
Hunter Walk

99% Humble, 1% Brag

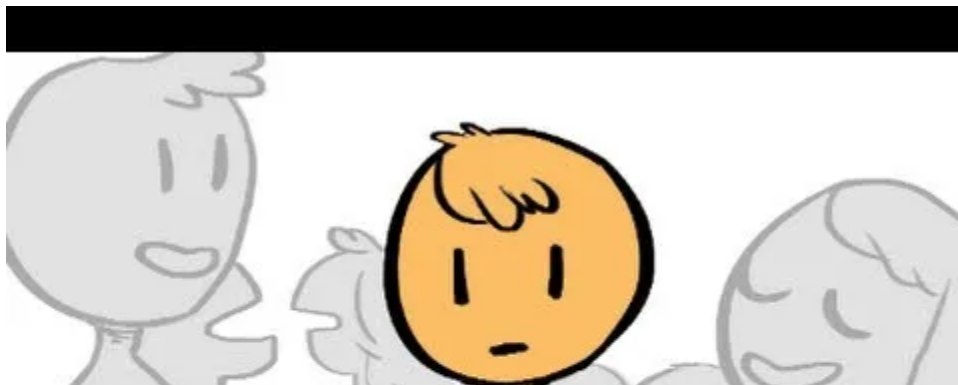
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How This Anxious Introvert Handles Large Events

Posted on [October 2, 2017](#) by [hunterwalk](#)

If you only *kinda* know me you might think I'm a confident extrovert, but if you **really really** know me, it's more clear: I'm an introvert, and one who gets slightly anxious during prolonged exposure to large groups. Introversion isn't shyness and it's not a like or dislike of people generally. For example, I really enjoy public speaking. Introversion is quintessentially "does being around other people give you energy or take energy away?" Introverts can be proverbial life of the party but then need time alone to recharge.

My own introversion is compounded by low level anxiety in large group settings, especially when the social dynamics start to approximate high school – you know, groups of people, some of whom know each other and others who don't. A bit of hierarchy and peacocking starting to play out, alcohol flowing (I don't drink much).





Over time, and in the interest of self-care, here's how I've approached my own expectations and behaviors at events, especially day-long or multi-day conferences:

A. Depth Not Breadth When Meeting New People at Conferences: The routine went like this – end up at a conference with 100+ amazing people. Assume that “doing a good job” meant meeting and impressing all of them. Then beat myself up when I retreated from this goal after shaking a bunch of hands and finding myself unfulfilled, exhausted. So I changed my definition of success. It's fine if I end up seeing a bunch of people but, really, if I can have meaningful conversations with just five, 10, 15 people over the course of a day, that's a win.

B. When I Feel Ready to Ghost, Stay 30m Longer: Before I'd quietly slip away whenever I felt the first tingles of “uh I don't want to be here anymore.” Now I recognize that impulse, honor it, exhale and see if I'm cool staying another 30 minutes. Once I do this check-in I'm totally ok bouncing after 30 if that's still the way I'm feeling, but often I'll end up hanging out much longer without even knowing it.

C. Take 30-60 Minute Recharges: Look for points in the schedule where it's ok for me to go take a walk, grab a coffee, take a shower or exercise. Things that put me in another headspace and recharge me. Yeah so it's not that I wasn't interested in your panel topic, it's that I needed some Hunter time.

D. Pull People Aside for 1:1s: As [Joe Greenstein](#) knows from an annual conference we both attend, I'm a big fan of catching up over a 1:1 walk, even offsite from the event. I find this technique especially good at evening events where instead of a loud noisy drinking circle, I'll find someone I wanted to spend time with and we'll find a location to just sit and chat for 20-30 minutes before releasing back into the frenzy.

E. Don't Go In the First Place: With [Homebrew](#), Satya and I kind of 'divide and conquer' when it

comes to events, and we're more likely to both decide not to go to something versus "arguing" over who should attend a fancy event. When we do both attend the joke is that I'm good 6am to 4pm and he then takes over 5pm to 2am. Near 24/7 coverage! But the pressure that I might have felt 10-15 years ago to attend every conference is gone. And you know what, the types of early stage founders we tend to resonate with most substantially aren't on the conference circuit either. So instead of taking that week-long international trip, I'm in SF putting sweat behind our investments or meeting founders back home. Investing is generally about being self-aware enough to run your own playbook and pushing yourself when you need to, but not being all things to all people.



How about the other anxious introverts out there – what are your strategies for conferences and events?

Suggestions from the Crowd:

- Get attendee lists in advance to identify folks you know who are attending or people with whom you have mutual friends/interests
- Asking people I know at the event to introduce me to people I don't. Even if I only know 1 person at first, this lets me have many convos...
- Also use a buddy system – Bringing a guest puts me at ease and makes it easier to meet new people

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