

Temperament-Inclusive Pedagogy: Helping Introverted and Extraverted Students Thrive in a Changing Educational Landscape

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By

Mary R. Fry, Associate Professor of Nutrition and Herbal Medicine at MUIH and Lead Faculty Fellow in Faculty Training & Development

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With the rapid transitions in how students are learning, I have been musing about the effects and impacts on how students learn and what supports they need. It is well-established that online education, with asynchronous discussions and means to participate, can result in broader participation from students (it helps introverts to find their voice and/or have their voices heard), but what about remote learning and how it is impacting learning for both introverts and extraverts? Does a class that moves to Zoom balance out the needs of extraverted and introverted students? And what of other learning activities and assessments?

I imagine that most of you are aware of the differences between introversion and extraversion, but let me just take a moment to briefly define these terms so that we are all on the same page moving forward. Extraverts tend to be drawn to the external life (people, activities, expression) and recharge by being out in the world. Introverts, by contrast, are drawn more to internal pursuits and making meaning of their observations, thoughts and impressions of the world around them, but generally do not participate in external pursuits as actively or as frequently as their extraverted

counterparts. While introverts may have very good social skills and enjoy social contact, it is often with smaller groups and for shorter duration. Too much external stimulation or activity tends to be draining for introverts. If you are not sure if you are an introvert or an extrovert, or would like to find out about which personality type your students are, there is a short [quiz](#) you can take and/or you can post for your students. And remember that there are ambiverts (those who fall in the center between introversion and extraversion).

It is not surprising that our culture, which tends to favor extraversion, would also have an educational system that tends towards an extraverted teaching style. This style tends to favor group work, grading for participation, discussions to brainstorm ideas and 'active learning'. While there is certainly merit to many of these activities, the way that they are often structured discourages participation of introverted students and favors the participation of extraverted students. With introverts making up an estimated one-third to one half of the American population, the individual learning of introverts may be adversely impacted with such approaches (and arguably the broader learning of a class may also be negatively impacted as the class only benefits from hearing one third to one half of the students in the class (Cain, 2013)).

So how do we take these different approaches to learning into account and foster a classroom environment that is more inclusive of the needs of both extraverts and introverts? Let's first distinguish between how extraverts and introverts most prefer to learn, and then discuss ways to meet the needs of both. Extraverts tend to learn through active and social engagement with the material (group work, interactive learning experiences, performing and discussing). Verbalizing typically helps extraverts to think through their ideas and to foster new ones. They often think quickly on their feet and welcome working in large groups. It can be challenging for extraverts to generate ideas in isolation (talking through ideas is often needed) and thus working on solitary projects and writing can be challenging.

In contrast, introverts thrive with solitary/independent work and typically need this time to sort through what they are learning before they can formulate their thoughts and articulate their perspectives. Introverted learners often dislike group work (or at least the group sizes and structures that are often used in the classroom (more on this in a moment)) and find their voice drowned out in synchronous discussions as they don't typically think as fast as their extroverted counterparts and don't often speak until they feel they have something carefully thought out to share. Introverted learners are often quite content, and can remain attentive, through longer lectures and presentations and prefer engaging with the material in a more interactive way only after a pause or break.

Given these differences, how do we foster engagement and learning in both extraverted and introverted students? I have compiled some key strategies for you to consider below:

Plan ahead: Letting your students know in advance what you plan to discuss in a live discussion will help extraverted students to slow down a little and reflect in advance, and will help introverted students to process the information and formulate their ideas before the stimulation and pace of the discussion takes hold. You might also consider giving specific details on how you would like students to participate in advance if you intend to call on students. This will help introverted students to feel more comfortable speaking in front of/to the class and may encourage more thoughtful and detailed responses from extraverted students (Cain, 2013).

Collaborate carefully: Introverted students need a chance to think before sharing ideas and often feel intimidated or overstimulated in larger groups. Structuring smaller groups with defined roles, and providing choice, can often be more equitable and conducive to learning. Consider a "think-pair-share" or better yet "think-ink-pair-share" activity where students pair up with a classmate after a teacher poses a question. Have each student take a minute or two to think about a question, take another minute or two to write

down their thoughts and then talk with their partner for a few minutes. Thereafter, they can share this discussion with the class. Introverted students will generally feel more comfortable sharing with one classmate versus speaking up in front of the whole class initially. These pairs can then present to the group after they have had a chance to discuss a little together first. (This can be employed in synchronous sessions with breakout rooms.)

With group work, assigning clearly defined roles for the group (or allowing students to choose their role) will encourage greater participation from introverted students, while still providing an opportunity for engaging group activities that extraverted students typically prefer (TOPHAT; Flanagan & Addy, 2019; Monahan, 2019).

Provide pauses: Pauses are critical juncture points to rest, reflect and formulate ideas, opinions, strategies and perspectives. Of course everyone needs them, but they are imperative for introverts to learn and contribute. Introverts are more prone to cognitive overload and overstimulation, so whether it be a live discussion, an asynchronous discussion or even the textual instructions that you provide for an assignment, being as concise and clear as you can be will limit cognitive overload in your introverted students and will keep all of your students attention focused on the task(s) at hand (Monahan, 2019).

Introverted students depend on pauses to consolidate their ideas and thoughts. You can find creative ways to build in pauses. And if your extroverted students want fewer pauses, pair them up in breakout rooms during synchronous sessions, or give them options for optional online chats or activities during breaks.

Use technology: Encourage extraverted students to begin the writing process by recording their thoughts through audio. Most smartphones and many computers have voice memos and ways to capture audio notes in audio and/or to transcribe them to text. Perhaps doing this with a partner,

friend or family member will help even more. They can just have a casual conversation about their ideas and record it. Transcribing it yields the start of their paper...

Polling can help introverted students to participate more readily/equally, as can live quizzing tools like Quizlet. Asynchronous tools like Canvas' discussion board, wikis and EdTech tools such as Padlet, VoiceThread and social annotating tools such as Hypothes.is allow collaboration in a more paced manner. E-readers may be used to read together in the class (making it a more collaborative/engaging experience).

Leverage strengths: Consider encouraging extraverts and introverts to work together can help them to leverage their strengths and provide them each with an opportunity to share their unique perspectives. Introverts have a more reflective cognitive style that can be helpful to enhance metacognition in their extraverted classmates, for example. And extraverts can often help introverts to express their ideas more (if given adequate time and structure to do so).

Analyze your assessments for bias: Are your class assessments/assessment criteria biased towards class participation versus class engagement? Extraverted students will typically participate more in live/synchronous discussions, but may not be as engaged with the material as introverted students (and may not listen to peers before engaging). Encourage thoughtful, qualitative engagement over more informal and quantitative participation to more equitably assess introverted and extraverted students (Davis, 2015; Flanagan & Addy, 2019; Monahan, 2019).

Reflect and inquire: We are always learning as educators on how best to meet the needs of our students and to promote their learning. This is particularly true now when teaching and learning are in such transition. Ask your students how they responded to different approaches that you tried, what their preferences are, how you helped them to stretch, what didn't work for them, etc. Consider having students complete a reflection log

periodically (asking similar questions about their learning and class experience(s) be answered with each entry). Not only will this activity promote writing practice and metacognitive skills in your students, but it will help you to improve as an educator (Boroujeni, Roohani & Hasanimanesh, 2015).

Support: Like the .GIF depicts above, extraverted students may be more challenged, so be sure to check in with your extraverted students more often, and with plenty of compassion, as they may need additional support in these locked down times. And if you have introverted students who are stressed out/overwhelmed with added stressors or increased family time, encourage them to build in breaks and '*restorative niches*' wherever possible. (*Restorative niches* are a concept discussed in Susan Cain's bestselling book, *Quiet* (p. 219) and are defined as the place you go when you want to return to your true self. It can be a physical place or a temporal one and can even occur during a class activity by carefully selecting how you participate therein.)

Take care of yourself: If you are introverted instructor, remember to build in '*restorative niches*' into your teaching approaches to maintain your energy, focus and health. If you are an extraverted instructor, remember to pace your delivery style and approach to include introverted students' needs and to make sure that your needs for social and intellectual stimulation are met through connecting with colleagues, friends, learning activities as well as with your students. You might also consider connecting with introverted faculty members to collaborate and learn together (as they may be less likely to reach out to you!).

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TOPHAT Webinar: A Conversation with Susan Cain: Bringing Out the Best in Quiet Students. <https://tophat.com/thank-you/susan-cain-2511/>

About Dr. Mary Fry

Dr. Mary Fry is an Associate Professor of Nutrition and Herbal Medicine at MUIH and Lead Faculty Fellow in Faculty Training & Development . She obtained her Bachelors of Science in Nutritional Biochemistry from McGill University – Montreal, Canada, her Naturopathic Medical Degree (ND) from National University of Natural Medicine in Portland, OR (with certifications in Homeopathy and Shiatsu), and a Post-doctoral research fellowship (funded by the National Institute of Health's National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health) in the Department of Psychiatry at Oregon Health & Science University. Additional training includes completion of a Summer Intensive study program in Jungian psychoanalysis/depth psychology with the C.G. Jung Institute of Zurich, Certification as a Highly Sensitive Person (HSP)- knowledgeable practitioner and Master Reviewer Certification with Quality Matters. She is currently pursuing training with OLC to obtain Instructional Designer Certification. At MUIH, Dr. Fry divides her time between teaching Nutrition students in the Masters and Doctoral programs and serving as the Lead Faculty Fellow of Faculty Training, Development and Support. In this latter

capacity, she works to support faculty training and advancement in pedagogy and seeks to support faculty to develop holistically. Through these efforts, she also seeks to support students in their academic development as they work towards becoming practitioners, educators and/or researchers. When not working, Dr. Fry enjoys tending to her old farmhouse and its grounds with her husband and caring for their 'flock' of cats and a Maremma sheep dog. She also enjoys swimming (especially in local lakes), camping, traveling, cooking and various artistic and creative pursuits.