

Extrovert

Introvert

Think about your own preferences and reactions when you're in a group of your peers. Do you find that being in the group gives you energy? Or do you find that being in a group zaps your energy after a while?

Now picture yourself at the end of a long day. When it is time to recharge, would you prefer to spend time laughing and chatting with friends? Or do you prefer a quiet activity like reading or tinkering with a solitary hobby?

These characteristics speak to basic personality differences, and your mentee has them, too! In order to accommodate and capitalize on these differences, consider whether your mentee is an extrovert or an introvert.

Start by considering your own category. If you agree that a group gives you energy and you recharge by chatting and laughing, you are probably an extrovert. If you agree that groups zap your energy and you recharge with solitude and quiet, you are likely an introvert. Being an extrovert or an introvert is all about how you process information and receive energy.

Extroverts are more comfortable processing their thoughts out loud. In fact, that is their preferred way to process information; being in a group gives them that rush of energy. By nature of how they work, extroverts tend to get more air time. A mentee who is an extrovert is a talker! If your mentee hears new information and seems to make a quick judgment about it, know that it may not be the final answer. What you've heard may be an interim step in forming a conclusion. You may have just observed your extroverted mentee processing new information aloud.

Introverts, on the other hand, process internally and thrive on quiet space and time to ponder. They will quietly process information, filtering facts through an internal conversation before deciding to speak out loud. Being attentive to how introverts work helps us avoid the risk of never hearing their insights or opinions. Sometimes we are uncomfortable with silence and feel that, as the adult, we should take steps to fill it. Your introverted mentee may need the silence to sift through their thoughts.

A mentor, especially an extroverted one, may wonder and worry if a mentee doesn't talk much. An introverted personality is one possible explanation. It could also be related to the child's [developmental stage](#), the fact that the student is under stress, or that the student has never had a mentor before and is still getting used to the idea. Remember that you have two great tools at your disposal: engaging in games or activities so that conversation doesn't have to be the focus of the visit; and just giving the relationship more time. Your Mentor Director is always happy to dialogue with you about these ideas.

*This article makes use of information from the Search Institute, email article on October 8, 2014 featuring material from **Groups, Troops, Clubs, & Classrooms: The Essential Handbook for Working with Youth**, by Susan Ragsdale and Ann Saylor.*