

# Profile of the ISFJ (Nurturer / Protector)

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This document contains detailed information about the *ISFJ* 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 Nurturer

In the Keirsey Temperament version of the Jung personality type system, the *ISFJ* profile is known as the *Nurturer*, though this is meant to be career advice. Here is Keirsey's description.

We are lucky that Protectors make up as much as 10% the population, because their primary interest is in the safety and security of those they care about – their family, their circle of friends, their students, their patients, their boss, their fellow-workers, or their employees. Protectors have an extraordinary sense of loyalty and responsibility in their makeup, and seem fulfilled in the degree they can shield others from the dirt & dangers of the world. Speculating & experimenting do not intrigue Protectors, who prefer to make do with time-honored and time-tested products and procedures rather than change to new. At work Protectors are seldom happy in situations where the rules are constantly changing, or where long-established ways of doing things are not respected. For their part, Protectors value tradition, both in culture and their family. Protectors believe deeply in the stability of social ranking conferred by birth, titles, offices, and credentials. And they cherish family history and enjoy caring for family property, from houses to heirlooms.

Wanting to be of service to others, Protectors find great satisfaction in assisting the downtrodden, and can deal with disability and neediness in others better than any other type. They are not as outgoing and talkative as the Provider Guardians [ESFJs], and their shyness is often misjudged as stiffness, even coldness, when in truth Protectors are warm-hearted and sympathetic, giving happily of themselves to those in need.

Their reserve ought really to be seen as an expression of their sincerity & seriousness of purpose. The most diligent of all the types, Protectors are willing to work long, hard hours quietly doing all the thankless jobs that others manage to avoid. Protectors are quite happy working alone; in fact, in positions of authority they may try to do everything themselves rather than direct others to get the job done. Thoroughness and frugality are also virtues for them. When Protectors undertake a task, they will complete it if humanly possible. They also know better than any other type the value of a dollar, and they abhor the squandering or misuse of money. To save, to put something aside against an unpredictable future, to prepare for emergencies-these are actions near and dear to the Protector's heart. For all these reasons, Protectors are frequently overworked, just as they are frequently misunderstood and undervalued. Their contributions, and also their economies, are often taken for granted, and they rarely get the gratitude they deserve.

## Portrait II – The Protector

The *ISFJ* profile is also often called the *Protector*. This is how the ISFJ profile is also often summarized.

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

ISFJs live in a world that is concrete and kind. They are truly warm and kind-hearted, and want to believe the best of people. They value harmony and cooperation, and are likely to be very sensitive to other people's feelings. People value the ISFJ for their consideration and awareness, and their ability to bring out the best in others by their firm desire to believe the best.

ISFJs have a rich inner world that is not usually obvious to observers. They constantly take in information about people and situations that is personally important to them, and store it away. This tremendous store of information is usually startlingly accurate, because the ISFJ has an exceptional memory about things that are important to their value systems. It would not be uncommon for the ISFJ to remember a particular facial expression or conversation in precise detail years after the event occurred, if the situation made an impression on the ISFJ.

ISFJs have a very clear idea of the way things should be, which they strive to attain. They value security and kindness, and respect traditions and laws. They tend to believe that existing systems are there because they work. Therefore, they're not likely to buy into doing things in a new way, unless they're shown in a concrete way why it's better than the established method.

ISFJs learn best by doing, rather than by reading about something in a book, or applying theory. For this reason, they are not likely to be found in fields which require a lot of conceptual analysis or theory. They value practical application. Traditional methods of higher education, which require a lot of theorizing and abstraction, are likely to be a chore for the ISFJ. The ISFJ learns a task best by being shown its practical application. Once the task is learned, and its practical importance is understood, the ISFJ will faithfully and tirelessly carry the task to completion. The ISFJ is extremely dependable.

The ISFJ has an extremely well-developed sense of space, function, and aesthetic appeal. For that reason, they're likely to have beautifully furnished, functional homes. They make extremely good interior decorators. This special ability, combined with their sensitivity to other's feelings and desires, makes them very likely to be great gift-givers - finding the right gift which will be truly appreciated by the recipient.

More so than other types, ISFJs are extremely aware of their own internal feelings, as well as other people's feelings. They do not usually express their own feelings, keeping things inside. If they are negative feelings, they may build up inside the ISFJ until they turn into firm judgments against individuals which are difficult to displace, once set. Many ISFJs learn to express themselves, and find outlets for their powerful emotions.

Just as the ISFJ is not likely to express their feelings, they are also not likely to let on that they know how others are feeling. However, they will speak up when they feel another individual really needs help, and in such cases they can truly help others become aware of their feelings.

The ISFJ feels a strong sense of responsibility and duty. They take their responsibilities very seriously, and can be counted on to follow through. For this reason, people naturally tend to rely on them. The ISFJ has a difficult time saying “no” when asked to do something, and may become over-burdened. In such cases, the ISFJ does not usually express their difficulties to others, because they intensely dislike conflict, and because they tend to place other people’s needs over their own. The ISFJ needs to learn to identify, value, and express their own needs, if they wish to avoid becoming over-worked and taken for granted.

ISFJs need positive feedback from others. In the absence of positive feedback, or in the face of criticism, the ISFJ gets discouraged, and may even become depressed. When down on themselves or under great stress, the ISFJ begins to imagine all of the things that might go critically wrong in their life. They have strong feelings of inadequacy, and become convinced that “everything is all wrong”, or “I can’t do anything right”.

The ISFJ is warm, generous, and dependable. They have many special gifts to offer, in their sensitivity to others, and their strong ability to keep things running smoothly. They need to remember to not be overly critical of themselves, and to give themselves some of the warmth and love which they freely dispense to others.

## Jungian Preference Ordering

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

## Famous Protectors

- Mother Teresa
- George H. W. Bush
- Jimmy Stewart
- Rosa Parks
- Clara Barton
- Kareem Abdul Jabbar
- King George VI
- James Herriot

## ISFJ 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.

ISFJs generally have the following traits:

- Large, rich inner store of information which they gather about people
- Highly observant and aware of people's feelings and reactions
- Excellent memory for details which are important to them
- Very in-tune with their surroundings – excellent sense of space and function
- Can be depended on to follow things through to completion
- Will work long and hard to see that jobs get done
- Stable, practical, down-to-earth – they dislike working with theory and abstract thought
- Dislike doing things which don't make sense to them
- Value security, tradition, and peaceful living
- Service-oriented, focused on what people need and want
- Kind and considerate
- Likely to put others' needs above their own
- Learn best with hands-on training
- Enjoy creating structure and order
- Take their responsibilities seriously
- Extremely uncomfortable with conflict and confrontation

ISFJs have two basic traits which help define their best career direction: 1) they are extremely interested and in-tune with how other people are feeling, and 2) they enjoy creating structure and order, and are extremely good at it. Ideally, the ISFJ will choose a career in which they can use their exceptional people-observation skills to determine what people want or need, and then use their excellent organizational abilities to create a structured plan or environment for achieving what people want. Their excellent sense of space and function combined with their awareness of aesthetic quality also gives them quite special abilities in the more practical artistic endeavors, such as interior decorating and clothes design.

## **Career Suggestions for the ISFJ**

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.

- Interior Decorators
- Designers
- Nurses
- Administrators and Managers
- Administrative Assistants
- Child Care / Early Childhood Development
- Social Work / Counselors
- Paralegals
- Clergy / Religious Workers
- Office Managers
- Shopkeepers
- Bookkeepers
- Home Economics

## 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”.

## ISFJs in Relationships

ISFJs place a great deal of importance on their personal relationships. They're generally very giving and loving people, who place the needs of others above their own. They sometimes have a problem with becoming overly emotionally needy, and with keeping their true feelings hidden from others. They take their commitments very seriously, and seek lifelong relationships. ISFJs are extremely dependable, and put forth a lot of energy into keeping things running smoothly. They sometimes have difficulty saying "no" when asked to do something, and therefore may be taken for granted.

### *Relationship Strengths*

- Warm, friendly and affirming by nature
- Service-oriented, wanting to please others
- Good listeners
- Will put forth lots of effort to fulfill their duties and obligations
- Excellent organizational capabilities
- Good at taking care of practical matters and daily needs
- Usually good (albeit conservative) at handling money
- Take their commitments seriously, and seek lifelong relationships

### *Relationship Weaknesses*

- Don't pay enough attention to their own needs
- May have difficulty branching out into new territory
- Extreme dislike of conflict and criticism
- Unlikely to express their needs, which may cause pent-up frustrations to build inside
- Have difficulty leaving a bad relationship
- Have difficulty moving on after the end of a relationship

## ISFJ 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 *ISFJ's natural partner* is the *ESFP*, or the *ESTP*. See their profiles on the [Digital Citizen](#) website. The ISFJ's dominant function of Introverted Sensing is best matched with a partner whose dominant function is Extraverted Sensing.

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.

## ISFJs 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

ISFJs are committed to their relationships. They have very intense feelings, which is not immediately apparent to others because they tend to hold things inside themselves without expressing them, unless they have a strong reason to do so. Their intensity of feeling makes their intimate relationship their first priority in life, with the possible exception of God. They seek monogamous, lifelong commitments, and can be depended upon to be faithful and loyal to their mates once they have made a commitment.

ISFJs have a difficult time leaving a relationship which is bad, or accepting that a relationship is over. They tend to put all the blame on their own shoulders, and wonder what they should have done to make things work out. If they have been loyal to their vows and have done their duties, they will be at a complete loss as to what went wrong, and will have great difficulty accepting the end. They are “true blue” lovers, and may even remain faithful to their deceased partners.

ISFJs tend to be very selfless, and to put the needs of others well before their own needs. This may backfire on them, if they get into a situation in which they are taken advantage of, and do not have a good outlet for their strong emotions. In this kind of situation, the ISFJ might bottle up their feelings inside them, and form strong resentments against others. The ISFJ should work on recognizing their own needs, and place some importance on meeting them, rather than always putting the needs of others first. After all, if you can't take care of yourself, how can take care of someone else?

The ISFJ is very warm and selfless. They'll put forth tremendous amounts of energy and time into doing what they feel is their duty. What makes them feel best about themselves is when others show them their appreciation of the ISFJ. Consequently, the best gift that the partner of an ISFJ can give them is the expression of their love and appreciation.

ISFJs have difficulty with conflict situations, and would much prefer to just sweep things under the rug. Sometimes facing a conflict situation helps to resolve it, and the ISFJ should realize that the world will not end if they face the conflict, and express how they feel about it. A conflict situation is not necessarily a “problem” which needs to be gotten rid of. It is also not necessarily the ISFJ's fault. It's a common problem for ISFJ's to not express their feelings until pushed to some limit, after which they explode in anger and say things which they later feel they shouldn't have said. These kinds of outbursts can be reduced by expressing their feelings on a more regular basis, rather than keeping them pent up inside.

In general, the ISFJ is usually a traditional, family-minded individual who places the comfort of their mates and families as their first priority in life. They're great for providing for everyday basic needs, and have a depth of caring which is very unusual, and not found in most types. They highly invested in the health of their relationships, and will work very hard to make things run smoothly. They are dependable and affectionate lovers.

## *Sexual Tendencies*

Sexually, the ISFJ sees intimacy as a tangible way of strengthening their relationship bonds. They also see as something of a duty & are likely to be more interested in serving their partner than in their own personal satisfaction. Although the ISFJ is not likely to be very wordy about expressing their love and affection, they're likely to do so through their deeds, and will deeply value their partner's responding affirmations.

## **ISFJs 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

Parenthood is seen as natural state and duty to the ISFJ. They are responsible about ensuring their children have their practical needs met, and try to teach them the rules and observations of our society so that they grow into responsible and independent adults.

ISFJs may have difficulty administering punishment or discipline to their children, although most are able to overcome this discomfort because they feel it is their greater duty to instill their children with sound values. As individuals who value order and structure, they're likely to create well-defined boundaries and roles for their children to live within.

ISFJ parents have a very difficult time if their children grow into "problem" adults. They tend to believe that it is their responsibility, and that they didn't work hard enough to raise their children well. This may or may not be the case, but usually it isn't. The ISFJ usually puts forth a lot of energy and effort, and doesn't give themselves credit for doing so.

In many ways, an ISFJ makes an ideal parent. Their children will not lack for structure, appropriate guidelines, or warmth and affection. Their children will remember and value the ISFJ parent for their warm natures and genuine efforts on their children's behalf.

## **ISFJs as Friends**

Although the ISFJ is likely to place God and family above their friends in their priorities, they genuinely enjoy spending time with friends and colleagues. In fact, ISFJs usually feel a strong need to talk problems and issues over with people before making decisions on their actions. Some ISFJs like to discuss things over with their friends, rather than their families.

ISFJs enjoy spending time with most other types of people. The love to observe people's reactions and emotions in situations, and so enjoy being around diverse types of people.

The ISFJ usually remains reserved around others, and does not open up very much. However, since they have a need to talk things over with others in order to make decisions, they do really need some close confidantes in their life. Their preference for these companions are other Sensing Feeling Judgers. They really enjoy and respect the company of iNtuitive Feelers as well, but are not able to relate to them quite as well.

Friends of the ISFJ will value them for their warmth, dependability, depth of emotional awareness and understanding.

## **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.

## **ISFJ Personal Growth**

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

ISFJs are the homemakers, careers and facilitators of the world. Their strong sense of duty, hard-working tendencies and ability to respond quickly to what is suitable to a particular

situation are great assets. With a dominant function that quickly grasps the qualities inherent within the external world, and a secondary function that weighs such perceptions against their value within this world, the ISFJ has a great talent for discovering the aesthetic and essential qualities compatible with and relevant to a particular real world situation. This means that, not only within the world of objects, but also in their relationships with people, ISFJs are gifted with the ability to recognize and understand the comfort and surroundings suitable to a secure and pleasing existence. And they can do this with a decisiveness which might make others wonder if the ISFJ was not in fact getting their answers from some form of iNtuitive understanding rather than what is really a vast library of carefully related memory images and value judgments. An ISFJ will always feel best when their world a place of quality and reassurance, both for themselves and others. Success for an ISFJ means being able to fulfill a role providing value for others and ordering their world in a way in which safety and security is balanced against a genuine respect for the aesthetic and positive qualities of life.

### *Allowing Your Strengths to Flourish*

As an ISFJ, 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 ISFJs will recognize the following characteristics in themselves. They should embrace and nourish these strengths:

- You are adept at seeing the right balance, the best way to make the world look and feel good. This talent enables you to make your world reflect your inner self and become a place of security and growth in which others can feel at ease too.
- You have a gift for knowing what will make another person feel better about the world and themselves. Your valuable input to their world comes back to you in ways which aid your own personal development.
- You see clearly what is right and wrong, what grates on yourself and others, what works for harmony and what does not. Your clear recognition of these things gains you the confidence and respect of others.
- You have a great memory for things, places and events, their curious details and the relationships between them. More than this, you also remember what was both good and bad about these things. These skills show in your ability to give no nonsense advice and aid to others.
- Within yourself you know, even if others do not realize it, that for as long as they are trying to do their best, you will hold the line with them to the very end. You see this as simply doing the right thing, but in fact it is a special virtue and makes you one of the most worthy of partners and friends when the chips are down.
- You work hard to get the job done, and you can be counted on to stay with it till it is finished.

ISFJs who have a strongly expressed Extraverted Feeling function will find they also enjoy these very special gifts:

- Work is never a chore to you, but a gift you offer to the world.
- In your relationships you are able to clearly show others how you feel about them.
- Others will always feel at ease in your home and presence.
- Your efforts always seem to be appreciated by those around you.
- You will try to find pleasing ways to settle differences and to find the most satisfying solutions to both your own and others difficulties.
- More often than not, you will know exactly the right thing to do, say, buy or create to make things better or move things toward a valid human solution to a problem
- You will clearly see the conditions underlying a situation and their effects on the persons within it, enabling you to see ways of changing things for the better. In this sense, you may be a powerful agent for social justice.

### ***Potential Problem Areas***

With any gift of strength, there is an associated weakness. Without “bad”, there would be no “good”. Without “difficult”, there would be no “easy”. We value our strengths, but we often curse and 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.

ISFJs are kind, steady and responsible beings with many special gifts. I would like for the ISFJ to keep in mind some of the many positive things associated with being an ISFJ as they read some of this more negative material. Also remember that the weaknesses associated with being an ISFJ are natural to your type. Though it may 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 weaker characteristics that are found in ISFJs are due to their dominant and Introverted Sensing function overshadowing the rest of their personality. This generally results in two notable effects: their Extraverted Feeling function is unable to balance their sharply rendered inner perceptions with a sense of human value, whilst at the same time these very perceptions often hint at strange associations and consequences which seem always to hover darkly in the background of the world.

In such cases, an ISFJ may show some or all of the following weaknesses in varying degrees:

- May find difficulty expressing their feelings without fear or anger.
- May be unable to correctly judge what really is for the best
- May wrongly suspect others of having hidden motives or agendas
- May be unable to shrug off feelings impending disaster

- May be unable to acknowledge or hear anything that goes against their certainty about the “correct” or “right” way to do things.
- May have a tendency to blame particular persons for disturbing or upsetting “their world” by simply being who they are.
- May come across to others as cold and insensitive to anything but another’s ability to fit in with and support their own judgments.
- May be unnecessarily harsh or strict about appropriate social behaviour.
- May be oblivious to what others think about them.
- May come across as rigid, inflexible or even cold and uncaring to others, without being aware of it.
- May be unable to understand verbal logic, and quickly cut off other’s explanations.
- May value their own certainties about the world and its problems far above others.
- May be quite falsely certain of their influence upon, and understanding of others.
- May be extremely vulnerable to tricks, con men, false hopes, religious cults and conspiracy theories.
- May react with anger or distress when someone expresses disagreement with their view of the world, or disapproval of their judgments.
- May favour their judgments to the degree that they are unable to notice the pain or difficulty such judgments might cause others.
- Under great stress, are likely to make outrageously harsh and uncaringly selfish survival oriented decisions.

### *Explanation of Problems*

Nearly all of the problematic characteristics described above can be attributed in various degrees to the ISFJs internally mapped and abstract view of the world not being successfully coupled to an appropriate level of Extroverted feeling. Without this rational external balance, the ISFJs opposing unconscious functions can wreak havoc upon the order and sense of the ISFJs perceptions and ideas. ISFJs are usually stable, certain, reliable and deft 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 cold dismay, and if pressed hard will tend to shut out the existence of problems caused by others differing attitudes and opinions. If the ISFJ does not learn how to deal with the wide range of differing world views they come into contact with, they can find themselves closed into a lonely little corner of the world in which only their own feelings of safety and certainty are maintained. This is a natural survival technique for the extreme ISFJ personality.

The main driver to the ISFJ personality is Introverted Sensing, whose function is to define the properties of and locate and recognize the sometimes abstract and innate qualities of and between the objects of the outer world. If an ISFJs picture of the world is threatened by external influences, the ISFJ 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 ISFJ who exercises this type of self-protection regularly will become closed within a small and ever decreasing circle of those family and friends 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 close personal relationships because they will have a negatively polarized and therefore limited ability to communicate outside of the box of their own security needs.

It is not an uncommon tendency for the ISFJ to support their ideas and values by using only the value judgments they make about the world and other peoples behaviour. However, if this tendency is given free reign, the resulting ISFJ personality is too self-centered to be happy or successful. Since the ISFJ's dominant function is Introverted Sensing, they must balance this with an auxiliary Extraverted Feeling function. If the ISFJ uses Extraverted Feeling only to serve the purposes of Introverted Sensing, then the ISFJ is not using Extraversion effectively at all. As a result, the ISFJ does not sufficiently recognize and sympathize with the way feelings effect the behaviour of others in the world to have a good sense of why things happen as they do. 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 judgmental and full of fixed and often rather ambiguously polarized ideas about the world. Other people are often surprised by the vehemence of their ideas and are usually unable to understand how they came by them.

## *Solutions*

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

The ISFJ who is concerned with personal growth will pay close attention to their motivation for deciding what is good and bad, right and wrong. Do they try to find the feeling values of others in a situation? Or, do they value only those feelings which support a personal idea or cause? At the moment when something is felt, is the ISFJ only concerned with whether that feeling supports something they recognize as correct? Or is she/he concerned with becoming truly empathetic? To achieve a better understanding of others and the world in which they live, the ISFJ should try to put themselves into the minds of others, to locate and recognize how they have come to feel the way they do, before making judgments. They should consciously be aware of their tendency to discard anything that doesn't agree with their carefully ordered concepts, and work towards lessening this tendency. They should try to feel the way others would feel in situations, without making personal judgments about the actual situations. They should work on exercising their Feeling in a truly extraverted sense. In other words, they should use Feeling to locate the their true connections to and relationship with others for the sake of gaining a wider perspective, rather than only allowing such feeling values to support their own conclusions. The ISFJ who successfully feels things objectively may be quite a powerful force for positive change.

## *Living Happily*

Some ISFJs have difficulty fitting into our society. Their problems are often a result of an inability to flow with what is, a too negative or correcting attitude which dismays others, or unrealistic ideals and ideas about the world. These issues mostly stem from using Extraverted Feeling in a diminished manner: the lack of a strong externally focused value system allowing an often ambiguous and yet strongly defended world view which has little relation to concrete reality to control the personality. An ISFJ who attempts to feel and value the feelings of others for the sake of understanding the world around them, rather than quickly deciding how they and they alone feel, will have a clearer, more objective understanding of how society is dependant not only upon structure and correct behaviour, but also how human values make it just what it is and not something else perhaps more desirable. He or she will also be more comfortable and less likely to demand that the world and the behaviour of others conform to some abstract code of being. Such well-adjusted ISFJs 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 Feeling in an unambiguous and totally extraverted direction. It's difficult to even understand what that means, much less to incorporate that directive into your life.

### **Specific suggestions:**

- Take care to try and discover why others feel the way they do. Try to notice the connections between their feelings and the way they see the world. Don't immediately compare your own value judgments about the world to theirs; simply accept that for them this is a real and perfectly valid way of responding.
- 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 it be seen as a problem, or as an opportunity? Would it be taken seriously or lightly? 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 feels about what they are describing. Concentrate on really sensing their emotional state. Tell them how you feel and compare. Ask questions about why they feel as they do.
- 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 feeling right now. What emotions are they 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 for any length of time.

## Ten Rules to Live By to Achieve Success

1. **Feed Your Strengths!** Let your talent for recognizing harmony and balance spill out into the world around you, show your gifts to the world. Allow yourself to take opportunities to design, reorganize and rebalance things to make your home and work environments better 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 people's feelings are sometimes more important than whether they are right or wrong. 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 & 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 relationship, and recognition that their 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 feel your way into their way of seeing things.
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 and truth beneath everything.
6. **Try to Let Others Take Some of the Load.** By letting others help, 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 feelings and 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 sense of self sufficiency 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 you trust.

## References

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