



The Introverted child

You're worried: your child enjoys being alone and doesn't talk much about their feelings. Relax – there's a reason

UNDERSTAND YOUR CHILD

It's estimated that introverts make up 30% of the population. Because they're in the minority, they're often misunderstood. 'Firstly, your child may not be shy,' says psychologist Claire Newton. 'A shy child doesn't necessarily want to be alone, but is too afraid to approach and interact with other children, whereas an introverted child actually enjoys time alone.'

Get to know the person your child is. 'Introversion is a personality trait,' explains Newton. 'Many introverts have excellent social skills, but will need to be alone after engaging in social activities to recharge their emotional batteries.'

ACCEPT YOUR CHILD

Your child needs to know that they're loved and accepted, even if they're different from you. Trying to change them is not a good idea. 'Pushing your child to have a more active social life amounts to trying to change a fundamental part of who they are,' warns Newton. 'It sends a message that they aren't good enough and this may not only weaken

their self-esteem, but also your relationship with them.'

HELP YOUR CHILD COPE

'Because the qualities of extroverts are valued more than those of introverts, introverts often feel out of place and may need to develop extra coping skills to help them feel good about who they are,' asserts Newton.

As a parent, you can help by scheduling downtime every day for your child. 'Create a private space for your introvert to retreat into,' she suggests. Be careful not to over-schedule, too. 'Limit the number of activities you do and build in rest time in-between.'

If your child is going to a social event, talk about it beforehand – who will be there, where it will be – so that they feel prepared. Try to get there early so that your child can observe for a bit and feel settled when the guests start arriving.

TAKE TIME TO LISTEN

Parents of introverted kids can find it's hard to get them to open up. That's because introverts

often don't like talking about their feelings. Planning one-on-one time with them can help create a safe space for them to talk to you.

'Try to listen attentively when they do open up and reflect back to them what they are thinking. 'Introverts tend to have hidden sides,' says Newton, 'so parents need to make the effort to reach beyond the surface to discover what their child's gifts are. □

INTROVERTED KIDS

- Communicate best one-on-one
- Are good listeners
- Seek solitude for renewal
- Need time to ponder questions before answering
- Often prefer not to share their emotions
- Have high self-awareness
- Learn well through observation
- Are quiet in large social settings
- Concentrate deeply
- See inner reflection as very important
- Select activities carefully and thoughtfully