

There's a slew of helpful information out there for functioning in everyday life as an introvert: hanging out with friends, dating or even making it through the day at work. What about the next phase of life though? The phase where you find yourself in what would be considered a miracle in the world of introverts — you have a family of your own. The first few years are easy as you somehow manage to avoid any unnecessary social situations and maybe squeeze in a game of Call of Duty here and there. Then in the blink of an eye your child has now evolved from toddler to kid and is excited about their birthday coming up because this year they are inviting friends. You on the other hand are sweating bullets because you realize that other kids coming could only mean one thing – socializing with parents about bullshit.

Keep calm, there's no need to panic. Well, there is, but you can breathe a little easier with these helpful tips to help you navigate those tricky social situations without seeming too awkward.

PICK ONE PERSON AND TALK TO THEM

This sounds like the last thing to ask an introvert to do, but keep reading. Talking with several in a group chat type of setting can be downright overwhelming and sometimes terrifying, but talking with one person is a little more manageable. Use your introverted skills of observation and listening to scope out the one person at this gathering that you feel would be least likely to make you mentally repeat to yourself, "Oh God, please make it stop." When you narrow it down, just jump right in and start talking. You can even try to introduce a topic that you like talking about to make the conversation that much easier. It's about keeping your stress level to a minimum while looking like a sociable human being. Make sure you're heavily involved in the topic to detract other people from wanting to join in unless they are as creepily obsessed with the subject as you are clearly showing.

Sometimes there's that one person that has to join in, but it's all good. Embrace it and keep enjoying the conversation for as long as you're comfortable. Here's why, the second it feels like your nerves can't take it anymore, use this convo infiltrator to keep the first person you were talking to entertained as you subtly bow out of the conversation. A serious and concerned look on your face while looking at something random off in the distance seems to do the trick most of the time. Maybe your spouse or child needs you for something. Oh no, is that a safety hazard in progress? Who knows, but who cares, they won't think twice about stopping you from leaving the conversation to attend to something that clearly must be this urgent.

LOOK BUSY

The ironic key to this tip is the bigger the birthday party, the better, because today you're going to be a perfectionist. You will go over everything throughout the party with a fine tooth comb and an immaculate eye for the most minute and insignificant details. Check each cooler three times to make sure there are enough drinks for everyone and take some extra time to find that one soda you knew for sure was in there. As a side note, you didn't actually buy the soda you're

looking for, but your guests don't know that. From there, head on inside to check the quality of the pizza. It's even better if you're cooking something else as well that requires constant monitoring. Check the timing on the oven. You don't just want to make sure nothing gets burnt, but also that your lasagna is so good, Chef Gordon Ramsay would offer you a job on the spot. Don't forget to check every inch on that bouncy house you rented as well. You don't want there to be any damage to it lest the company you rented it from makes you pay extra. Sure, guests may leave wondering why they didn't get to talk to you for most of the party, but they'll definitely know who they're calling when they need an event planner.

TIME TO TAP OUT

Marriage is a team sport where you need to rely on each other and adjust according to each other's strengths and weaknesses. Sit down with your spouse and have a game plan ready before the party starts. If you become enraptured in the fantasy of sitting underneath a tree reading a great horror book only to realize a parent has been talking to you for the last 20 minutes, maybe it's time for a tap out. Casually turn and talk to your spouse when they're nearby and include a code word you both came up with earlier. If it goes according to plan, you have now been repositioned as the task master for the party, while your spouse has taken on the role of being the social host or hostess. Remember you're tapping out for 15 minutes, not the rest of the day, especially if your spouse is introverted as well. Be there for them the same way they're there for you no matter how tempting it is to stay inside and awkwardly observe everyone from the window.

Birthdays are some of the key moments our children remember when looking back on their childhood. There are no lengths we won't go to as parents to make sure that every one of them is special, even if that means pushing ourselves past our own social boundaries. That doesn't mean we can't at least make the day bearable for ourselves. If your child has a birthday party coming up soon and the idea of talking to someone starts to make you sweat as the date approaches, try utilizing all of these tips. Just make sure to use your sarcasm sparingly.