

**THE
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OF
OPPOSITES
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**HOW INTROVERTS AND EXTROVERTS
ACHIEVE EXTRAORDINARY
RESULTS TOGETHER**

JENNIFER B. KAHNWEILER, PHD

*Bestselling Author of *The Introverted Leader* and *Quiet Influence**

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ONLINE SUMMIT

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The Genius of **Opposites**

How Introverts and Extroverts
Achieve Extraordinary Results
Together

Jennifer B. Kahnweiler, PhD



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The Genius of Opposites

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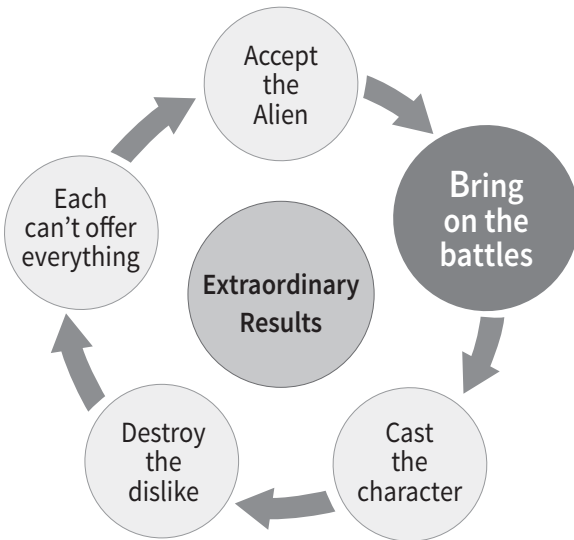
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Chapter 4

Bring on the Battles

“We often hate each other, but it’s the kind of hatred that’s like flint and steel—the sparks that come out make it worth the while.”¹¹

—Penn Jillette on his long-time partner in magic, Teller



Bring on the Battles—see disagreement as necessary to arrive at better outcomes because you challenge each other to come up with better solutions together than you would alone.

Back in 1956, Dr. Alice Mary Stewart, a physician and epidemiologist, came out with a shocking article published by the British medical journal *The Lancet*. Her article cited data showing that the X-rays taken of pregnant mothers actually caused childhood cancer. Sadly, the medical establishment did not immediately act upon her findings. Instead, it took twenty-five years for doctors to stop X-raying pregnant women.

Through those years, she worked closely with George Kneale, a statistician who was instrumental to her success. He helped her to fuel her determination and persistence, leading to the eventual ending of a tragically harmful medical practice.

In her TED Talk, Dare to Disagree,¹² management thinker Margaret Heffernan said, “So for twenty-five years, Alice Stewart had a very big fight on her hands. So how did she know that she was right? George Kneale was pretty much everything that Alice wasn’t. Alice was very outgoing and sociable, and George was a recluse. Alice was very warm and empathetic with her patients. George frankly preferred numbers to people. But he said this fantastic thing about their working relationship: “My job is to prove Dr. Stewart wrong.” He actively sought disconfirmation. He used different ways of looking at her models, at her statistics, different ways of crunching the data in order to disprove her. He saw his job as creating conflict around her theories. By creating pushback,

George sharpened her thinking and made her theory more convincing.

Successful opposites use their differences to challenge each other's conventional thinking and blast apart their assumptions. Like opposites Alice and George, they bring on the battles, and the world benefits from the results of their genius.

Why Bringing on the Battles Matters

It's Best for the Organization

Introverts and extroverts who work well together are fortunate. They can pull out the best thinking from each other, like blending two brains into one. They push toward each other, pull away from each other, and eventually reach a resolution that incorporates different views. Extrovert Betsy Polk and introvert Maggie Ellis Chotas are authors of *Power Through Partnership: How Women Lead Better Together*. They write about the value of dealing with their conflicts head-on. "We've come to realize that even in the toughest tug of wars we want what is best for Mulberry [their firm] and each other."¹³

You Reach a Better Solution

Successful opposites learn to dance with each other by playing to each preference when facing potential conflict. Introverted Ricardo and his extroverted business partner Jose described a recent conflict about whether to add an

assessment tool to their online business's offerings. They had run the idea for the service by their prime client, who expressed interest in learning more.

Jose had a lot of ideas about how this tool could work and was energized by the possibilities. All he wanted to do was talk about it. Ricardo, typically the more cautious of the two, wasn't sure they could deliver the service with the stated customer requirements. Both men could feel the temperature rising as they gave voice to their differing views.

They each approached the next steps using their strengths. Jose knew that more talk would overwhelm Ricardo, who was mulling over the plan, so he grabbed another colleague, a "talking partner," to give voice to his ideas and pop out solutions. Ricardo, on the other hand, went to his work area alone for a few days and mapped out the process, including a timetable and potential risks. Though Jose was ready to pull the trigger and Ricardo needed more time, they avoided a blow-up and emerged with a terrific solution. The client signed off on the new service. By bringing on the battle in a way that catered to their opposite styles, this team drew a clear win.

Disagreements Can Be Paths to Your Outcome

Successful opposites accept that decisions come with conflict and that conflict is normal, natural, and necessary.

They know that disagreements open the path to an outcome. When you walk through business problems together, it isn't a linear process. You may get stuck on one disagreement for a while before you can move on. Successful opposites get that.

Even long-time best work buddies like Ricky Woolverton, an extroverted inside sales manager, and Liz Braden, an introverted training director, have disagreements. Back when they started working together, the company president matched them up hoping to balance out their personalities. And it worked until one time. "I was supervising Ricky, and I was forced to run a tight ship. He thought it was okay to take a salesman to the airport when he was supposed to be on the phones and decided to ignore my direction." As an extrovert, Ricky took action without mulling it over, and as an introvert Liz kept her feelings inside. "We were mad at each other for a week."

Talking about the situation after it occurred allowed them both to move on and be more productive. Their communication has vastly improved since then. Liz has learned from Ricky and through interpersonal skills training to see the necessity of conflict. She is less afraid of it. "Now, I take that extra minute and ask myself, 'Where is that person coming from?'" she said.

Extroverted Ricky agreed to speak in lower tones and actually listen to what Liz is requesting of him.

It continues to work well as a way to manage their disagreements.



How Bringing on the Battles Breaks Down

Seeing One Partner as More Important

Former auto executive Robert Lutz described his work with opposite Robert Eaton, CEO of Chrysler from 1993 to 1998, in the language of an extrovert describing an introvert. Lutz wrote, “A gentle leader of modest charisma and command presence . . . Bob [Eaton] was experienced, polite, well-spoken, and knew the business. He showed the mature, calm confidence and self-assured manner that had been honed in decades of facing upward and looking good at GM. We (Lutz and Eaton) had a good sharing of responsibilities.”¹⁴ Together they made a great deal of money for the company.

The next chapter in Chrysler’s history was very different. Benz-Daimler and Chrysler combined the firms in 1998, and a new CEO, Jurgen Schrempp, came on board. Lutz wrote that Schrempp “was a tall man with a powerful, commanding physique and a stentorian voice . . . a brash giant.” It was apparent that this new leader saw himself as more important.

“It was pretty clear that this was not going to be a jointly run company.” Lutz watched these opposites have problems from the start, ending with Eaton’s departure. In summing up that unfortunate chapter, Lutz said that

Eaton “ran a great company . . . and created enormous wealth for Chrysler’s shareholders,” but “Bob Eaton had his reputation unfairly tarnished.”

Extrovert Lutz valued introvert Eaton’s quiet contributions and the opposites thrived, but Eaton’s next partner either couldn’t or wouldn’t see his introverted partner as an equal.

Hiding Your Concerns

Kendra is an introverted lawyer and was a new mom working on a big case. Her extroverted business partner Carolyn’s patience was being tested. Kendra’s breastfeeding breaks, hormone rollercoaster rides, and leaving work early to arrive at the daycare center before closing were becoming the norm. Carolyn often found herself picking up the pieces from Kendra’s tasks and clocking up to two additional late nights a week.

Carolyn expressed frustration about the clients’ increasing demands and started taking out her anger on other people in the firm. Kendra knew she was not pulling her weight and felt stressed and guilty about her role in the situation. As an introvert, she internalized her concerns and kept them buried. The problem was that neither of them brought up the elephant in the room—the workload imbalance. After they blew an important client deadline, Carolyn and Kendra met one evening over a glass of wine and ended up talking for four hours,

honestly airing their emotions and concerns. They brainstormed solutions to the workload issues and eventually came up with an agreement they both could live with.

Acknowledging that their goal was to meet their clients' needs, they put together a strong case to the senior partner for temporary help. This solution made all the difference and repaired their strained relationship.

Under stress, we often act out in ways that are not helpful to resolving conflict. As an introvert, Kendra internalized her feelings and did not bring up the issues between them, while Carolyn acted out passive aggressively. Neither approach helped resolve the conflicts, even when they both wanted to reach the same outcome—to serve the client in the best way possible.

Losing Sight of Your Shared Vision

One introvert/extrovert married couple I interviewed, Achir, an introverted woman and Ishar, an extroverted man, are business owners originally from India. They built a printing business together in Washington, DC. They are moderately profitable and always incorporating new technology into the business. They each began working together with the hope of building a better life and providing for their family. Although they are proud of what they have accomplished, they have been through a lot to get there.

Individually, they each told me about some of the stressors that took them away from their vision of

creating a strong family business; one that adapted to the changing printing industry. The pressure to keep up with technology was a major stressor.

Achir described disagreements between them about new purchases for the business. Ishar admitted that he sometimes plunged ahead without consulting his spouse on what he considered necessary investments. As an introvert and influenced by her cultural influences (for example, don't bring up conflict), Achir kept her feelings inside and said, "I don't want to dwell on our disagreements too much." But the problem was her feelings would pile up.

These mutual hurts and misunderstandings moved them further from their shared vision of creating a dynamic business that could support their family. It would have helped them to bring the battle to each other. One can't help wonder how directly dealing with their frustrations and conflicts might have opened up even greater possibilities for strategic growth and personal satisfaction from their business.

Solutions: To Help You Bring on the Battle

Remember Energy Differences

Accept that your partner's introverted energy may wane from too much people time working on conflict resolution, or your extroverted colleague's buzz might get her too hyped up when conflict emerges. Remember that

introverts need to carefully consider ideas in their head before speaking, and extroverts are ready to *get moving* already. Also consider that your introvert will need breaks and your extrovert will deflate with too much downtime.

Tell 'Em What You Need

You can set the foundation for clear communication when you bring on the battles. Let your partner know specifically what you need.

Self-described “raging extrovert” Lisa McLeod is a sales leadership consultant and author. She and her introverted business partner and husband, Bob McLeod, avoid flare-ups by stating what they require in the moment. As Lisa puts it, “I am a verbal processor and I need to talk. I depend on Bob for my energy.” She understands that when she is calling from out of town and he doesn’t answer he is in his introverted space. And when she does connect with Bob, Lisa is very clear about saying, “I need a half-hour to talk about it. Is now a good time?” If it is not, he’ll say, “Not now,” instead of “No.” She says, “I know it is not a personal rejection, and we will reconvene when he is better able to focus.”

Manage Crises Together

When the inevitable crises occur, put your heads together and figure out a way through. That often means drawing on the partner in the pair who is better suited to meet the problem at hand.

Table 4.1 Helpful Questions for Bringing on the Battle

When to Ask	What to Ask
Before a conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is it I really want? ▪ Do I understand what my partner really wants? ▪ How invested am I in the outcome? How invested is my partner?
During a conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do I allow my introverted partner to communicate with me in writing and one-on-one conversations? ▪ Do I allow my extroverted partner to communicate with me through talking things out? ▪ Am I letting my emotions hijack my rational thinking? Am I letting my rational thinking hijack my emotions? ▪ Are we taking time-outs during our discussion of the problem? ▪ Does it make sense to bring in an outside person to help us resolve the disagreement? Who might that be? ▪ Does it make sense to agree on a trial solution first? ▪ Have we set a date to implement the solution? ▪ When will we meet again?
After a conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How is the solution working? ▪ What should we tweak? ▪ What have we learned from this experience? ▪ What should we do differently the next time a conflict arises?

Anthony, the co-founder of the Australian online training company, said that one time they were stuck in the “stuff” of the problem and not dealing with a client problem at a higher relationship level. This was clearly his extroverted partner Errol’s turf. Errol picked up the phone and arranged to see the client immediately. By taking full responsibility for where things had gone wrong, Errol defused the situation and got the relationship back on track. The client went from being one of the pair’s most troublesome, stressful clients to being one of their most loyal.

Bring in a Third Party to Break Through an Impasse

When my introverted spouse, Bill, and I were writing our first book together, we reached one of several impasses: managing the timeline. In typical fashion, Bill was way ahead of me on his section of the manuscript. After several unproductive conversations, we decided to call our editor in Cambridge, England. I can hear Ailsa’s calming voice now as she gently suggested to Bill that he relax and I “get moving.” Turning to an objective outsider helped us break the tension and start communicating more civilly again. We finished on time, though not without a few more impasses and calls to England. Turning to Ailsa was a strategic move for us. It took a third party to help us get unstuck and see a way forward.

Take a Time-Out

Michael, an extroverted salesperson, was getting little visible reaction from his sales team partner, Derrick. He kicked it into high gear to try even harder to convince Derrick why they needed to purchase more product to sell. Unfortunately, Michael's "passionate entreaties" had the opposite effect, and Derrick walked away from the discussion.

When Michael dialed down his behavior by taking a breath and listening to Derrick's concerns, he could address them one by one, and the partners had a rational problem-solving session.

You may be together a great deal in the beginning of your partnership or at critical points throughout. But too much time together means you can get lost in the duo and lose your sense of self as well as your unique point of view.

You can also definitely get tired of each other. Ask any retired couple who find themselves together all day! Sometimes taking a time-out is the best workaround to help you regroup and reconvene, ready to engage with a clear head and heart.

As mentioned in the chapter on Accepting the Alien, during conflict and stress we exaggerate our strengths. For instance, it is natural to talk more often and louder as an extrovert or retreat into yourself as an introvert. Resist the tendency to amplify your natural traits. Take a few moments to stop and think. Even a few minutes of quiet

will help you consider your next step. And, by the way . . . it may be to do nothing!

Walk and Talk

Consider moving your conversation outside the doors of your office. This strategy serves the needs of both extroverts and introverts. Why? Extroverts think aloud, and talking out their ideas while walking around helps them gain clarity about their positions. They can also ask questions of their partners without seeming like a prosecuting attorney with the introvert on the witness stand. Introverts will respond to the relaxed pace. They also will conserve energy by not having to concentrate on making eye contact and other in-your-face listening behaviors.

When you let the juices flow by getting up and moving, new ideas spring up and you will see solutions together. Thought leader and a proponent of these walking meetings, Nilofer Merchant, writes, “After a few hundred of these meetings, I’ve started noticing some unanticipated side benefits. . . . I can actually listen better when I am walking next to someone than when I’m across from them in some coffee shop. There’s something about being side-by-side that puts the problem or ideas before us, and us working on it together.”¹⁵

Summary: Bringing on the Battles Can Preempt a War

In the hands of committed opposites, bringing on the battles can lead to original solutions and breakthroughs that benefit opposites and their clients. Conflict-facing skills include honoring what energizes each partner, talking about what each of you needs, dealing with crises together, and turning to a third party when necessary. It also means taking a time-out, and even talking about the conflict while walking beside each other rather than when facing each other. The more high stakes the situation, the more important it is for opposites to bring on the battles as an outcome-focused team.

Questions to Consider

1. How do you take opportunities to challenge your opposite's thinking?
2. In what ways do you use your individual strengths to handle crises?
3. Do you consider your partner's introvert or extrovert preferences when approaching him or her with sensitive information?
4. What are the ways in which you carve out regular talk time?
5. When can you bring in a third party to resolve conflict?

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