doing with who they are.

Let's say we have a day in which we fall well below what we would have hoped for – and we score only 5 for that day's performance. If we haven't settled that our intrinsic value is 10 then we will take our performance score as 'proof' of what we have always believed about ourselves and that is that we are 'no good' and 'not up to the job.'



If we accept that our intrinsic value is 10 then we will see a poor performance score as a blip and will be far more likely to do better the next day because we still feel positive about ourselves. We will see it as an encouragement to use more of who we are. Remember that a baby has no functional value but its intrinsic value is settled. It is only as we grow up that we can fall prey to the illusion that our intrinsic value is less than 10. We must separate functional and intrinsic value.

If we are struggling with a sense of failure in any given situation, it would be helpful to pause and ask ourselves whether we are focussing on our functional value or intrinsic value. We are going to get things wrong, make mistakes and put ourselves and others under pressure. The way we handle those mistakes will be determined by how quickly we can remind ourselves of our intrinsic value and act on it.

If we don't have an accurate sense of our intrinsic value, we can set the bar too high in order to compensate and thereby set ourselves up to fail. It can become so much a part of us that we don't recognise it. The Choleric Melancholic can have this tendency. The Choleric can set the bar very high but the Melancholic will know it cannot be achieved. The vicious circle that results simply confirms his negative view of himself. Alternatively, some Choleric Melancholics feel so bad about themselves that they don't even bother to set the bar.

If we are going to be true to God's Word, then we will value ourselves. When you get something wrong, small or large, don't let that become a comment on who you are. Don't let the sick feeling in the pit of your stomach lead to self-condemnation but rather to a reassessment of how you use who you are. Even false accusations will be easier to handle when you know your intrinsic value is 10. When you make a mistake, remember that you are 'better than that' and then choose to be. Take control of your thinking and the changes will happen.

5.3 What does 'valuing yourself' look like in practice?

This is about our attitude towards ourselves. There are a few key words that will help us here:

5.3.1 Respect

The extrovert needs to respect the introvert. For example, within the double introvert, it would be easy for the Phlegmatic to say to his Melancholic, don't worry about what you are feeling – just get on and do it. The Choleric, with his goals and optimism might be dismissive of 'fiddle' or detail in his own introvert. The Sanguine might not even stop to think. We must take our introvert seriously and give him his proper place and expect him to work through his own issues.

5.3.2 Perseverance

Encourage our introvert to persevere. Expect him to be patient with the person who can't get it. If we don't use our introvert to stick with someone we will rubbish ourselves in the end if the other person cannot grasp what we are trying to say. Our inner war will spill out onto their struggles.

5.3.3 Settled

If our extrovert has not slowed down, then we will not be settled enough to pick up what our introvert, or someone else's, is saying and feeling.

5.3.4 Motivation

Our desire and drive needs to come from our introvert. If we are simply driven by our extrovert, we may be unable to sustain sufficient level of motivation to succeed.



5.3.5 Confidence

If the introvert doesn't keep going and begins to rebel against the direction the extrovert is going in, then negative attitudes develop – e.g. resentment, self-pity. We can also find our extrovert turning to substitutes as we will be trying to produce satisfaction but without using our introvert. If we are at war within ourselves, the qualities within our introvert will not be brought to bear on life's challenges.^{3.14}

5.3.6 Love

Your attitude towards yourself must always be one of acceptance and love.

5.3.7 Take responsibility

Get into your introvert and take responsibility for what is going on in there. Don't let others pay the price. If the Melancholic is in a muddle, take responsibility for sorting it. Whatever the Phlegmatic is feeling, encourage him to engage with the other person and put their needs first.