

Are We Getting More Introverted As We Age? | TIS Ep. 59

Lisa 00:06

Welcome to the introvert sisters, the podcast by introverts, for introverts, hosted by Sharon and Lisa, to INFJs with a lot to say.

Sharon 00:22

Hi, I'm Sharon

Lisa 00:24

and I'm Lisa and together. Were the introverts Sisters.

Sharon 00:28

Welcome to our podcast. Well, today we're talking about something that I know some of you will relate to, you know, we're talking about aging, aging. And, you know, the question is do we become more introverted as we get older?

Lisa 00:46

Right,

Sharon 00:47

Right. You know, we're of a certain age, shall we say? No?

Lisa 00:51

Yes, that's all we should say. *Laughter*

Sharon 00:53

And, you know, sometimes we do wonder ourselves, whether, you know, we're really just playing into these introvert tendencies, or this introversion, personality more and more. So why don't you kick us off sis?

Lisa 01:07

Well, the thing is, I don't think that introversion when we were growing up, first of all, let's start here, when we were growing up, introversion was not a thing. Right? Alright, if it was not a thing, it was not spoken of. It was not spoken of it wasn't sort of like out there in the zeitgeist if that's the right word. Yeah, right. And so, you know, you just had quiet children and children who are not quite right. So it wasn't until I read the book, Quiet. Right, which was comparatively recently, this was like a few years ago, that I realized, ah, I'm introverted that is what this is. Yeah. Right. So it explained a lot of, I guess, my habits, my reactions, how I process things. I didn't know there was a name for it. You know, it was just me being me. So what about you? How do you how do you always know that you are an introvert?

Sharon 02:05

No, no, no, I mean, similarly to you, you know, people would describe me as a shy child. Right.

Lisa 02:10

Right, which you were not.

Sharon 02:11

Which I was not, which I was not, but that's how I was described. Yes. Right. And what tended to happen was that, you know, there wasn't the language of introversion, but I think I found out about it a little before you, because I can't remember where I worked. But at some point, I ended up doing a personality test and discovered I was an INFJ. Right. And that is the point at which I learned about introversion. Right, and realized that there was a name for this thing that I was that wasn't shyness. Right. Right. Exactly. And so since then, it's more like, you know, what does this mean? What does this being introverted actually mean? Right, right.

Lisa 02:50

And, I mean, for me, like, when I, when I read Quiet, right, it definitely was a relief, to realize that, that there was a name, you know, that that there was a name and that there were other people out there, like me, because so much of society is extraversion based, that, you know, if you don't fit into that norm, you are looked at differently and treated differently. Right. Exactly.

Sharon 03:19

Yeah, exactly. And so it's, you know, it's really important to, to have that knowledge yourself. Yeah. That that is, you know, there's a name for this personality type. You're not some sort of weird anomaly. Right. You know, and also, I wish, I think the, the book quiet makes very clear that this personality type has strengths. Yes, you know, that that are really, really important. So that, in itself, I think, is also very empowering, you know, knowing, knowing that not only are you not some weird person hiding in a corner, you know, you're, you're introverted, which means that you get, you know, you feed your spirit in a different way from people who are extroverted. And that it is okay.

Lisa 04:03

It is completely okay. Right. And so, so my question to you really, because I mean, as we told our listeners, like, we're starting off really talking about the aging process. Now, we're not going to get into the, you know, the creaking of our bones,

Sharon 04:16

No, no.

Lisa 04:17

Or how we groan And every time we sit or stand, we're not going to talk about that at all. No, no, what we are going to talk about is aging as it relates to introversion. So my question is, do you find like having discovered or learned that you're introverted? You know, as the years have passed by, do you find that you have become more introverted as you've gotten older?

Sharon 04:38

Well, it's an interesting question that because in a way, I think if you're introverted, you're introverted, but as we both know, you know, sometimes you ended up having to fake extraversion in certain settings. And so I think there was definitely a phase even after I realized that I was an introvert, where I realized you there are certain things that one has to do in the workplace in relating to other people. And so you'd spend a lot of time putting on this, this,

Lisa 05:07

It's masking. Yes.

Sharon 05:09

Yes. So that you would, you know, you would come across, if not quite as extroverted, but certainly not as as introverted as I, you know, as I actually am. Right. And so, so there was that, and, you know, this is not to say, because, you know, pretty I, you know, I think of myself as generally being a, you know, a genuine and pretty authentic person. Right. But having, I mean, when you think back to how it was perceived when we were children, yes. You know, there was always the idea that this was not the way that one behaved.

Lisa 05:38

Right, I mean, somehow, I don't understand how, it's so amazing, because you really can't win, right? Because when you think about it, the quote unquote, loud and boisterous children always been told to be quiet. Settle down. Yeah, you're being rowdy, you're disrupting the class. Yeah. Quiet children were like, you know, why don't you speak up? Why don't you speak up more, you know? And so like, you really can't, you can't can't make anybody happy. But there definitely was this feeling that something you know, something is wrong with you, or just wanting to sit down quietly in a corner and read a book or, you know, as you mentioned, like, growing up and going into the work world for me a big thing was I actually no, I do not want to have a group lunch. Of course, I've had several.

Sharon 06:17

Yes.

Lisa 06:18

I've had several. I have had the silly small talk. Yes, I have, you know, ask people about, you know, whatever, and actually sometimes been genuinely interested, right? Yes. But honestly, speaking, my preference has always been to have lunch by myself, because I have so you know, when you get to like between 12 and two, right, depending on when you started work, I've already done I've expended a lot of energy just tried to exist and appear as the powers that be on the corporate plantation want me to appear? Yes. Right. And it takes it takes a lot of energy. So yeah, I absolutely want to just spend lunch by myself to recover, recuperate, and in the afternoon, get through the afternoon, the masking takes a lot of energy. A lot of energy!

Sharon 07:02

also automatic is because of the way because of that. Yeah. You know, the the the disparagement of introverted behavior, yes. Right, has resulted in automatic masking. So you're right.

Lisa 07:15

It's like, it's like, it's like a constant. And then okay, you add in or into some of our intersectionalities, you know, being Black being women, and so on. And so the code switching that we do, right is not just code switching to, quote unquote, appear more professional, right? Yeah, dress more. And I'm using air quotes, right? Dress more professionally in air quotes. Have our hair look more professional. Speak depending on accent, right, which is probably harder for me than for you. Because you have a hard light. I remember once in England, I heard you answer the phone. I was like, *laughter*

Sharon 07:25

Who is speaking?

Lisa 07:45

I turned around like who is speaking let you go pure 100%. Brit, right. When I mean, of course, you were living there. And we all have we all do is no judgment we all have our more professional, less professional voices. But can you imagine you have your what I would call your natural baseline accent, but then you spend an entire work day and then repeat that by how many days per year minus vacation? Yeah, all day everyday hiding your accents. You add that on then literally masking your personality, your code switching your Blackness to be more white, and your personality to be more extroverted. Yeah, and you're exhausted at the end of all of that day in and day out.

Sharon 08:34

It can. It can, it can be exhausting. It can be exhausting. And that's why you know, there are days when you come home safe from work, especially those days when you have lots of meetings. So you're doing it in lots of different contexts. You're exposed to lots of people you're having to be relentlessly social when it doesn't come naturally to you. Yeah. And you are exhausted. So I think in a sense, I don't think that I have become more introverted, right. I think I have been I have compromised less on the fact that I am introverted.

Lisa 09:09

Yes, well, I've compromised less on a lot of things.

Sharon 09:13

That's the aging process,

Lisa 09:14

That's the aging process! I've compromised, started to compromise less on a lot of things and for me, and I think you as well, I think I would define us both in different ways. As you know, having a strong people pleasing gene, I think this applies to many women especially Yes. Right. So you know, we're people pleasers, and you want to make people happy and make other people feel uncomfortable. Sorry, feel comfortable, but like okay, well, who's really made me feel comfortable though?

Sharon 09:37

Well, there is that right?

Lisa 09:38

To make me feel comfortable. And so eventually realize, you know, what, I have to make myself happy. I have to make myself comfortable and if they want to get the best out of me, I actually have to compromise less because all of that energy that is being siphoned off to appear as people wanting to appear is energy that's not going into creativity. It's editing that's not going into Production and output is energy.

Sharon 10:02

Right taking you away from living your purpose

Lisa 10:04

is taking you away from from the true meaning of life.

Sharon 10:07

Exactly, exactly. So were I think, at the point where I discovered that introversion was a thing, right? You know, I still did not, at that point feel comfortable to say, Oh, I'm an introvert. Right? Right. It was like, it was like, like, I knew I was an introvert. Right. And I would go home very quietly, and do my recovery thing. Yes. Saying anything? Yeah, the difference now, is that I will say, Yes, I'm an introvert. You know, I think you should know that I'm an introvert.

Lisa 10:34

Right.

Sharon 10:35

You know, I'm an introvert. So,

Lisa 10:36

you so you lead. So you lead with that?

Sharon 10:38

I lead with that.

Lisa 10:40

The you know, that doesn't always work. I do. I do remember a distinct experience, where it's actually one of the hardest jobs I've ever had, that the whole the whole environment was toxic. I'm sure people can relate. But I remember the interview process. The person that I ended up reporting to asked me something, you know, they asked you what, you know, what my weakness is right, you know, that foolish question, right. And so, I did mention, I took care to mention that I am actually extremely introverted. And so I can appear quiet. But the quiet means that I'm actually thinking and processing. And you know, it is not a hindrance to my creativity, but I understand in an extroverted context. Yeah, the whole discussion. And the person said, oh, you know, I'm an introvert, too, and blah, blah. And that,

you know, for the next few years, proceed to try and change me for an introvert into an extrovert. Right? Wow. Oh, my gosh, she was absolutely horrible. You know, absolutely horrible. And so, you know, people, I think sometimes this, this gets into a lot of the performativity, performativity, that we speak about what we're dealing with anti racism is that most people say the things that they think they should say, but they don't actually mean them at all, right? Because actions, words count, words do matter. And words are important, but actions are all. Actions are all what are you doing? Okay, you, you say that you are inclusive of all personnel, personality types of all people of all abilities and so on. But how it is actually really playing out? Exactly. You know, what I'm saying? Exactly, right. Exactly. Yeah.

Sharon 11:45

-tivity? No, I think I think that's really important. I think what has, what has helped me is that the the conversation around introversion has gotten up during the time that I've been a freelancer. Yeah. So I have been able to, you know, I'm working for myself, I've been able to space out my meetings and things like that, to give myself time. When I don't do it, I pay the price, like I had, you know, a few, a few months ago, I, I somehow ended up with three meetings, every day in a week, ooh, and zoom, but still,

Lisa 12:55

right? Zoom, let me tell you zoom, you would think zoom would be easier for introverts, it is not. Because somehow, you actually have to perform even more, because you're not in person. And so people don't have those body language cues and other cues that we that we rely on. And so you really have to put out a full Broadway performance, right? Yeah, a full Broadway performance in order to be seen to be participating fully. Right, because heaven forbid, you sit there and absorb information. Right?

Sharon 13:29

No, it really is. It's really, really difficult. And I suppose what has happened is that I am less willing to compromise on what I actually need as an introvert. Right, I have become so and I think that is part of the aging process. Because as you said, early on, you know, you're less willing to compromise on a lot of things. Right. And I think having that having that language, having that knowledge that, you know, this is my personality type. This is what I need, you know, that enables me to have conversations that ensure that I get more of what I need, right? Sure. There are times right. Sure there are times when I end up with back to back meetings, but I tell you after that last time that that happened, I said, Okay, not doing that I'm actually going to increase the padding between meetings in my calendar. Yes, yes, I have some more decompression time. Yeah.

Lisa 14:23

I block off. I not not always I don't always remember and, you know, maybe I'll start making this a more consistent practice. I definitely sometimes just block off time. So that you know, between meetings, so you have time to breathe.

Sharon 14:37

Yeah, so my calendar software also allows me to, to block out like, you know, I can block out days and weeks where people can't book meetings. Yeah, I you know, so.

Lisa 14:45

I love that.

Sharon 14:45

Yeah, sometimes I just, you know, I just do that, you know, if I've had a busy meeting week, you know, I remember that same situation. I got to the middle of the week looked at the weekend said okay, I can't take any meetings next week. Right? Because because you need that recovery time. Not only do I need to recover time but you know, I need the thinking time. Yes, I need the time to actually be able to do the deep work that introverts do well,

Lisa 15:06

Exactly.

Sharon 15:07

And in order to do that, I need to be not stressed out by having to be on all the time. Right. Right, exactly.

Lisa 15:15

You know, so in turn, but in terms of, you know, has, you know, have we gotten more introverted as we've gotten older or as life has gone on? You know, I don't think okay. I do remember after I was in that after I was hit by by that car that time. I do remember, really, I felt like my entire personality changed. And so

Sharon 15:43

You think you've gotten more introverted?

Lisa 15:44

I think, yeah, a lot changed. For me physically, mentally, emotionally after that. I do think that some of it may to, you know, it's like post traumatic, yeah, shock or whatever, right. Some of some of it was probably that, and some of it was probably, you know, a little soup saw depression. Right? Because, I mean, it's, it's a hard thing to go through. But I definitely knows, I've mentioned this to you before, where there are some things that changed about my brain and my personality, at that time, that have never gone back to being the same. And one of them was I definitely noticed, I became a lot less less able to mask, it was like a, like, a lot of part of my, I guess, my, my shell, the shell that you used to the armor that used to get through the world, it was like literally shattered and never like fully got back together. Right? And so I guess based on that, in terms of what we're discussing, yes, I became more introverted after that, for sure, you know, and less able, because I was less able to mask, I had to then start advocating for myself sometimes with you know, with more or less success, but at least I was having those sorts of, okay. Can you handle XYZ? Being able to tell, you know, people that I was reporting to, you know, is it okay, if I skipped it, I might need it for this meeting. Because if I'm not needed for this meeting, my time is better spent working on XYZ project. Is that okay with you? Yeah. You know, whereas before earlier in my career, that was not a possibility. Well, no, you know, yeah, to even have those discuss.

Sharon 17:22

Again. Yeah, I think, you know, as you progress in your career, you have a little more seniority you do you do, you're allowed to have those discussions in a way that you're not when you're a junior colleague, and they tell you to turn up for things, you turn up for things. No matter how you personally might feel about it, no matter how exhausted you are afterwards.

Lisa 17:38

Exactly.

Sharon 17:39

Right. And so I really appreciate this time in my life, when I'm able to acknowledge the fullness of who I am,

Lisa 17:45

Right.

Sharon 17:45

And say, okay, yes, I'm an introvert, which means, you know,

Lisa 17:49

yeah, I'm not coming to your cocktail party. That's what that means. I'm not coming to a cocktail party, I'm not going to your happy hour.

Sharon 17:56

And text don't call.

Lisa 17:57

Text don't call. I'm having lunch by myself. I am leaving work as soon as work is done. I am leaving work. I do not want to hang out with you all after, love you byeee. *laughter* I don't want to hang out with you. It is work. No. And that's another thing. It's like, people, a lot of companies have this thing where we're family here and blah, their family till they fire you first of all, right. But you know, these people are not your family. They're not your friends, you we do not we don't need to do the team building foolishness, you know? And I'm sure that there are probably, I mean, I'm speaking in generalizations. There are people for whom it works, for whom it works, there are companies for whom it works and the companies for whom it is actually true. And authentic. Yes, very few. Yes. But I know, I know that they do exist. But in general, no, these are not your family, they're not your friends. So I am not going to try to expend my energy trying to make people that I know would cross the street and close your bag if it saw me outside the office.

Sharon 18:58

And that has happened.

Lisa 18:59

And it has happened. Yes. Right. The people that you work with for five years, and then you see them, they see you out of context, right. And literally literally don't recognize you it's not it's not a question of

you have a moment and think they have a moment thing. Oh, this faces is familiar, they literally do not recognize you or remember you Yes. Or forget your name.

Sharon 19:17

Worse, they do recognize you and they cross the street to avoid talking to you.

Lisa 19:21

Exactly.

Sharon 19:22

Because that has happened.

Lisa 19:23

Yes. Which mind you by the way, I do it too, because I don't want to talk to ya'll. *laughter* So you're the introvert because introversion so it's a whole different thing, you know, but um, but yeah, so these people are not your friends, even though I'm not going to pretend that they are, I have friends. I have friends. I have family. And my energy is focused on building bonds with them. Right? Is it important to have a certain that you do need so there has to be some social commerce right? Yes. Yes, you do need to be able to collaborate and get along with your colleagues. I'm not saying otherwise. Right. But Don't fake it to make it what it isn't. It is work. Yes.

Sharon 19:59

And I, you know, I do think one of the things that I saw recently that was really interesting is when a company was talking about its diversity, equity and inclusion policy, they actually mentioned introverts by name.

Lisa 20:13

They did? Wow!

Sharon 20:14

Yes. And I thought that was so amazing. I think that's the first time I've ever seen it. And you know, there was a recognition that introverts have something to add to the workplace that does not require them to be the life and soul of the party. Right? Right. Influence have things to add to any relationship that does not require them to be the life and soul of the party. Right? Your introverts are there thinking and processing and coming up with ideas, and strategizing.

Lisa 20:40

Quietly,

Sharon 20:41

quietly, because that's how they do it best. And so if you have a mixed team, you need to allow space for introverts to do their thing in the way that works for them. Yeah, right. And then in your daily relationships with with, you know, with friends and family, you know, it's important to recognize that some of the people in your circle might be introverts, and therefore, they are not going to go want to go

and out and hang out with you every evening this week. You know, they might, they will do it once because they love you. Yeah. And then they're going to need a couple of days to recover. Yeah, that's just the way it is. Yeah. And so, you know, give a little grace to the introverts in your life. And you know, introverts, I am sure that those of you who are listening can relate to what we've said today. Yeah, right.

Lisa 21:26

So, you know, my thing is, you know, it's not necessary that we become, well, in your case, it's not necessarily you become more introverted, you just become more clear, right. For me, it's a mixture I have I have become more clear, but I do think I've actually become a little bit more introverted as late earlier. Yeah, but slightly, but most of the introversion, like I said, but most of the introversion when I look back, like oh, it's always been there, I didn't have the language to describe it. I know exactly, you know, yeah, you know, but I am so happy being an introvert. Right? I am a big fan of introversion. I think there are a lot of strengths to it. And it is our our bubble that people keep trying to get us to come out of right, or bubble is a magical place. And I like being in my bubble. Absolutely to be an introvert.

Sharon 22:14

Right. And on that note, thank you for listening to this episode of the introvert sisters podcast, and we will catch you next time.

22:23

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