



Am I an Internalizer or an Externalizer?

A Self-Discovery Tool for Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents

Created by Women's Therapy Centre



This tool is designed to help you gently explore the emotional survival strategies you may have developed as a result of emotionally immature parenting. This is not a diagnosis—just a starting point for self-awareness and reflection.



Quick Check-In – Internalizer or Externalizer?

Which of the following apply to you most of the time? Remember, this is a way to check-in and reflect.

◇ *Internalizer Traits*

- I often suppress my feelings to avoid conflict
- I take on responsibility for others' emotions
- I fear being seen as “too much” or “needy”
- I constantly scan for others' moods before expressing myself
- I try to make things perfect to feel safe
- I feel anxious or guilty when setting boundaries
- I rarely ask for help, even when I need it

◇ *Externalizer Traits*

- I react strongly when I feel unheard or dismissed
- I often feel like others are to blame for my stress
- I have a hard time calming down during conflict
- I need others to change so I can feel okay
- I often feel frustrated or misunderstood
- I seek control or certainty when anxious
- I tend to act out or shut down under pressure

Mostly Internalizer?

You may have learned to survive by turning inward—silencing your needs and focusing on pleasing others. This often develops in homes where emotional expression wasn't welcome, and where safety came from being invisible or “easy.”

Mostly Externalizer?

You may have learned to express pain outward—through control, blame, or strong emotion—especially if your home modeled chaos, denial, or rejection of responsibility.

A Mix of Both?

Many people carry traits from both. You might shut down in some relationships and lash out in others. This tool is a guide—not a box. Your emotional habits are part of your story, not your identity.

What Now? How to Use This Insight

- Begin tracking your triggers: When do you internalize? When do you externalize?
- Practice saying: “This was a strategy I learned. I get to choose a new one.”
- Consider journaling or bringing your reflections to therapy
- Reminder: This pattern was adaptive—not shameful.