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Presentation Transcript
A Seminar for Introverts and Those Who Love Them
By Elaine Jacobs
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Welcome everyone and thank you for coming. My name is Elaine Jacobs and I am an introvert. This is the book which I took information for this seminar from, along with my own experience. I, obviously, can't cover everything in the next fifty-five minutes, so if you find what I have to say interesting, you might want to get the book yourself. We got it off of Amazon. And if you ask for a used book – which it wasn't – you get the used book price. I found it quite validating as an introvert.

There's some lingo that I'll be using today that you've probably heard in another context. For our purposes today, an *innie* is an introvert, and an *outie* is an extrovert.

I'd like to thank Stacey Seelig, who is in Thailand right now, for recommending the book to me summer before last, and also Scarlet Stough, who suggested that I give this seminar after reading a short article that I wrote in *Faith Networks* about it. She sent me an email and I'd like to quote what she had to say.

“I started reading this book this week and I had to tell you how excited I am about it. I knew I was an introvert – and extreme at that – but I had no idea that so many things I deal with are directly related to being an introvert. I was so encouraged by the concept of introversion being a gift that I'm learning to work with it instead of against it. I always thought it was something bad that must be overcome. I feel like I've been locked up for sixty-two years and somebody just gave me the keys to the door. I feel like somebody just gave me wings. Of course, I actually have to walk out the door and learn to use those wings, but oh the freedom to understand the source of so much in my life.”

So, are you an introvert? If everybody would take their handout and turn to the page between pages one and two. We're going to do this little assessment to determine if you're an extrovert or an introvert. There are two sets of qualities. So you need an A column and a B column. And you will just answer “yes” or “no.” So if you don't have a handout, you can just put a “Y” or an “N.” We're going to go through this pretty quickly. We can't spend a lot of time on it, so just go with your first inclination about yourself. We're going to do the A qualities first. Everybody ready?

Do you like to be in the thick of things? Yes or no?

Do you relish variety and are you bored with sameness?

Do you know lots of people and consider them friends?

Do you enjoy chit-chatting even with strangers?

Do you feel stoked after activity and eager for more?

Do you speak or act without needing to think first?

Are you generally quite peppy?

Do you tend to talk more than listen?

Okay, now let's go to the B qualities.

Do you prefer to relax alone or with a few close friends?

Do you consider only deep relationships as friends?

Do you need rest after outside activities – even ones you enjoy?

Do you often listen, but talk a lot about topics of importance to you?

Do you appear calm, self-contained and like to observe?

Do you tend to think before you speak or act?

Do you experience your mind going blank in groups or or under pressure?

Do you not like the feeling of being rushed or interrupted?

Okay, if everyone would count their “yeses” in each column. There's a continuum with extreme extroverts on one end and extreme introverts on the other end, and everybody else in between. So you may not have every quality, or you may have it in varying degrees. And sometimes in our life, we slide up and down the continuum. The book pointed out that a lot of people, as they get older, move towards the center. I, as I went into menopause, moved to the extreme introvert end, because I have less energy. So, see, things can move up and down.

Okay, how many of you had more “A” yeses? Okay, you're the extroverts. How many had more “B” yeses? Oh, I see I'm not alone today! You're the introverts. Okay, innies are outnumbered three to one by the extroverts in this world.

People used to think being an introvert was a bad thing – something to be ashamed of. Someone I dearly love once told me she hated that word. Very strong feelings are connected with the introvert label. Science is proving that innie brains work differently from outie brains. It's something that we are born with. It's in our genes. It's our temperament. And it has nothing to do with being shy, withdrawn or schizoid.

There are three distinguishing characteristics between innies and outies. The first one is our energy source. Innies recharge by spending time *alone*. Outies gain energy by being *with* people.

This past July my husband and I sponsored Camp Outreach West through LifeResource Ministries. Seventeen of us met in Meridian, Idaho, to work on painting and repairing a duplex for the homeless and a mission for the homeless. After four days of painting, repairing, cleaning, we were all exhausted. My husband's way of dealing with the exhaustion was to take everyone who wanted to on a three-day backpacking trip. (Laughter) Twelve people went! Being the introvert, I was more than happy to stay in a motel alone, go shopping alone, eat alone and go to two movies alone in three days. (More laughter) I was a little apprehensive at first, because I was in a strange city. But it didn't take me long to warm up to the idea. And for me, it was my kind of fun and I was able to recharge my batteries by being alone and doing things alone. I enjoyed all the people at camp while we were there together, but by the last day I was running on empty and I thought I had nothing more to give.

The second distinguishing characteristic is stimulation. Innies are easily overstimulated by the external world. We need to balance it with alone time.

While I was alone in Idaho I had fun things to do to get me out of the motel, but I did them alone. I took my time. And after my activities, I came back to the motel and spent the evening alone, and I slept in every morning.

Outies thrive on the external – activities, people, places and things. My husband is a morning person and can hardly wait to get up and greet the day, see people and go places. I'm not a morning person. I don't usually greet the day with a smile. I need time to wake up. So when he cheerfully and enthusiastically greets me, sometimes I'd like to smack him! (Laughter) And you know, he still hasn't learned that lesson! This morning I had to get up.... You know, we're on different time zones – two hours later. We have to get up two hours earlier than we're used to. And I'm not sleeping while I'm here. And this morning I had to get up even earlier so that I could come do this seminar. And he's in the shower just so happy, you know, and he's coming out, and he's saying silly things! (Laughter) And I had to pray about my attitude! (Chuckling)

I am blessed to be able to work in my home. And I love it! If other people were around all the time, I don't think I'd like it and I don't think I'd be able to function as well. On the other hand, though my husband has to do some of his work at home, I think he would

be lost if he didn't also work at a mental health clinic and have the opportunity to mix with other people.

The third distinguishing characteristic is knowledge and experience. Innies like a narrow, in-depth focus. I'm a detail person – a bookkeeper by trade. I need to have it quiet. And I need to be able to concentrate when I work. Outside stimulus bothers me. I don't have a wide array of interests. I like my work, for the most part, and I like to decorate, and I like to shop – mostly alone. I don't like anyone watching me while I create or decorate. I *hate* talking on the phone and will let the answering machine get it if it's not for me. I have only a very few people I consider close friends and I'm happy with that.

Outies cast a wide net to accrue knowledge and experience. My husband has three jobs – LifeResource Ministries, a small private counseling practice and he works for Southwest Family Institute as a therapist. He also dabbles in real estate, belongs to a four-wheeling club and likes to go rock crawling in his Samurai with the guys from the club. He loves backpacking. He loves to stay in touch with his many, many friends by phone. They talk for hours! On our way to Idaho last summer we passed a motorcycle that looked like one of Bill's friends. He immediately picked up his cell phone and called Bob to tell him. He just wanted to touch bases with Bob. And Bob, who is also an extrovert, appreciated the call.

There's been a scientific experiment that they use to follow the gene D4DR, which influences temperament. It's called the *novelty gene*. And these are some of their findings. Novelty seekers are less sensitive to the neurotransmitter dopamine, therefore they need to experience more of life's thrills and chills to produce higher levels of dopamine. Low novelty seekers are highly sensitive to dopamine, so don't need as much buzz in their lives. They receive a different kind of good feeling from another neurotransmitter called acetylcholine. They tend to be reflective, content to live at a slower pace, orderly and cautious. They enjoy the routine of the familiar. They like to see the big picture before plunging ahead and focus well on long-term projects. They are even tempered, good listeners and loyal. (It's good to have an audience of introverts – they're good listeners.) Sounds a lot like extroverts and introverts, doesn't it?

The brain has separate pathways for different neurotransmitters. Innies, whose neurotransmitter is acetylcholine, have more blood flow to their brains than outies, indicating more internal stimulation. The innie's pathway is more complicated. It flows to parts of the brain involved in remembering, solving problems and planning. This pathway is long and complex, having to do with internal thoughts and feelings. Outies, whose neurotransmitter is dopamine, have more blood flow to areas where visual, auditory, touch and taste processing are. Their main pathway is short and less complicated, attending to what is happening externally.

Because the pathway through the brain is longer for innies, we may often find ourselves at a loss for words if we're asked something on the spur of the moment. Depending on whether we are right-brained or left-brained, we need time to think. Extroverts need to learn that introverts require time to form and articulate opinions. Introverts walk around

with lots of thoughts and feelings in their head. They often have an ongoing dialogue with themselves. Sound familiar? I know it is true of me and I find it exhausting. We need to reach back into long-term memory to locate information. This requires reflection time without pressure. You may have noticed when you ask an innie a question, they may look away or just sit there for awhile. An outie may find that irritating. But they are not purposefully evading answering. They need time to think about what and how to answer.

Now let's look at some famous introverts, so we will know we are not alone. Michael Jordan, Thomas Edison, Grace Kelly, Laura Bush, Bill Gates, Clint Eastwood, Harrison Ford, Michelle Pfeifer, Julia Roberts, Steve Martin, Dianne Sawyer, Prince William, Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln and Sir Alfred Hitchcock. Even though innies are a smaller part of society, they've made a large and interesting contribution.

Is it good or bad if your mate is the opposite temperament? They help us go out and about. We help them slow down. The author tells about a trip to Las Vegas with her husband. She, an innie, couldn't wait to get through the casino, to the elevator and up to her room. The noise, lights, smoke and bright colors were too much for her. She felt like a fish out of water. Her husband, the outie, was ready to rock and roll. His cheeks were rosy and his eyes sparkled. All the noise and action excited him. He didn't understand why she was heading up to the room. Extroverts have many charms and they are a good balance for us introverted types. They help us go out and about. We help them slow down.

Learning to compromise with your mate is key. Introverts and extroverts may not agree on what makes a fun, satisfying vacation. So the author and her husband take turns choosing where they will go. The year after her husband picked a nine-countries-in-nine-days vacation (laughter), she picked one in which they did nothing but this historic mining town of Leadville, Colorado. How many of you have ever been to Leadville – or through there? Very small, little town in Colorado. Old town. She said, sitting by the fire at the hotel the first afternoon, "We read the Chamber of Commerce's one-page flyer – *What To See in Leadville*. My stomach was tingling with excitement. Mike had dozed off." Mike said, "Looks like we'll be done seeing Leadville by two tomorrow afternoon. What are we going to do after that?" She had planned to see one attraction per day. He said, "We're only fifty-nine miles from Aspen. We can drive there tomorrow." She said, "Whoa Nellie! Who's vacation pick is this anyway?" Leadville was one of her favorite vacations, but the four days in Colorado seemed like four years to him. But next year it would be his turn.

Compromising helps everyone feel like they've got a good deal. You can learn to be a good team. Extroverts are the doers of the world. They need counsel from the advisors – the introverts. The advisors need warriors. Extroverts tend to take action and make things happen.

As I said, I hate talking on the phone, especially if it's something confrontational, or something that I know nothing about and don't know what questions to ask. It's a relief to me when my warrior volunteers to make these calls.

Now a word of caution. Being the advisor is all in the approach. It doesn't go over very well if you're perceived as a nag or control freak. Part of the secret to getting along as an innie/outie couple is in being willing to yield and in learning to take care of each other. We need coping skills if we're to thrive in this world full of extroverts. We can't be hermits, although it's very tempting sometimes. We need to go out and use the gifts that God has given us to serve others. So we need to know ways to take care of ourselves so that we can extrovert.

Learn to accept that you are an introvert and it's okay. You have your own set of gifts.

We were out to dinner one evening last spring, and the subject of this seminar came up, and someone asked me, "Well, what are the advantages of being an introvert?" And I said that I still wasn't sure there were any. (Laughter) And then I thought, "Well, that wasn't a very good comment considering you're going to be giving a seminar on it." So in thinking and praying on it later, I came to the conclusion that I couldn't see them as advantages because I was still having trouble accepting that I *was* an introvert, even though I *knew* I was. I wasn't accepting my limitations and appreciating or celebrating my strengths. And I'm still working on it. It takes time to change your way of thinking, especially when you're outnumbered three to one.

I think it's especially hard when your mate is an extrovert. There is a tendency for the innie to feel left out and unimportant because their outie mate connects with so many people. Given this, outie mates may want to consider making a concerted effort to spend time with their mates and show them attention before and after showering attention on others. I have found that when I don't feel neglected, I'm happy to have him spend time with others.

I've noticed that I need to remember that my husband is not a mindreader and that because we are so different, he won't always know my needs. It's nice if he can figure it out, but if he can't, I need to tell him nicely.

Learn to listen to your needs. Take time to be alone and recharge. Don't try to run on empty. That's why, in Idaho, it was good for me to stay in a motel alone and do some things by myself. For my husband, that would have been torture.

Conserve energy before social events. And don't cram activities requiring extroverting too close together.

Once we travelled to Canada to visit some friends. I was very tired from the long drive and then the extroverting required upon our arrival. The next day was the Sabbath and we would be visiting a new congregation. It was also an outset after church. A lot of people would be coming for a cookout. Have you ever wanted to just run and hide? Just jump in the bed, and pull the covers up over your head, and make the world go away? Well, that's what I did. At that time, though, I didn't know about the introverts and extroverts, so I felt guilty for doing it. But I just knew I couldn't handle it. So, as it came time to go to church, I just told my husband and our hosts that I must be coming down with something.

I just didn't feel good. I stayed in bed all day and all evening. I never did get sick and felt so much better when everyone left. I've come to realize that I just felt overwhelmed at the thought of having to meet and make casual conversation with so many strangers. I just couldn't handle it. Now I know to just bow out and explain that I'm running on empty and need to recharge my batteries.

Before attending social events, plan how to enter, exit and start a conversation. I usually think of topics to discuss with someone before I spend time with them to avoid those awkward moments of silence. Now when I gave this at our home congregation, all the extroverts were laughing. They thought, "This is ridiculous! You think about what you're going to talk about before you even go out!" But that makes *me* feel comfortable. I like to plan. If I know I'm not going to feel comfortable, I tell my husband before hand, "Let's don't stay long," or "We'll just stay twenty minutes." You can have a sign between the two of you that says, "I need to leave NOW!" And so that you can excuse yourself politely, you can have a good reason in mind for leaving.

Take breaks during a social occasion. Go hang out in the bathroom for a few minutes. Or step outside, if you prefer fresh air. It not only applies to social events, but having guests in my home is sometimes hard for me because my safe haven and place of recharging has been invaded. It's important to be able to take a break if you need one. You might consider fleeing to your bedroom, closing the door and doing some deep breathing.

I remember once we had someone visiting us, and I sensed that she was not comfortable with us yet. I felt sorry for her because she was an introvert, too. Her discomfort made me all the more tense since I didn't know her. I realized that I needed a break to get my head together, so I grabbed the key to the mailbox, and told my husband that I was going to check the mail. I was only gone two minutes, but it gave me time to gather my wits and come back smiling. It was just the break I needed.

Realize that you do not have the stamina that an extrovert does. This has been a hard one for me. Our ministry requires a lot of traveling. From the beginning I realized that I would not be able to travel as much as my husband. It made me sad to miss out. But I decided that instead of being sad, I should plan some fun things for me to do while he was gone. For me, that would be shopping, antiquing, going to a movie and buying popcorn and a soda. We never buy popcorn and soda when we go to a movie together. It's too expensive. But when I take myself, I treat myself! (Laughter) Feeling left out is a big thing for me. So before he takes a trip we always have what we call "a hot date." We do something fun together – just the two of us.

The Feast is another time when I get tired and can't do everything. So we have an agreement that my husband will ask if I wish to be included in each activity, but understands if I need not to go. That way I'm invited, but the choice is mine. Give yourself permission to socialize as an introvert. Just sit and watch if you don't feel like talking. I worry sometimes that people will think I'm unfriendly or stuck up, because when we travel, I prefer to stay in a motel instead of with people so that I can have some down time. It's not that I don't like people, or don't appreciate their hospitality. I just

need a place to go to take care of me and recharge. We innies need to set ourselves up for down time.

Learn to set your own pace – one that allows you to accomplish what you want without feeling overwhelmed or drained. Innies are easily overwhelmed by all the things we need to accomplish.

The author tells a story about a young boy who had three months to write a report on birds. He, of course, procrastinated until the day before it was due. He sat at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by paper, pencils and unopened books on birds – immobilized by the hugeness of the task. Then his father sat down beside him, put his arm around him, and said, “Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.” When I find myself being overwhelmed, I tell myself, “One thing at a time.” You can only do one thing at a time. It’s the same principle. Another way of saying it is, “Baby steps.” Just take baby steps. You’ll get there.

Set boundaries to keep your stimulation in the “just enough” range. We all have limitations. If you don’t feel like answering the phone, don’t. Monitor your calls. In the book, *Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff*, the author makes the point, “Just because someone throws the ball doesn’t mean you have to catch it.” Most of our phone calls are for the extrovert in the family, thankfully. So, if he’s not home, I just let the answering machine get it.

One of my pet peeves is someone showing up at my door without calling to ask if it’s okay to come over. That probably sounds extremely unfriendly to many – especially extroverts. But it sounds terribly inconsiderate to this introvert. I’m just not up to answering the door when that happens. I need time to prepare myself mentally for guests. I have the need to protect my space – my safe haven.

Last, but certainly not least, prayer. When I see that there is nothing I, myself, can do to rescue myself, a fervent prayer always works. And I end up using those a lot.

Last summer my husband and I, and two of my sisters and their mates, got together for a vacation in Tahoe. We were having a ball! But about the fifth day I was just feeling exhausted. And when I’m exhausted, I’m irritable. And guess who I take it out on? I thought about, maybe, just staying in the room that day and not going out. That sounded so good to me. But I don’t get to see my sisters that often and the activity that we were going to do that day was something I’d been wanting to do for years. So I grabbed the ice bucket and left the room. And on the way I started talking to God and asking Him to please give me the strength and energy I needed to be able to extrovert that day, to be nice and to enjoy the day, and let Him live through me. And it worked! I was able to go and enjoy the day. But I couldn’t have done it on my own. I needed His help. So, what do introverts contribute to the world? Extroverts can introvert just as introverts can extrovert. Some of you extroverts may have some of these qualities, too. I’m not saying you don’t. But we’re talking about introverts today.

The author makes a cute comment, and she says, “We bring important attributes to the party. Of course, we introverts would just like to drop them off and skidaddle on home.”

A surprising number of introverts interviewed by the author are in advisor class positions. They were people who work independently, like writers, ministers, therapists, historians, teachers, computer professionals, mothers, bookkeepers – to name a few. They were people who wrestle with decisions, who have had to put themselves in other people’s shoes and communicate with people.

We are creative. Many innies are artists. I love to decorate my home, do crafts. I took cake decorating classes and I also had a card making hobby for awhile.

We are imaginative. We have an innie daughter, whom, when she was little, a friend loved to invite over to entertain her daughter, because she had such a great imagination.

We are intelligent. Remember Albert Einstein from the list of famous introverts? You can’t get much more intelligent than that.

We are thoughtful. Someone I know, who is an introvert, was traveling, and she and her husband had just checked into a motel room, were unpacking their suitcases, and there came a knock at the door. She went and peeped through the peephole and couldn’t see anybody. Feeling safe, because her husband was there, she opened the door and there stood a little tow-headed boy, wet from head to toe in a bathing suit, looking for his mother’s room. He was five-years-old. He didn’t know his last name. He didn’t want to go to the front desk to see if they remembered him. He didn’t want to go back to the pool. My friend was determined to see that he got to his parents safely. So she knocked on all the doors up and down the hallway, asking strangers if they knew this little guy. Meanwhile, one of the young couples whose door she had knocked on, went to the pool and found his brother, and found out what room he was in – two floors up. He was delivered safe and sound. My friend didn’t let her anxiety about talking to strangers keep her from doing the thoughtful and right thing.

We are observers and we notice detail. Watching movies with Bill at home, I like to catch every nuance so I can figure out who done it. He likes to talk (laughter), which really prohibits me from being a good observer. So I suggest that we talk during commercials. He forgets that I suggested that. (Chuckles)

Our work often impacts many people and we have the courage and perspective to say many unpopular things. Our small congregation in Albuquerque is governed by a board. But before the board makes a decision, it gets input from the group. More than once I’ve had a different opinion. I usually get outvoted, but I feel strongly that it’s important for me to voice my unpopular opinions.

Introverts usually know themselves pretty well. By thinking about what has meaning to us and giving thought to what gets in our way, we can focus our energy on what we truly want.

LifeResource Ministries is in our home. Our living room is both of our offices. Our dining room is our mailing center. When we can afford it, we would like to have our living room and dining room back. Bill's solution is to buy a commercial building and use it for LRM and rent it out as office space. I like working at my house, so I would like to build on a workspace at the back of the house. I like being able to stay in my exercise shorts all day, if I need to, to get my work done. And I don't just crave to go to a building outside my home and interface with other people to be able to get my work done. I have no doubt that's what I want.

Introverts have the ability to focus deeply and don't like to be interrupted. My arch enemy – the phone – again. I have to focus deeply when I do my bookkeeping, seminars or writing emails. Bill and I have an agreement, since both of our offices are in the same room, that if he needs to talk on the phone, he goes into another room.

Introverts do better on tasks that require careful attention, like being an air traffic controller. Extroverts would get bored – and we'd all be in trouble!

Introverts have an understanding of how change will affect everyone involved. They can see the big picture and focus on the details.

Often, from the outside, introverts give no hint of the mental gears grinding and meshing inside. They may look impassive or uninterested. So they need to be asked what they are thinking. We have a propensity for thinking outside the box and may come up with a solution no one else has ever thought of.

We have the potential to slow the world down a notch. We like to schedule, plan and make lists. At home I have a small spiral notebook I call my PDA. At the beginning of each week, I look at my calendar and I make a list of things to do each day of the week. And as I do them, I cross them off. At the top I keep a list of things that need doing, that aren't urgent, and I add them in as I am able.

It unnerves extroverts when introverts suggest they slow things down, plan, think about consequences, and focus longer before acting. But what a mess this world would be in if we didn't.

To end, I'd like to paraphrase a section from the book titled, *Be Kind, Don't Rewind*. Introverts tend to constantly evaluate what they have said. That's what I mean by rewind. Extroverts don't rewind. Maybe that's one of the reasons they're so carefree. Tell that critical voice to "put a sock in it." If the voice says, "This shouldn't be hard for you," who is that? Though the voices in your head may seem like you, they are most likely to be created from people in your past who wanted you to behave in a certain way. Their disparaging comments were from the things *they* were uncomfortable about, not about who *you* are. Since we are already reluctant to venture out of our comfort zone and are burning fuel every second, critical voices deplete us and discourage us even more.

So when you get home, find a cute picture of yourself as a young child and sit and look at it for at least five minutes. The world is often a scary place for kids – especially introverts. Write down five things that little child needed in venturing out into an extroverting world.

Right now just get a cute picture of yourself as a child in your mind – one to five years old. Can you see yourself? So precious. So innocent. We're going to use the author's list of what she said *she* needed. She needs a hand to hold. She needs a kind, encouraging voice. She needs to be reminded that she sometimes feels uncomfortable. She needs to know ways to soothe herself. She needs to know that feelings always pass. What she *doesn't* need is criticism.

(The book referred to in this presentation is called *The Introvert Advantage*, by Marti Olsen Laney.)