

# Hey, It's Okay To Be *Shy!*

*Sure, the loudmouths, show-offs and attention-seekers might hog the limelight most of the time (and where would we be without the Jersey Shore crew?) but there are instances when it's really the quiet girls who secretly hold all the aces*



Jessica Alba

## Famous Introverts



Leona Lewis

**I** prefer people in small numbers and controlled doses," claims self-confessed introvert Kristen Stewart. And she's not alone. One in three of us fall into the introvert category: people who enjoy time alone, are uncomfortable in the spotlight, are sensitive, thoughtful, gentle and calm. But in a world that seems to favour those with look-at-me confidence who put themselves out there (Kim Kardashian, anyone?), where does that leave the wallflowers among us?

In a pretty powerful place, actually, if you play your cards right. Granted, you won't be bagging your own reality show anytime soon, but you can still shake the world – albeit a bit more subtly. You see, while the extroverts are schmoozing with the masses and dancing on the bar, shy girls are quietly forging strong friendships and leaving the party early to get an amazing idea down on paper (step forward J.K. Rowling and the Olsen twins, all famously introverted and all millionaires).

"Why can't quiet be strong?" argues Susan Cain, negotiation consultant and author of *Quiet (The Power Of Introverts In A World That Can't Stop Talking)*. "The secret is to put yourself in the right lighting. For some it's a Broadway spotlight for others, a lamplit desk." Susan adds, "I see first-hand how difficult it is for introverts to take stock of their own talents and how powerful it is when they finally do." Here, Susan reveals four amazing ways shy girls can rock.

## Wowing In The Boardroom

Extroverts might be aces at thinking on the spot and talking themselves up, but introverts have their own unique skills when it comes to blowing the boss' sock off, says Susan. For starters, shy

girls think carefully before they speak, so their arguments tend to be more reasoned. What's more, introverts ask lots of questions – and actually listen to the answers – so they come armed to a meeting with stacks of vital info their more talkative colleagues might have missed. And don't be fooled by a shy girl's quiet speaking style: her mild manners allow her to take a strong bargaining position in a business negotiation, without coming off as aggressive.

## Making Good Friends

While on the face of it, an extrovert is likely to be more popular (at a party, she's the girl surrounded by admirers) when it comes to forging genuine friendships, introverts triumph. The extrovert needs constant stimulation, so likes nothing better than meeting new people, but when the novelty wears off, she's on to the next crowd. But an introvert would rather skip a group activity to spend quality time sipping cocktails and thrashing out a problem with just one close friend.

Look at Kristen Stewart's extroverted co-star Nikki Reed: now that the final *Twilight* movie has wrapped, she has publically cut ties with the co-stars she once described as "family", while Kristen has walked away from the franchise with a new BFF in Taylor Lautner. You see, when an introvert makes a friend, she makes a friend for life. "Introverts devote their social energies to close friends and family," explains Susan. "They listen more than they talk, and enjoy deep conversations."

## Networking At A Party

There's no doubt about it: a party isn't a party without the extroverts. They are the ones who laugh loudly and generously and who can fill any awkward silence with chit chat. But while the thought of making small talk at an office do fills an introvert with fear, they still have a lot to offer in the networking stakes. Yes, you'll be out of your element palm-pressing with a bunch of strangers, but you could be the person having a quiet deep and meaningful in the corner that one key player, relaying

your thought-out business development strategy. And, says Susan, "One new honest-to-goodness relationship is worth ten fistfuls of business cards."

## Forming A Genius Idea

There's no doubt that in modern business the playing field is tipped in favour of the extroverts (think open-plan offices and an increased value on team work and people skills). And in a group brainstorm situation, for example, it's easy to overlook an introvert. They're not comfortable blurting out half-baked ideas and would rather think an idea through fully in private before sharing with a group. Whereas an extrovert tends to have a more scatter gun approach – firing out fragments of ideas in the hope that something sticks. But don't mistake assertiveness for eloquence, warns Susan. Introverts might not be the first to speak up, but they are the people who can think deeply, strategise and solve complex problems – it's just that they prefer to solve the problems in private before sharing.

"Some of our greatest ideas, art, and inventions – from the theory of evolution to the Van Gogh's Sunflowers to the personal computer – came from people who knew how to tune in to their inner worlds and the treasures to be found there," reveals Susan. So channel that quiet power. ■

## Are You An Introvert?

*If more than seven of these statements apply to you, you're a shy girl.*

- ✓ **I prefer one-on-one conversations to group activities.**
- ✓ I dislike small talk but I prefer talking in depth about topics that matter to me.
- ✓ **People tell me I'm a good listener.**
- ✓ I like to celebrate birthdays with only one or two close friends.
- ✓ **I tend to think before I speak.**
- ✓ I prefer a weekend with nothing to do than have too many activities scheduled.
- ✓ **I often let calls go through to voice mail.**
- ✓ I dislike conflict.
- ✓ **I do my best work on my own.**

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