

# Profile of the ESFJ (Provider / Caregiver)

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This document contains detailed information about the *ESFJ* Jung personality profile. The content references concepts already mentioned in the document called *Understanding your Personality Assessment Results*, which can be found on the [Digital Citizen](#) website. If you are reading this and do not understand some of the content, please refer to the referenced document.

This personality profile comes with the following analysis:

- Portraits (summaries)
- Traits, strengths and weaknesses
- Possible career paths
- Relationships (strengths, weaknesses, lovers, Parents, friends)
- Personal growth (success, happiness, problems, solutions, rules to live by)

The analyses here combine work done by Carl Jung, Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, and David Keirsey. Myers & Briggs built their work on Jung's, and Keirsey expanded and revised some of their work. At times, the outcomes conflict in small ways, and they are noted. However, all their works are presented for you to embrace whichever appeals to you.

A read of the Keirsey Temperament documents, found on the [Digital Citizen](#) website, is highly recommended if you want to know more about a profile's tendencies beyond what is here. The document you want is the one with Preference letters found in the profile you want.

## Words of Caution in Interpreting This Material

The biggest mistake I often see with the presentation of personality assessment results is that they are spoken of in absolute terms, when they should be discussed as majority tendencies.

You got a percentage score with each of your Jung type preferences (letter) if you took the test I supplied. That score is an indication of how strong you have those tendencies. A 75% score on Thinking, for example, means you rely on Thinking about 75% of the time to make decisions rather than Feelings. But it also means you use or value Feelings 25% of the time, rather than that you are a Thinking decision-maker all of the time. You have to keep these percentages in mind when interpreting this content as it may apply to you or someone else.

Do **NOT** compare your percentage scores with someone else's as if they were absolute. That is, if you had a 75% Thinking score, that does not mean you are more logical than someone with a 65% Thinking score. The best way I can think to illustrate this is with an analogy. Your percentage is like how you break up *your* "pie", where the whole is both Preferences (Thinking and Feeling here). Someone could have a 55% Thinking score & be more logical in their decision-making than you. That's because *their* "pie" might be bigger than yours. They may put more of, both, Thinking and Feeling, into their decision-making, or may be capable of more complex logical decision-making than you. They just don't rely on Thinking 75% of the time like you. That's all those percentages mean, so keep your % scores only for your own comparison.

While it may more convenient, less convoluted and more convincing to discuss your results in absolute terms, it is not true. People are complex and there's no way of "dumbing them down" to understand them. All that does is either create misunderstandings or skepticism in the results.

## Use the Results as a Starting Point, Not an End Point

Jung's personality type results are generalized, so they can be used as prejudice if you use them as an end point to judge others. This is true if you use the results to judge individuals and condemn them to certain behaviours *all* of the time, when you know it is only true more times than not. It is also unfair to expect all people of a certain personality type to all behave the same way given a certain situation, as each has freedom to behave any way in any certain situations.

Humans are not preprogrammed machines. We do not behave with absolute consistency. We just have tendencies. We are creatures of habit, not logic. As a result, use the Jung personality type results as a starting point to understand each other, not an end point to condemn each other.

### Portrait I – The Provider

In the Keirsey Temperament version of the Jung personality type system, the *ESFJ* profile is known as the *Provider*. Here is Keirsey's description.

Providers take it upon themselves to insure the health and welfare of those in their care, but they are also the most sociable of all the Guardians, and thus are the great nurturers of social institutions such as schools, churches, social clubs, and civic groups. Providers are very likely more than ten percent of the population, and this is fortunate for the rest of us, because friendly social service is a key to their nature. Wherever they go, Providers happily give their time and energy to make sure that the needs of others are met, and that social functions are a success.

Highly cooperative themselves, Providers are skilled in maintaining teamwork among their helpers, and are also tireless in their attention to the details of furnishing goods and services. They make excellent chairpersons in charge of dances, banquets, class reunions, charity fundraisers, and the like. They are without peer as masters of ceremonies, able to speak publicly with ease and confidence. And they are outstanding hosts or hostesses, knowing everyone by name, and seemingly aware of what everyone's been doing. Providers love to entertain, and are always concerned about the needs of their guests, wanting to make sure that all are involved and provided for.

Friendly, outgoing, neighborly – in a word, Providers are gregarious, so much so that they can become restless when isolated from people. They love to talk with others, and will often strike up a conversation with strangers and chat pleasantly about any topic that comes to mind. Friendships matter a great deal to Providers, and their conversations with friends often touch on good times from years past. Family traditions are also sacred to them, and they carefully observe birthdays and anniversaries. In addition, Providers show a delightful fascination with news of their friends and neighbors. If we wish to know what's been going on in the local community, school, or church, they're happy to fill us in on all the details.

Providers are extremely sensitive to the feelings of others, which makes them perhaps the most sympathetic of all the types, but which also leaves them somewhat self-conscious, that is, highly sensitive to what others think of them. Loving and affectionate themselves, they need to be loved in return. In fact, Providers can be crushed by personal criticism, and are happiest when given ample appreciation both for themselves personally and for the tireless service they give to others.

## Portrait II – The Caregiver

The *ESFJ* profile is also often called the *Caregiver*. This is how the *ESFJ* profile is also often summarized.

As an *ESFJ*, your primary mode of living is focused externally, where you deal with things according to how you feel about them, or how they fit in with your personal value system. Your secondary mode is internal, where you take things in via your senses in a literal, concrete fashion.

*ESFJs* are people persons – they love people. They are warmly interested in others. They use their Sensing and Judging characteristics to gather specific, detailed information about others, and turn this information into supportive judgments. They want to like people, and have a special skill at bringing out the best in others. They are extremely good at reading others, and understanding their point of view. The *ESFJ*'s strong desire to be liked and for everything to be pleasant makes them highly supportive of others. People like to be around *ESFJs*, because the *ESFJ* has a special gift of invariably making people feel good about themselves.

The *ESFJ* takes their responsibilities very seriously, and is very dependable. They value security and stability, and have a strong focus on the details of life. They see before others do what needs to be done, and do whatever it takes to make sure that it gets done. They enjoy these types of tasks, and are extremely good at them.

*ESFJs* are warm and energetic. They need approval from others to feel good about themselves. They are hurt by indifference & don't understand unkindness. They are very giving people, who get a lot of their personal satisfaction from the happiness of others. They want to be appreciated for who they are, and what they give. They're very sensitive to others, and freely give practical care. *ESFJs* are such caring individuals, that they sometimes have a hard time seeing or accepting a difficult truth about someone they care about.

With Extraverted Feeling dominating their personality, *ESFJs* are focused on reading other people. They have a strong need to be liked, and to be in control. They are extremely good at reading others, and often change their own manner to be more pleasing to whoever they're with at the moment.

The *ESFJ*'s value system is defined externally. They usually have very well-formed ideas about the way things should be, and are not shy about expressing these opinions. However, they weigh their values and morals against the world around them, rather than against an internal value system. They may have a strong moral code, but it is defined by the community that they live in, rather than by any strongly felt internal values.

*ESFJs* who have had the benefit of being raised and surrounded by a strong value system that is ethical and centered around genuine goodness will most likely be the kindest, most generous souls who will gladly give you the shirt off of their back without a second thought. For these individuals, the selfless quality of their personality type is genuine and pure. *ESFJs* who have not had the advantage of developing their own values by weighing them against a good external value system may develop very questionable values. In such cases, the *ESFJ* most often genuinely believes in the integrity of their skewed value system. They have no internal understanding

of values to set them straight. In weighing their values against our society, they find plenty of support for whatever moral transgression they wish to justify. This type of ESFJ is a dangerous person indeed. Extraverted Feeling drives them to control and manipulate, and their lack of iNtuition prevents them from seeing the big picture. They're usually quite popular and good with people, and good at manipulating them. Unlike their ENFJ cousin, they don't have iNtuition to help them understand the real consequences of their actions. They are driven to manipulate others to achieve their own ends, yet they believe that they are following a solid moral code of conduct.

All ESFJs have a natural tendency to want to control their environment. Their dominant function demands structure and organization, and seeks closure. ESFJs are most comfortable with structured environments. They're not likely to enjoy having to do things which involve abstract, theoretical concepts, or impersonal analysis. They do enjoy creating order and structure, and are very good at tasks which require these kinds of skills. ESFJs should be careful about controlling people in their lives who do not wish to be controlled.

ESFJs respect and believe in the laws and rules of authority, and believe that others should do so as well. They're traditional, and prefer to do things in the established way, rather than venturing into uncharted territory. Their need for security drives their ready acceptance and adherence to the policies of the established system. This tendency may cause them to sometimes blindly accept rules without questioning or understanding them.

An ESFJ who has developed in a less than ideal way may be prone to being quite insecure, and focus all of their attention on pleasing others. He or she might also be very controlling, or overly sensitive, imagining bad intentions when there weren't any.

ESFJs incorporate many of the traits that are associated with women in our society. However, male ESFJs will usually not appear feminine at all. On the contrary, ESFJs are typically quite conscious about gender roles and will be most comfortable playing a role that suits their gender in our society. Male ESFJs will be quite masculine (albeit sensitive when you get to know them), and female ESFJs will be very feminine.

ESFJs at their best are warm, sympathetic, helpful, cooperative, tactful, down-to-earth, practical, thorough, consistent, organized, enthusiastic, and energetic. They enjoy tradition and security, and will seek stable lives that are rich in contact with friends and family.

## Jungian Preference Ordering

- **Dominant:** Extraverted Feeling
- **Auxiliary:** Introverted Sensing
- **Tertiary:** Extraverted iNtuition
- **Inferior:** Introverted Thinking

## Famous Protectors

- Sam Walton
- Martha Stewart
- Ray Kroc
- Barbara Walters
- Dave Thomas
- Dolley Madison
- William Howard Taft
- Louis B. Mayer
- Ed Sullivan

## ESFJ Traits, Strengths and Weaknesses

Whether you're a young adult trying to find your place in the world, or a not-so-young adult trying to find out if you're moving along the right path, it's important to understand yourself and the personality traits which will impact your likeliness to succeed or fail at various careers. It's equally important to understand what is really important to you. When armed with an understanding of your strengths and weaknesses, and an awareness of what you truly value, you are in an excellent position to pick a career which you will find rewarding.

ESFJs generally have the following traits:

- Organized
- Loyal
- Can be depended on to follow things through to completion
- Enjoy creating order, structure and schedules
- Enjoy interacting with people
- Warm-hearted and sympathetic
- Tend to put others' needs above their own
- Very good at giving practical care
- Very cooperative, good team members
- Practical and down-to-earth
- Value peaceful living and security
- Enjoy variety, but work well with routine tasks
- Need approval from others
- Receive satisfaction from giving to others
- Live in the here and now - dislike theorizing about the future

The ESFJ has two primary traits which will help define their best career direction. One, they are extremely organized and enjoy creating order. And two, much of their self-satisfaction is gotten through giving and helping others. Accordingly, they will do well at tasks which involve creating or maintaining order and structure, and they will be happiest when they are serving others.

## Career Suggestions for the ESFJ

Research has shown that many of the different Personality Types tend to have distinct preferences in their choice of careers. We have incorporated observations of each type's character traits which affect career choice along with some suggestions for possible directions. We have also included lists of actual careers which the various types have chosen in their lives.

This material is provided for your reference, and is intended to be an informational guide. It does not comprise a complete analysis of ideal careers for individuals & does not guarantee success or failure at any occupation. As we know, individuals vary greatly. However, we highly encourage personal self-knowledge & research in your quest to live up to your fullest, and for this reason we provide you with this information. For a complete & personal evaluation of career possibilities, you should speak with a career guidance counselor.

- Home Economics
- Nursing
- Teaching
- Administrators
- Child Care
- Family Practice Physician
- Clergy or other religious work
- Office Managers
- Counselors / Social Work
- Bookkeeping / Accounting
- Administrative Assistants

## Personality and Relationships

*“And above all, have fervent love for one another: for love shall cover the multitude of sins.”*

– Peter 4:8

Most of us are probably allured by the attractive notion that effortless relationships exist. Whether it be happily-ever-after marriages, or friendships which last forever, or parent/child bonds which supersede the need to understand each other, we’d all like to believe that our most intimate relationships are unconditional, and strong enough to withstand whatever may come. However, at some point in our lives most of us need to face the fact that relationships require effort to keep them strong and positive, and that even wonderful, strong relationships can be destroyed by neglect.

Whether you’re looking to improve a love relationship, familial relationships, friendships, or employer/employee relationships, understanding your own personality type and the personality type of the other person involved in the relationship will bring a new dynamic to the situation, which will allow better understanding and communication. Although the different types of relationships have very different characteristics and specific needs, there are two basic areas which seem to be critical in all relationships: *Expectations and Communication*. What do we expect from ourselves and the other person involved in the relationship? How do we communicate these expectations, and our feelings and opinions to the person in the relationship? How does our personality type affect our expectations and methods of communication? Does our personality type affect who we are romantically attracted to? How does it affect who our friends are, and who we work with best? These are the questions which we address following.

### **\*\*Disclaimer\*\***

Please note that we are not prescribing an absolute solution to your relationship problems, nor are we stating that there's any guarantee of improved odds with particular type pairings. Statistics show that individuals who are most happy within their marriages are those who have the highest levels of inner peace and those who have the most optimistic outlook on life in general. We do not address people's emotional standing here when discussing relationship issues, which is another important aspect of relationship dynamics.

## ***Opposites Attract***

That old concept and expression "opposites attract" has been batted around for centuries. And in fact, it's very true when it comes to love relationships. Through our research, we have noted that people are usually attracted to their opposite on the Extraversion/Introversion and Judging/Perceiving scales. We are naturally attracted to individuals who are different from ourselves – and therefore somewhat exciting. But it's not just the exciting differences which attract us to our opposites, it is also a natural quest for completion. We naturally are drawn towards individuals who have strengths which we are missing. When two opposites function as a couple, they become a more well-rounded, functioning unit. There is also the theory that our natural attraction to our opposites is a subconscious way of forcing us to deal with the weaker aspects of our own nature. While we are highly attracted to our opposites, two opposites involved in an intimate relationship have significant issues and communication barriers to overcome. So in a sense, our attraction to the opposite personality can be seen as our subconscious minds driving us towards becoming a more complete individual, by causing us to face the areas in life which are most difficult to us.

The same cannot be said for other kinds of relationships. When it comes to work colleagues, or friends, we are not especially interested in dealing with people who are very unlike ourselves. We are most comfortable with those who have similar interests and perspectives, and we do not show a lot of motivation or patience for dealing with our opposites.

## ***Birds of a Feather Flock Together***

Although we are attracted to people who are very different from us in the way we deal with the world, we are most attracted to others who have a similar focus in their lives. Couples who have the same dominant function in their personalities seems to have the longest and happiest relationships. So, for example, an individual whose dominant function is Introverted Sensing (ISTJ or ISFJ) seems to be naturally drawn towards partners with a dominant function of Extraverted Sensing (ESTP or ESFP).

We have also noticed that Sensors seem to communicate best with other Sensors, and that iNtuitives seem to communicate best with other iNtuitives. There seems to be a more equal partnership formed with people who communicate on the same level, although there are many successful relationships between Sensors and iNtuitives. Two individuals of any type who are well-developed and balanced can communicate effectively and make a relationship work, but many people will communicate best with people who share their same information gathering preference.

With that in mind, it shouldn't come as any surprise to learn that research regarding Personality Type and Relationships shows a definite pattern which indicates that successful mates often share the same dominant function, and the same letter preference ("S" or "N") for their information gathering function. Of course, that does not mean that people with different preferences cannot have a happy, successful marriage, it simply indicates that people frequently settle down with individuals who are on their same "wave-length".

## **ESFJs in Relationships**

ESFJs are warm-hearted individuals who highly value their close personal relationships. They are very service-oriented, and their own happiness is closely tied into the happiness and comfort of those around them. They are valued for their genuine warm and caring natures, and their special ability to bring out the best in others. They usually do not handle conflict well, and may tend to be very controlling or manipulative. Relationships are central to their lives, and they put forth a great amount of energy into developing and maintaining their close interpersonal relationships. They expect the same from others.

### ***Relationship Strengths***

- Put forth a lot of effort to fulfill their duties and obligations
- Warm, friendly and affirming by nature
- Service-oriented, they want to please others
- Take their commitments very seriously, and seek lifelong relationships
- Responsible and practical, they can be counted to take care of day-to-day necessities
- Generally upbeat and popular, people are drawn towards them
- Generally very good money managers
- Traditionally minded and family-oriented, they will make family celebrations and traditions special events

### ***Relationship Weaknesses***

- Generally uncomfortable with change, and moving into new territories
- Extreme dislike of conflict and criticism
- Need a lot of positive affirmation to feel good about themselves
- May be overly status-conscious, and interested in how others see them
- Have very difficult time accepting the end of a relationship, and are likely to take the blame for the failure onto their own shoulders
- Have difficulty accepting negative things about people close to them
- Don't pay enough attention to their own needs, and may be self-sacrificing
- May tend to use guilt manipulation as a way to get what they want

## ESFJ Natural Partners (in love and in life)

Before you read this section, I would like to put in a word of caution *not* to take this section too seriously. Take it for what it's worth, a statistical likelihood.

All that means is that given some large sampling of pairs of various personality types, the natural partners are the ones which get along best most frequently. However, for any given pair, too many factors in life influence how a relationship develops for naturally matching personalities to be the determining factor. It's a possible edge, enough to use as the core for love partner matching on love matching sites like *chemistry.com* or *e-harmony*, but not enough to be used along as those sites also take into account other life factors like personal interests, jobs and such.

Natural partners listed here are for life, in general, although some of the text is written for love partners rather than just two people's ability to get along together well.

Although two well-developed individuals of any type can enjoy a healthy relationship, the *ESFJ's natural partner* is the *ISFP*, or the *INFP*. See their profiles on the [Digital Citizen](#) website. The ESFJ's dominant function of Extraverted Feeling is best matched with someone whose dominant function is Introverted Feeling.

You may be interested in understanding how we came to the conclusion that certain types are ideal for each other. Our type pairing is a result of combining observation, research, and understanding of Jungian psychological type. Observation and research of married couples shows that there is a definite trend in types that are attracted to each other, and in type combinations that have the longest lasting relationships. Our understanding of psychological type helps to see that these types typically have the same dominant function, but with a different attitude.

In Jungian terms, "functions" refer to the four core traits: iNtuition (N), Sensing (S), Feeling (F), and Thinking (T). The term "attitude" refers to the direction of the function, *i.e.* Introverted (I) or Extraverted (E).

So, for example, a person with a personality type of ISFP has a dominant function of Introverted Feeling. More specifically, Feeling in the dominant function, and its attitude (or direction) is Introverted. A person with this personality type is likely to be most attracted to, and fit best with, a person that has Extraverted Feeling dominating their personality. Extraverted Feeling dominates the personality types ESFJ and ENFJ. We therefore determine that the ISFP's natural partner is the ESFJ or the ENFJ.

Our natural attraction to people who share our dominant function, but who use it in a different direction works very well for us. We not only flip-flop the Introverted or Extraverted trait, but we also flip-flop the Judging or Perceiving trait. In this way, the partner that we choose for ourselves will have a very different approach to dealing with the world. If we are laid-back and indecisive, our partner will be structured and decisive. If we are reserved, our partner will be outgoing. For all of our apparent differences, we will share a common vision of what's truly important in life.

For people whose personality types are dominated by Decision Making functions, (*i.e.* Thinking or Feeling), their ideal partners will include both Sensing and iNtuitive types. Many people have problems communicating effectively with people who do not share their same preference for Information Gathering. So, if you have a very strong preference for Sensing or iNtuition, you will need to give the personality type with the same preference a higher value as a likely natural partner. For example, an ISFP who strongly prefers Sensing will work best with an ESFJ, rather than an ENFJ.

Although we believe firmly that this model works very well to help in finding and maintaining healthy relationships, it is important to remember that it's just a tool. We offer guidelines to help you understand the kinds of things that you value in a relationship, rather than guidelines that you need to follow strictly. Two well-developed individuals of any type can make a relationship work, and work is a key concept here! There is no such thing as an effortless relationship. Don't use this model as an excuse to dump your relationship.

## ESFJs as Lovers

*"To love means to open ourselves to the negative as well as the positive – to grief, sorrow, and disappointment as well as to joy, fulfillment, and an intensity of consciousness we did not know was possible before."*

– Rollo May

ESFJs are warmly caring people who give their intimate relationships a lot of special care and attention. They're usually traditional and take their commitments very seriously. Once the ESFJ has said "I do", you can bet that they will put forth every effort to fulfill their obligations to the relationship.

ESFJs want to be appreciated for who they are, and what they give to others. This need of theirs is sometimes intensified to the point where they are very emotionally needy, and constantly "go fishing" for affirmation if it is not freely given. ESFJs typically cannot stand conflict or criticism. They take any sort of criticism as a general indictment of their character. This is a potential pitfall for ESFJs to be aware of. In the face of negative feedback, or the absence of positive affirmation, ESFJ may become very depressed and down on themselves. Appreciation is the greatest gift that their mates can give them.

ESFJs have a tendency to be very conscious of social status and "what other people think". They should take care not to let this interfere with their close relationships.

Being highly practical, the ESFJ is excellent in matters regarding home management. They're likely to be very responsible about taking care of day-to-day needs, and to be careful and cautious about money matters. They are interested in security and peaceful living, and are willing and able to do their part towards achieving these goals for themselves, their mates, and their families.

Most ESFJs have a strong need to "belong" – whether to institutions, traditions, or family units. This need usually causes them to be very social creatures who enjoy attending parties & throwing their own. They're likely to strongly desire that their mates share in their social experiences.

## *Sexual Tendencies*

Sexually, ESFJs are warm and loving, and welcome intimacy as an opportunity to express their affections, and receive their partners gifts of love. Many ESFJs have a tendency to be highly scheduled and traditional in their sexual habits, but this is almost always overcome by increasing their education and awareness of options. ESFJs are very service-oriented and will place a lot of importance on making their partners happy.

## **ESFJs as Parents**

*“You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth...  
Let your bending in the archer’s hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,  
so He loves also the bow that is stable.”*

– Kahlil Gibran

As parents, ESFJs are extremely committed to their roles and duties, and contain and freely express a great deal of love and affection for their children. They expect their children to honor, respect and obey their parents, and do not tolerate well any deviance from this rule of behavior. Their Feeling preference makes it difficult for them to punish or discipline their children. If they have not worked on overcoming this issue, they may tend to punish their children in less obvious ways, such as using guilt manipulation. This is a potential pitfall for the ESFJ to overcome. It is generally more effective and more healthy to directly issue punishment when called for.

The ESFJ is very service-oriented and concerned with the comfort and happiness of those around them. Consequently, their children are likely to have their practical needs taken care of very efficiently & responsibly. Their ESFJ parents will create structured environments for the children, where their boundaries will be well-defined and known.

The ESFJ’s tendency to be controlling, combined with their emphasis on tradition and security, makes it likely that they will be at least somewhat strict & controlling of their children. However, they will also be their children’s strongest, loudest advocate. Children of ESFJ parents are likely to rebel from their authority at some point, which will cause a stressful time for both parent and child. In this case, the ESFJ natural tendency is to make their children feel guilty about their behavior. Depending on the extent of the guilt manipulation, this may cause serious damage to the relationship.

Most ESFJs are remembered fondly by their children for their genuine love and affection, and for the well-defined structure and guidelines they created for their children.

## **ESFJs as Friends**

Although the ESFJ usually puts their family in front of their friends, they do place a lot of importance on their close friendships, and feel tremendous loyalty towards their friends.

Since they feel tremendous pressure in their lives to constantly “do their duty”, they may sometimes turn their friendships into another task or responsibility. Usually, however, they get a lot of enjoyment from their friendships, and give back a lot of affirming warmth.

There are a couple of ESFJ tendencies which may cause problems with their casual and intimate friendships: 1) they don't give things freely - they expect something in return, and 2) they have a difficult time believing anything bad about someone close to them.

ESFJs are valued by others for their genuine interest in people, and for their warmth and kind-heartedness. They have a special skill at seeing the best in others, and making people feel good about themselves. As such, they usually have a relatively large number of very close friends, usually of all different personality types.

ESFJs are likely to have well-furnished, orderly and attractive homes. They are usually excellent hosts and hostesses, and enjoy throwing parties and having a good time. They like to feel as if they belong to traditions and institutions, and are likely to have a relatively large group of people which they include in their social circles.

## **Personal Growth**

Perhaps the most important realization that an individual can make in their quest for personal growth is that there is no single formula that defines the path to personal success. We all have different goals and priorities, which means that different activities and attitudes will make us feel good about ourselves. We also have different natural strengths and weaknesses that are a part of our inherent personality type. How then, as individuals, can we feel successful in our lives?

### ***Understand What's Important to You***

Each personality type has a different idea of what it means to be successful. Self-knowledge is one common goal that will help everyone achieve personal success. So many people are hung up on somebody else's idea of what it means to be successful, and they are unaware of what is truly important to them. This is completely normal. We all have important role-models and influencers in our lives who may have basic values that are quite different from our own. If this is the case, it's important to recognize that the discrepancy between what we have been taught is truly important and what we personally believe to be truly important is due to a difference in perspective. If we spend our time and effort trying to meet somebody else's idea of success, and ignore or belittle any conflicting messages from our own psyche, then we will find ourselves exhausted and unhappy. Realizing what is truly important to us is a major step towards achieving personal success.

### ***Recognize Your Weaknesses Without Hiding Behind Them***

While improving our self-knowledge and realizing our true goals can be very liberating, we should not discard the rules of the society in which we live. We must recognize that other people's value systems are no less important than our own. And we must recognize and accept

that we live in a society in which certain personality types and behaviors are more suited towards particular tasks. This is the second key that will open the door towards personal growth.

For example, there are situations in which it is more appropriate & effective to show compassion and caring (Feeling), rather than impersonal logic (Thinking). Likewise, there are situations that call for using impersonal logic to make a decision, in which the more subjective viewpoint of the Feeling function is inappropriate and ineffective. Persons with a preference for Feeling will have a natural advantage over Thinkers in situations that require compassion and awareness of other's emotions. Conversely, persons with a preference for Thinking will have a natural advantage over Feelers in situations that require the ability to make a decision based on impersonal data.

As we learn about our personality type and the types of others, we are empowered with an understanding of why people react differently in different situations. When put into the context of Psychological Type, we can better accept and understand people's behaviors that are different from ours. These insights are extremely useful and powerful to us as individuals. However, if we are concerned with growing as individuals, we must take care not to use personality type as an excuse for our inappropriate behavior. While it's powerful and useful to notice that another person's inappropriate behavior may be due to their personality type, we cannot use the same reasoning on ourselves. We should recognize that our personality type has weaknesses, but we must use that knowledge to conquer those weaknesses rather than to excuse poor behavior. We cannot be responsible for other people's behavior, but we can control our own.

Accordingly, if we notice that someone seems to be unable to make an impersonal decision that is isolated from human perspective, we should say to ourselves, "Ah ha, here is a Feeler. This person does not use Thinking well, and that is why they're behaving this way." Yet when we as Feelers are presented with a situation that requires an impersonal approach, we should NOT say to ourselves "I am a Feeler, and can't be expected to make decisions based purely on impersonal facts & logic." This kind of rationalization for behavior is certainly an easy way out of a situation, but it enforces the weakness, making it weaker and weaker still.

### *Strive for Balance*

Most of the weaknesses associated with any given personality type are a result of that type's dominant function overtaking the personality to the extent that the other functions become slaves to the dominant function. Although it is natural for every personality to be ruled by its dominant function, it becomes a problem when the supporting functions are not allowed to develop fully on their own because they are too busy "serving the master". In such cases, a personality can become quite imbalanced.

A situation in which the dominant function of a personality completely overshadows the other personality functions is analogous to a kingdom ruled by an overbearing king who requires absolute servitude. Imagine such a king sitting down to dinner in his castle. He keeps all of his servants running about to bring him dinner, and requires that they serve him fully (disregarding their own needs) until he is completely sated. His Foreign Minister, expected at an important affair at a neighboring kingdom, finds himself pouring ale. His Minister of Domestic Affairs, rather than addressing the issue of a failing economy, slices roast turkey. His staff grabs food for themselves here and there, but never get what they really need or want, and are consequently

unsatisfied, malnourished, and underdeveloped. The issues that the staff should be taking care of are left undone, because they never finish their primary task of serving the king. The king's immediate needs are being met, and so he is tolerably happy, but he is an ineffective king. As far as he knows, everything and everybody exists simply to serve him. He has no concept of Success beyond his daily needs. Since he cannot see beyond his own needs, the entire kingdom suffers.

Likewise, a personality that has developed with a goal of serving the dominant function above all other considerations often results in a person who is imbalanced. In severe cases, weaknesses associated with the given type are often quite apparent to others and overshadow the individual's natural strengths. Such a drastic imbalance is not common, and may be the result of continuous and extreme stress. Most people will experience times in their lives during which they are stressed to the point of serious imbalance. People who experience this constantly have issues that need to be dealt with, and should seek help.

Much more commonly, we see individuals who exhibit both the strengths and weaknesses of their type. It is natural and healthy that each personality type is ruled by a dominant function, and that the other functions support the ruling function. We don't seek to change anyone's natural self, or to achieve a perfect balance amongst a personality's functions. By definition, a kingdom needs a king in order to exist, and a personality needs a dominant function. However, a kingdom with a well-developed and effective king (the dominant function), who has well-trained and educated advisors (the supporting functions), will thrive more than the kingdom ruled by a neglectful king who is supported by inexperienced advisors.

As we can see, Balance and Success are relative terms. They have different meaning for each personality type, but one statement is true for all types: Balance is the key to Success.

## *Opening the Door*

So how do we go about realizing what's truly important to us? How do we recognize our weaknesses, and learn not to hide behind them? How do we become balanced? How do we open that magical door that will show us the way to personal growth and success?

There is no quickie scheme that will make you a successful person. Psychological Type is a powerful aid in our quest for excellence, but it is not the actual solution. It is a model that will help you to expand your understanding of human nature. An improved understanding of yourself and others will help you to find, follow or expand your path. An awareness and acceptance of the fact that one personality function may be more effective than another function in a given situation will help you to understand the relevance of personal growth to your life.

Carl Jung identified a process of personal growth that he called individuation, which is essentially the conscious realization of your true self, beyond the Ego that is presented by your conscious self. Our efforts to help people develop themselves is essentially the effort to help them to realize that their personal perspectives and conscious ideas are only a small part of who they are, and that the more they try to develop and defend this superficial "self", the further they get away from their true Self. This realization helps a psyche in many concrete ways, and is also a positive step towards promoting a psyche that is open to the process of individuation. For the purposes of

making this realization accessible to the general public, our writings are mostly void of complex theoretical discussion.

## ESFJ Personal Growth

### *What does Success Mean to You?*

The ESFJ is called the “caregiver”, and for very good reasons. Caring is the very nature of their personality; a personality driven by feeling judgments and supported by a strong sense of the world around them. The ESFJ not only sees how situations affect themselves and others, they are concerned about it. Everything that makes them feel valued & successful is bound inextricably to the value and concern they need to exchange with others. “Give & ye shall receive” is the motto of the ESFJ, whose gifts serve the most important function in all communal human processes, from the family to the wider world of care giving such as hospitality, primary teaching, nursing, aged care, social services, human resources and so on. Whilst their judgments might be bound by a somewhat conventional moral code, the ESFJ always stands up for what they are certain is the best for others. In some situations this trait can lead them into disaster, particularly if they are thrust into an unsuitable role. The ESFJ thrives best where they can make the decisions and organize things to suit their own way of seeing the world. Regardless however of their particular station in life, the ESFJ is at their best when it involves caring for and about others, measuring their success by the happiness and gratitude which is reflected back to them from the people in whose lives they play a part.

### *Allowing Your Strengths to Flourish*

As an ESFJ, you have gifts that are specific to your personality type that aren't natural strengths for other types. By recognizing your special gifts and encouraging their growth and development, you will more readily see your place in the world, and how you can better use your talents to achieve your dreams.

Nearly all ESFJs will recognize the following characteristics in themselves. They should embrace and nourish these strengths:

- A strong sense of what is right and wrong
- Easily empathizes with another person
- Able to share feelings with other people
- Cares greatly about the welfare of others
- Open, honest and forthright about the way they see things
- Sensitive to the needs of others, particularly those judged to be less fortunate
- Strongly upholds traditional and safe ways of living

ESFJs who have a strongly expressed Introverted Sensing function will find they also enjoy these very special gifts:

- Very sensitive to how any situation might be inwardly affecting another person
- Able to see the potential in any human environment for enabling the comfort and safety of others
- A flair for dramatic illustration and storytelling which makes them excellent teachers of the young
- Able to make strong, people oriented administrative decisions
- A skill with fashion and decoration which makes people feel good about themselves
- Able to see outside the “square” and adjust their values to the facts of a situation

### *Potential Problem Areas*

With any gift of strength, there is an associated weakness. The strong expression of any function can overshadow others, whilst at the same time its own associated and unexpressed inferior function can mine the unconscious mind and throw up annoying resistances and unsettling emotions. We value our strengths, but we often curse and – even more limiting to our potential development – ignore our weaknesses. To grow as a person and get what we want out of life, we must not only capitalize upon our strengths, but also face our weaknesses and deal with them. That means taking a hard look at our personality type’s potential problem areas.

ESFJs are kind, steady and responsible beings with many special gifts. I would like the ESFJ to keep in mind their many positive traits as they read on, and remember that the weaknesses associated with being an ESFJ are natural to your type. Although it can be depressing to read about your type’s weaknesses, please remember that we offer this information to enact positive change. We want people to grow into their own potential, and to live happy and successful lives.

Many of the ESFJ’s weaker characteristics arise because their dominant and Extraverted Feeling function can overshadow the rest of their personality. This generally results in two notable effects. With their Introverted Sensing function unable to provide sufficient balance to their sharply defined feeling judgments, they often miss the relativities and contingencies of the real world. This very often leads them into conflict with those who believe a situation needs to be properly analyzed before its realities can be seen and acted upon. Secondly, with their sense of the world controlled by feelings alone, the narrowly defined ESFJ will often find themselves at odds with any view of the world that does not see their own clearly held judgments to be primary, or which does not accord them the “feeling toned” responses they expect. This can produce a range of effects, all of which ends in conflict for the ESFJ, either with others or with their own feelings.

Without a sound appreciation of the concrete world, an ESFJ may show some or all of these weaknesses in varying degrees:

- May be unable to correctly judge what really is for the best.
- May become spiteful and extremely intractable in the face of clear logical reasoning.
- May be unable to shrug off feelings that others are not “good people”.

- May be unable to acknowledge anything that goes against their certainty about the “correct” or “right” way to do things
- May attribute their own problems to arbitrary and unprovable notions about the way people “ought” to behave.
- May be at a loss when confronted with situations that require basic technical expertise or clear thinking.
- May be oblivious to all but their own viewpoint, valuing their own certainties to the exclusion of others.
- May be unable to understand verbal logic, and quickly cut off other’s explanations
- May be falsely certain of the true needs and feelings of others.
- May be extremely vulnerable to superstitions, religious cults and media manipulation.
- May react too quickly and too emotionally in a situation better dealt with in a more pragmatic fashion.

### *Explanation of Problems*

Nearly all of the problematic characteristics described above can be attributed in various degrees to the ESFJs externally mapped, feeling based view of the world not being successfully coupled to an appropriate level of Introverted Sensation. Without this internal balance, the ESFJ’s perception & ideas are determined by feeling judgments that are not always a valid basis for understanding.

ESFJs are usually stable, certain, reliable and caring in their approach to life, but if unbalanced they are likely to treat any point of view other than their own with a kind of amused indifference or a tendency to keep those with differing attitudes and opinions at a distance. Whilst this is natural survival behaviour for the strongly expressed ESFJ personality, if they do not learn how to deal with the wide range of differing viewpoints they come into contact with, ESFJs can find themselves waging a self created war against all that opposes their own. This conflict often expresses itself in various unambiguous and simplistic “Us versus Them” generalities, or a penchant for smugly and narrowly defining other people by arbitrary or superstitious belief systems, which often actually symbolize and define their own conflict. At its worst, this conflict with the obstinate and unfeeling contingent realities of the world creates a situation where the ESFJ retreats to a kind of psychological castle where, not only none but those who have the “right” or “nice” approach can enter, but also where the ESFJs feeling based and often tortured logic, attitudes and judgments reign supreme and cannot be questioned; a place where: “give and you shall receive” can ironically twist quickly into: “off with his head!”

The main driver to the ESFJ personality is Extraverted Feeling, whose function is to judge the relative human value of the ideas, behaviours, situations and objects they perceive. The resulting world view is tidy, and ordered according to its worth to the ESFJ’s own particular character: “Everything has its place and everything in its place”. If this picture of the world is threatened by external influences, the ESFJ generally tries to shut such new information out of their lives. This is totally natural, and works well to protect the individual psyche from getting hurt. However, the ESFJ who exercises this type of self-protection regularly will find they can only

connect and relate with those who do not actively disturb their increasingly narrow and rigid world view. They will always find justification for their own inappropriate behaviours, and will always find fault with the outside world for problems that they have in their lives. It will be difficult for them to maintain the flexibility needed for a healthy relationship with the messy world outside because the differing ways others value things is a constant affront to their personal judgments.

It is not an uncommon tendency for the ESFJ to support their feeling judgments by selectively using only their immediate perceptions of a situation and how it appears to them. However, if this tendency is given free reign, the resulting ESFJ personality is too self-centered to be happy or successful. The ESFJ's auxiliary function of Introverted Sensing must be allowed to grow beyond this limit, where it is used only to support Extraverted Feeling judgments. If the ESFJ uses Introverted Sensing only to serve this purpose, then the ESFJ is not using Introversion effectively at all. As a result, the ESFJ does not sufficiently recognize and understand the vast number of contingent and differing ways in which the world is perceived by others. They see nothing but their own perspective, and deal with the world only so far as they need to in order to support their perspective. These individuals usually come across as somewhat illogical and full of fixed and often rather staid or conventional ideas about the world. Other people are often surprised by the simplicity, ambiguity and often unrelenting vehemence of their ideas.

## *Solutions*

To grow as an individual, the ESFJ needs to focus on opening their perspective to include a more accurate picture of the world and its ways. In order to be in a position in which the ESFJ is able to perceive and consider data that is foreign to their value system, the ESFJ needs to recognize that their world view is not threatened by the new information. The ESFJ must consciously tell himself/herself that the judgments of others are not unrelated to reality; that the ideas of others are also just and valid within a wider and less rigorous vision of the world.

The ESFJ who is concerned with personal growth will pay close attention to the way things appear to them. Do they try to find the basic connections between the elements of a situation? Or, do they appreciate only those elements which accord them a feeling of worth? At the moment when some connection or relationship between things is perceived, is the ESFJ only concerned with whether that perception supports something they value? Or is she/he concerned with becoming truly appraised of how things fit together in the world? To achieve a better understanding of others and the world in which they live, the ESFJ should try to put themselves into the minds of others, to locate and recognize how others see things, before making judgments. They should consciously be aware of their tendency to discard anything that doesn't agree with their carefully adjudicated system of relative worth, and work towards lessening this tendency. They should try to see the way others might see situations, without making personal judgments about how others ought to feel. In general, they should work on exercising their Sensation in a truly introverted sense. In other words, they should use Sensation to recognize that all parts of a situation are necessary for its functionality and that valuing one function or objective connection over another narrows their ability to deal with the real world as it truly is. The ESFJ who can successfully envision the world as a realm of functioning and connected parts which are all necessary to its balance can be quite a powerful force for positive change.

## *Living Happily*

Some ESFJs have difficulty fitting into our society. Their problems are often a result of an inability understand the connections and relationships necessary to each situation, a too conventional and dogmatic set of values which limits the way others can relate to them, or an unrealistic & illogical view of the world. These issues mostly stem from using Introverted Sensation in a diminished manner: the lack of a strong internally focused viewpoint allowing an often ambiguous and yet strongly defended set of values to control the personality. An ESFJ who attempts to envision a more accurate and impartial view of the world for the sake of understanding the ways of others, rather than quickly deciding how things alone affect them, will have a clearer, more objective understanding of how society is dependant not only upon adherence to values and care for others, but also how the world relies upon structure and laws which function regardless of their human value. He or she will also be more comfortable and less likely to demand that the world and the behaviour of others conform to values of right and wrong, good and bad, worthy and worthless *etc.* Such well-adjusted ESFJs will fit happily into our society. Unless you really understand Psychological Type and the nuances of the various personality functions, it's a difficult task to suddenly start to use Sensation in an unambiguous and totally introverted direction. It's hard to even understand what that means, much less to incorporate that directive into your life.

### **Specific suggestions:**

- Take care to try and discover how others see things. Try to notice the connections they make between ideas and objects. Don't immediately compare your own vision of things to theirs; simply accept that for them the world fits together in a valid way.
- Think of those times and situations in your life when you felt misunderstood or disregarded by others. Now try to understand how one or two other people would see the situation. Don't try to assume they would judge as you do: "she would have to feel the same way if that happened to her", or "he would change his tune if he saw things from my point of view". Rather, try to understand how they would truly see the situation. Would they analyze it through a code of values, or see it as an opportunity to grasp a wider perspective in which a solution can be found? Would it affect them personally or would they view it impartially? Try to determine their point of view without passing judgment or comparing it to your own.
- When having a conversation with a friend or relative, dedicate at least half of your time to finding out how the other person sees the world around them. Concentrate on really sensing the relationships within what they describe. Tell them how you see the world and compare. Ask questions about why things seem so to them.
- Think of the people who are closest to you. As you think of each person, tell yourself "this person has their own life going on, and they are more concerned with their own life than they are with mine." Remember that this doesn't mean that they don't care about you. It's the natural order of things. Try to visualize what that person is seeing right now. What connections are they making/enacting, what thoughts are they having? Don't pass judgment, or compare their situation to your own.
- Try to identify the personality type of everyone that you come into contact with.

## Ten Rules to Live By to Achieve Success

1. **Feed Your Strengths!** Let your talent for caring & giving spill out into the world around you, show your gifts to the world. Allow yourself to take opportunities to nurture and develop situations in your home and work environments which bring value for yourself and others. Find work or a hobby which allows you to realize these strengths.
2. **Face Your Weaknesses!** Realize and accept that some things are never going to be how you would like them to be. Understand that other peoples need to deal with the world regardless of how it seems. Facing and dealing with discord or differences in others doesn't mean that you have to change who you are; it means that you are giving yourself opportunities to grow. By facing your weaknesses, you honour your true self and that of others.
3. **Discover the World of Others.** Don't let yourself fall into the trap of thinking you always know what is right for others. Open your heart to the possibility of understanding that their true needs are something that must be discovered through recognition that their view of the world might be very different, yet just as valid as your own.
4. **Don't be too hasty.** Try to let things settle before you make a judgment, allowing others to discover the best for themselves while you try to see all the variables and contingencies in a situation.
5. **Look Carefully at the World.** Remember, things are not always what they seem on the surface. You might need to look deeper to discover the truth, particularly when it seems you are sure of your first quick judgment. There are layers of meaning & truth beneath everything.
6. **Try to Let Others Take Some of the Load.** By letting others make their own judgments, you are not letting things get out of control, but are validating their own need to be a part of your life. Remember, it is better to guide another to see your point of view than keeping them out of the picture.
7. **Be Accountable to Others.** Remember that they need to understand you and your needs too. Express your doubts and difficulties as well as your reasons and let them become partners to your goals.
8. **Don't Hem Yourself in.** Staying in your comfort zone is self defeating in the end. Try to make every day one where you get out and discover a little something different about the world and others. This will broaden your horizons and bring new ideas and opportunities into focus.
9. **Assume the Best and Seek for It.** Don't wait for others to live up to your expectations. Every person has a goldmine of worth in them, just as every situation can be turned to some good. If you let yourself believe this, you will find yourself discovering ways to make it true for you.
10. **When in Doubt, Ask For Help!** Don't let your fears leave you on the horns of a dilemma or lead you into disaster. If you are uncertain of something or someone then get input from others who have greater experience in dealing with this difficulty.

## References

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