

Ep. 15: Girls Who Embrace Their Introvertedness

Simon Sinek: [00:00:00] First of all, uh, there's a, you have to know what the definition of introversion and extroversion are, right? Socially awkward is not, I know, socially awkward extroverts. Right? It's not, if you're uncomfortable, it's not social awkwardness. That's not introversion. I, I like in terms of, it's Susan Cain's definition. It's, it's about energy, which is, um, an introvert loses energy from social interaction. An extrovert gains energy from social interaction. So an introvert wakes up in the morning with five coins. Every social interaction, they spend a coin. At the end they are depleted. An extrovert wakes up with no coins. Every social interaction, they get a coin, and by the end they feel rich.

[00:00:45] **Susan Cain:** So the key then, to maximizing our talents is for us all to put ourselves in the zone of stimulation that is right for us. But now here's where the bias comes in. Our most important institutions, our schools, and our workplaces, they are designed mostly for extroverts and for extroverts need for lots of stimulation.

[00:01:05] **Trudy Hall:** When Susan Cain, author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, hit the speaker circuit in 2012, she launched a long overdue conversation. She persuasively argued that, over time, our culture has come to celebrate the extrovert and that stereotypes of being an extrovert have become the preferred norm, as opposed to being understood as a personality temperament.

[00:01:29] Parents come to believe that their child should be social, should be outgoing, should feel confident and comfortable in groups. Teachers grade on class participation and fully engaging in group activities. In so doing, the contributions of introverts are undervalued and this happens, Cain noted, to the detriment of our families,

[00:01:50] our schools, our culture and the 25-40% of the population who are self-described introverts. Folks such as Bill Gates, Rosa Parks, Mahatma Gandhi, Eleanor Roosevelt and Albert Einstein are among those self-described introverts, yet can we imagine the world without their full contribution? Cain's message provided a wake-up call to educators and parents of quiet children.

[00:02:15] For introverts, it provided the affirmation to finally be themselves. In the decade since, Cain has become the hero of a movement to better understand the definition of introversion—no, it does not necessarily mean socially awkward—and, as important, to provide strategies for both parents and educators who are raising quiet children. It has proven remarkably challenging to unseat the stereotype of the quiet child as being painfully shy, socially isolated, a non-contributor who is missing out on life.

[00:02:46] **Audio clip:** I would like parents of introverted children to know that supporting our passions and interests is important and that we will find our individual

ways of being a leader. Even though we might be quiet, we are still just as [00:03:00] capable of being confident and will know that we, we can individually be a leader.

[00:03:06] **Trudy Hall:** Hi, I am your host Trudy Hall, a bit of an introvert if I am permitted to admit that at the front end of this conversation, and you are listening to *On Educating Girls*, a podcast produced by the International Coalition of Girls Schools. Today, with the help of those who know how to listen to and coach quiet girls, we are going to better understand how to help our introverted girls find their unique voice.

[00:03:29] If there is a quiet girl in your life—or inside you—you will want to listen. If you like what you hear in this Episode, we urge you to rate and review it or simply forward it along so that others can learn from the wisdom of our guests. My guest today is Betsy Gugle, the Lower School Director at Columbus School for Girls in Columbus, Ohio.

[00:03:51] In anticipation of our conversation, Betsy volunteered to interview her former colleague, Charlotte Stiverson, who brought the work of Susan Cain to the Columbus School for Girls, becoming an advocate for the professional development of parents and teachers as they sought to understand and empower the introverts in their families and classrooms.

[00:04:10] We have included clips of that conversation, as well as the voices of girls who are self-described introverts. Since she herself began to understand Cain's work, Betsy has become committed to the important work of fully embracing the introverted temperament as both a teacher and a parent.

[00:04:27] **Betsy Gugle:** The school environment is sort of geared for extroverts. We know that societally things are often geared for extroverts. Um, how do we help to bring awareness to the strengths of both extroverts and introverts in in the school setting in society?

Charlotte Stiverson: When I say I know faculty and, um, parent parental training or parent training, those are really good times. The more you can learn, the better. I know I just from my own experience of researching and it becomes more instinctive, like, Oh yeah, that makes sense. [00:05:00] And um, and you can help people and try to explain to, I know even. When I'm out with a group and sometimes they'll say, Well, why is that person doing that? I said, Well, that's kind of her need. You know, she needs, we've been together for how long? So they, she needs a break. And that's, that's perfectly fine. And we all find different ways to recharge and even extroverts will need time to recharge except that the introverts need it, um, sooner. Mm-hmm. Their, their downtime comes sooner.

[00:05:32] **Trudy Hall:** I'm happy to be learning from you today, Betsy, and welcome.

[00:05:33] **Betsy Gugle:** Thank you so much, Trudy. It is a pleasure to be with you today as well.

[00:05:38] **Trudy Hall:** Betsy, I know this topic is both personal and professional for you. Could you take a moment and share an AHA episode in your life as a parent or ed-

ucator when you truly understood that our culture has been stereotyping, introverted and extroverted girls, What was it that really got you thinking about the need to better understand girls who are introverted by nature?

[00:05:59] **Betsy Gugle:** That's a great question. So in [00:06:00] 2016, there was really an intersection of two events that gave me my aha moment. My colleague, Charlotte Stiverson asked me if she could attend the Quiet Ambassador Program where educators from around the country were being trained on how to foster teaching and learning communities.

[00:06:20] That leveraged the strengths of introverts and extroverts. Literally the same week, Charlotte was in New York at the Quiet Ambassador Program. My first grade daughter was in summer camp at Columbus School for Girls. I was so excited to visit her in the dining room on her first day of camp because this was her first opportunity to eat in the big dining room now that she was in lower school.

And when I entered the dining room, I have to tell you, my heart just sank as I watched her eating lunch by herself. Of course, and I know this happens to a lot of parents, I immediately thought something was wrong. And to my surprise, as I walked up to her table and asked her why she was sitting at the table by herself when other classmates were nearby, she said, In a [00:07:00] calm, confident voice, I just needed some alone time right now, mom.

And it was at that moment when I realized so often our children are just fine. And we as parents are the ones that have to. And listen to better understand our children. I couldn't wait at that moment for Charlotte to come back from her training and teach the lower school teachers and me more about how we could better understand and support our introverted students.

[00:07:28] **Trudy Hall:** Well, I know you all have done some significant work in that regard too, which is why I think you're gonna be such a great guest for us because you have that intersection. You live at the intersection of being a parent, um, and being an educator. So let's start with, can you share, uh, what you've come to know, what you come to believe as the meaning of the word introvertive? Uh, some may assume that it's. The same as being shy, uh, but I think you would tell us different.

[00:07:53] **Betsy Gugle:** Yes. I would love to share the differences between the two because by definition, someone who is introverted is drawn to the inner world of thought [00:08:00] and feeling. They lose energy when around people for a long period of time, and they recharge by being alone.

In conversations, introverts listen carefully and don't mind silence in conversations because it gives them time to think. They prefer to work through thoughts before sharing with others. Being an introvert is different from someone who is shy. People who are shy are nervous. Or uncomfortable around people and worry about what other people will think of them.

[00:08:29] They enter into conversations only when it is necessary too, and they find silence in conversations uncomfortable. They hope that others won't ask them for

their opinion in front of others. One misperception is that introverted people aren't social or in the public spotlight, and this is absolutely untrue.

[00:08:47] One of my favorite actresses, Audrey Hepburn, said it best when she. I have to be alone very often. I'd be quite happy if I spent from Saturday night until Monday morning [00:09:00] alone in my apartment. That's how I refuel. Now, that surprised me. If you watch *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, you would not have thought her to be an introvert, but that is a poignant statement from her. Indeed.

[00:09:14] **Trudy Hall:** Uh, the parents of introverts most likely already know the answer to the question I'm gonna ask next, but I'm wondering if you could take a moment for those of us who are new to the topic to cite some of the strengths that introverted children do bring to a group.

[00:09:28] **Betsy Gogle:** Absolutely. There are so many strengths of introverts, and I appreciate what Susan Cain said, "Don't think of introversion as something that needs to be cured. Spend your free time the way you like, not the way you think you're supposed to." One thing that Susan Cain explains beautifully in her book, *Quiet Power*, is the physiological differences between introverts and extroverts' nervous systems.

[00:09:53] Introverts need less stimulation in social situations and sensory experiences while extroverts' nervous systems don't [00:10:00] react as much, which means they crave more stimulation. Whenever we can better understand the science behind different temperaments, we are more likely to appreciate those strengths and grasp

[00:10:15] The differences with a new perspective. It also allows us to change the narrative by saying, My daughter is not being stubborn or defiant. Her brain is wired to need something else right now, and how can I help her? So let's jump into the strengths of introverts. Those include careful listening, intentional decision making, valuing deep relationships, observing to understand and thinking deeply.

[00:10:38] I loved. In 2012, *Forbes Magazine* published an article titled *How the Definition of Leadership is Changing for Women*. In the article, the author states, leaders who listen well, collaborate effectively, and see diverse opinions and contributions often make better decisions. Overall, leaders understand and [00:11:00] embrace the value of introspection, reflection, and deep learning.

[00:11:03] These leaders are deeply thoughtful and tend to see the big picture and patterns within systems that others don't recognize. And you can see in this article, the focus of leadership is shifting away from hierarchy, ladder to relational, moving away from command and control to collaboration. It is less about position and more about influencing.

[00:11:27] The key is really leveraging your assets and this definition of leadership in the article amplifies qualities of an introvert. At Columbus School for Girls, we have launched the Center for Girls and Young Women's Leadership as a part of the work to launch the center we developed a set of leadership core competencies.

[00:11:45] These include expressing her authentic self, listening with open-mindedness and empathy, speaking with clarity and conviction, taking courageous and healthy risks. Facing challenges with resilience and collaborating with [00:12:00] others to serve, and the intention behind these competencies is for each girl at CSG to know that she can be a leader, that each person will have their own leadership style, and how to remain true to one's authentic self as they understand and value their strengths.

[00:12:16] **Trudy Hall:** This is really interesting. Um, you're very careful with the kind of language you use. I, I noticed this and I, I know that you feel strongly that language matters. Um, when one is learning to honor an introvert's preferences, an introvert style and introvert's strengths cause the labels can do a lot more damage.

So, How can parents talk to their daughters, teachers or the parents of her friends about the needs of their own introverted daughter?

[00:12:44] **Betsy Gugle:** Um, it is important that the adults in a child's life are all on the same page. As a parent, you want your child's teacher to fully see her capabilities and not falsely judge her on how often she raises her hand. Over the years, there has [00:13:00] been tremendous research on the need to move away from a participation grade and focus more on what class engagement looks like. During the 2016/17 school year, the lower school set aside 15 to 30 minutes each month. At our division meetings to dig deeper into a particular component of the study on temperaments.

[00:13:19] These conversations allowed us to look more carefully at our curriculum, our program, and understanding of the students in our class. The work that had the most impact on our community was our analysis on writing narratives for progress reports. As my own awareness increased, so did my sensitivity towards how wrote about students. I read comments like, "Sally is reserved, but quietly completes her working class." Susie is respectful to her classmates, but does not participate in class discussions Often. You'll notice in both examples, the sentences use the word, but in a way that sets up a negative slant on the student.

As [00:14:00] a team, we dissected these sentences and found ways to rewrite them, so they honored the strengths of our introverted students. So Sally is reserved, but quietly completes her work in class. Was changed to Sally, is observant and a careful listener during class discussions and always completes her work on time.

[00:14:17] The example Susie is respectful to her classmates, but doesn't participate in class discussions often was changed to Susie, is respectful to her classmates and engages in class discussions after carefully reflecting on the topic. There are other great examples of quiet friendly comments available on the website of Quiet Schools Network, and I encourage educators and parents to take a look at that.

[00:14:40] It is also helpful to talk with your child's teacher regarding ways for your introverted child to recharge during the day. The cadence of a school day, especially in the lower school, is typically geared towards extroverted students - from full group lessons to small group projects, large run lunch rooms, to loud recess activities.

[00:15:00] There's not often a lot of time or space for introverts to have the quiet time they crave. Ways to build this refuel time in the day could include allowing them a quiet place to read or draw in before care or during recess. Another thing many of our classroom, uh, classrooms have instituted in the lower school is a zen corner in the classroom with a three minute timer, which allows recharge time during the busyness of the classroom assignments.

[00:15:27] **Trudy Hall:** I need a zen corner in my home. Betsy, that sounds like a great idea. Absolutely. You. You're, you've done, uh, so much good work in this area, and I love the real emphasis on language that you are teaching us about. Can you now talk about strategies that you can offer adults who are working with introverted girls, particularly in the primary or the elementary grades, and especially when emphasis is placed on socialization skills.

[00:15:57] **Betsy Gugle:** Absolutely. You know, the most [00:16:00] important thing is to embrace introverts for who they are and not put expectations of extroverts onto your introverted child. This is really important. Introverts have so many wonderful qualities, as we've discussed in their toolbox, and you want them to see their strengths as their superpowers.

[00:16:17] One of the best strategies for adults to use with introverted children is pre-viewing event and modelling conversations ahead of time. Before an introverted child is going to an event preview with them who's going to be there, what is going to happen once they get there? Who could she connect with that she feels comfortable with?

[00:16:37] This allows an introvert more time to ease into new social situations. A common analogy when talking about stretching introverts into new social situations is the rubber band theory. This is where you practice stretching yourself to take risks a little more each time is that rubber band is stretching, but never to the point where it is too uncomfortable that the rubber band breaks.

[00:17:00] As the adult in a child's life, it is important to recognize and acknowledge stretch moments when you see growth in the child's confidence. For example, you might say to your child, I noticed how you weren't sure you wanted to go to the party, and even though you were able to call me to come and pick you up early, you ended up staying for the whole party and had a really good time.

[00:17:22] As an introverted children mature and build more competencies and confidence, they will feel more willing to share all sides of themselves with others. And this really is a gift to us all because they have so much to share that is rich and full of depth.

[00:17:37] **Audio clip:** I think Columbus School for Girls has supported me as an introvert ever since I first started school. Um, I came to Columbus School for girls when I was three years old, and I don't think I would be as confident as I am today if it weren't for my school. When I was little, I was quite quiet and reserved, and there's nothing wrong with that, and I still am today. But [00:18:00] entering into elementary school, I was always encouraged to do opportunities and was always told that, yes, I can do this opportunity and you can do that. And to anything I was interested in

and growing up, it never crossed my mind that I should not do these things that I am drawn to.

[00:18:18] **Audio clip:** At school I find recharge time. Getting my book out and reading Once I finished lunch, or if I need some time away from other people at break. I can just sit and read or just think.

[00:18:33] **Trudy Hall:** I like that we are talking a lot about what goes on in a school setting, and now I wanna shift our focus a bit if we could. I'm curious, can having an introverted child in your family impact the family dynamic in some way? And should we be talking to parents about how the entire family dynamic might be impacted by having a child in that setting?

[00:18:57] **Betsy Gugle:** I certainly think so. And in my family, Trudy, we have an introverted daughter and an extroverted daughter, and as they are getting older, they are understanding more and more what each sister needs at different times. This has taken us some time to talk through with them, and it is not always easy, especially when your extroverted child wants to be with your introverted child to have company and your introverted child wants to be in her room.

[00:19:21] Where it is quiet at the end of the day, I tell my girls that their differences will help balance each other out, and as they get older, they will learn from one another. My extroverted child will learn the importance of slowing down before making decisions, and my introverted child will be encouraged to stretch herself in new ways through the modeling of her sister.

[00:19:40] This is not, in my opinion, only about value, valuing the their siblings unique strengths, but also respecting the differences within our family and beyond in other communities that they're a part of. I think the piece that I hold onto, Really making sure that our decisions as a family balance out [00:20:00] what both girls need at different times.

[00:20:02] **Trudy Hall:** So I was talking earlier today with a friend of mine and telling her that I was gonna be on this podcast today and what the topic of the podcast was about. And she said something that was interesting to me that that feeds me directly into my next question. She said, Oh, you know, when I was raising my child, we just didn't have resources like this. It's so fantastic that parents now have a place they can go to get more information and I'm, I'm wondering, you know, ever since Susan Cain's book Quiet has introduced this to the power of introverts, they obviously must have produced significantly more resources. And can you offer up several resources that you've found particularly helpful, that your teachers have found particularly helpful, that you know as a parent you found particularly helpful?

[00:20:46] **Betsy Gugle:** Absolutely. I really encourage every family to read Susan's Cain's second book, Quiet Power, which really is written as I mentioned earlier, for kids and teens.

In this version, the [00:21:00] information on temperaments is stated in easy to understand terms and examples that both the child and the adult can discuss together, which I think is so helpful. A couple other well known books on this topic include Ol-

son Laney's, the Hidden Gifts of the Introverted Child, and Christine Fonseca's, Quiet Kids on the resource list at the end of the podcast.

[00:21:23] I've included, in addition to these titles, valuable articles, as well as some nonfiction and fiction books that bring more awareness and understanding to the gifts Introverts possess. Um, and one other resource I would suggest for parents to consider are the role models around your child. Um, for example, this year at an assembly, we had two teachers share what being an extrovert and being an introvert looks like and feels like to them.

[00:21:48] The teachers did an incredible job of sharing what they need in different situations and we're able to break down some of the stereotypes for each temperament. So thinking about who in your community [00:22:00] models the different temperaments and, and might be a good role model for your child is an awesome place to to step into next as well.

[00:22:10] **Audio clip:** Abigail, what would you say a few of your strengths are as an introvert?

[00:22:13] **Audio clip:** I feel like some of my strengths are that I can listen to people and. I can observe them and understand people.

Audio clip: I think leaders are often seen as being extroverted and very outspoken, but I don't think that is necessarily the case.

[00:22:34] Um, this fall I was part of the leadership committee for Columbus School for Girls' Leadership Summit, which was a symposium with my classmates and I had the opportunity to present on issues we care about, listen to local change makers, and educate students on how to take action in our own community.

[00:22:54] And a similar event will be happening this spring too. But anyways, I think that because I am an [00:23:00] introvert, I allow time to listen to others and for ideas to come to the table. Um, I feel that I am very comfortable in being alone with my own thoughts and often need that time in my own mind. Um, sometimes, or one thing that I've observed is that sometimes more outspoken people might get really excited about a specific topic, which is one of the things that I really love about them.

[00:23:36] But, um, that might lead to other voices not being heard. And during the summit, I felt like it was very important that everyone's voice was heard. Um, such as like during the planning phase when we were talking about like where things or what things should go where and kind of during that process. Um, and also another thing is that while I would love to do every opportunity that is available to me, I do like to mull it over in my mind for a while to make sure that I will be [00:24:00] like 100% committed um, to what I am doing and that I will be someone I can rely on. So I think that kind of thinking process. Part of the introvertedness of me.

[00:24:12] **Betsy Gugle:** Um, so finding their own voice is critical in a particular focus. For those of us who teach girls at ICGS member schools, I have found literature to be a wonderful tool to use when having these conversations with your daughter.

Talking about ways to advocate for oneself through the objectivity of a character, allows them to have the conversations first, and then they can begin applying what they've learned from the book to their own situation. So for example, in *Ada Twist scientist* by Andrea Beady, Ada's head is full of questions. She doesn't talk because she is busy observing the world.

Her fact finding missions and science experiments often leave her parents frazzled, but in the end, her parents learn to value her curiosity. And help her [00:25:00] follow her passions. In *Ladybug Girl at the beach* by David Soman and Jackie Davis. Lulu is unsure about going into the ocean and it takes her time and practice to feel comfortable to go in.

[00:25:12] Once she goes in and finds out how much she loves the water, she's eager to play in the water the rest of the day. This book is an excellent connection to that idea of stretching your rubber band into new situations that might not at first be comfortable. And a classic, the story of *Ferdinand* by Monroe Leaf. Ferdinand does not act like the loud, rowdy bulls in his community.

Rather, he prefers to sit in nature and observe the flowers, and I love this book because of the sweet message of being your authentic self and not what you think the world expects you to be. In addition, I would encourage parents to really pause and listen to their children, ask questions like, I can see you're feeling overwhelmed, or I can see you're frustrated.[00:26:00]

[00:26:00] What do you need right now to reset or recharge? If they can't articulate it at that moment, offer them some recharge activities for 20 or so minutes, and then revisit the conversation. Offering choice in the recharge activities allows for children to feel a sense of agency and allowing her to also know that her voice is really important.

[00:26:21] Another suggestion would be to look at your family's schedule to be sure that there is a balance of activity and recharge time. If you're a family always on the go and your introverted child is not getting the quiet time to reset, you will likely notice more irritability and frustration and feeling upset.

Have your child help you co-design the families schedule for the week so that they know what to anticipate and they see the windows when they will have that needed downtime. Ask your child to also help you set up a space in the house that they can claim as their quiet, calm space. These are just a few ways in which you help them [00:27:00] know that their voice matters and that you are listening to what they need.

[00:27:03] **Trudy Hall:** Clearly, we are just beginning to scratch the surface of this critical topic and it needs and deserves a deep exploration. But this is just one short podcast. I'm wondering, as we close our conversation, can you offer two to three important takeaways for parents of daughters who tend to be introverted? Talk about what your personal and professional experience has led you to believe are the one to three key things, uh, people should walk away from from this conversation.

[00:27:33] **Betsy Gugle:** Sure. Thanks, Trudy. You know the first takeaway for me is to read the resources that are out there to fully understand the strengths of your daughter as an introvert, you are going to be her number one advocate when she is younger, and you will be her coach to help her advocate for herself as she gets older.

Help change negative comments by others and turn them into a positive. For example, if someone says about your daughter, she is so shy, you can respond, [00:28:00] You know what? She takes in everything and doesn't miss a thing. So really helping to, to frame the positive, um, aspects of, of being an introvert. The second takeaway is to ensure that whether at home or at school, she's getting quiet, recharge time.

[00:28:15] This not only maintains an important balance for her, but also for your family. A happy child creates a happy family if she needs 30 minutes after school to read, play music, watch a show, get a snack, play outside et cetera, right before doing homework, then it's important to honor that and don't force an agenda that you think is best, but that doesn't meet her actual needs.

And the final thing I will say is for parents to really cultivate your introverted child's passions. Introverts are more inclined to dive deeply into activities that are of interest to them. This will also encourage them to find new social avenues with people who share the same interests. Introverts can be in theatre productions and group [00:29:00] sports teams, just like the extroverts in the world.

They just might opt to go home after the play or the game is over. So just being aware of what is their passion and helping them to really develop those passions with, with people who are, you know, like, like-minded.

[00:29:16] **Trudy Hall:** That last one makes a lot of sense to me because any of us, uh, when we are acting from a place of passion tend to be much more likely to push through barriers, and that makes a lot of sense to me.

And so, as, as we sign off here, um, what I'm hearing you really say is that it's absolutely critical for a parent to really understand how to become their daughter's number one advocate. And in order to do that, to take advantage of the significant resources that are out there and educate themselves and look to the educators in their daughter's life so that you're working together and you're on the same page.

[00:29:49] I, I do believe, as you said, surround sound is so critical and as long as all the adults can be on the same page, imagine, imagine, uh, what we could bring to the table in these [00:30:00] young women who are introverted and prefer that style. So thank you so much for Betsy, and I know that we'll be talking again because I'm finding you to be such a good resource on education.

[00:30:12] **Betsy Gugle:** Wonderful. Thank you, Trudy, for having me. Take care.

[00:30:14] **Trudy Hall:** This has been *On Educating Girls*, a podcast produced by the International Coalition of Girls Schools to address real issues that impact the lives of girls we know. As always, we welcome your thoughts and suggestions as we create

content that you find useful. Please send comments and questions to podcast@girlsschools.org and join us next time as we share insights and resources. Thanks for listening; it is important to the girls in your lives that you do!