

# Profile of the ISFP (Composer / Artist)

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This document contains detailed information about the *ISFP* 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 Composer

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

More than the other Artisans, Composers are in tune with their senses, and so have a sure grasp of what belongs, and what doesn't belong, in all kinds of works of art. While the other Artisans are skilled with people, tools, and entertainment, Composers have an exceptional ability—seemingly inborn—to work with subtle differences in color, tone, texture, aroma, and flavor.

Although Composers often put long, lonely hours into their artistry, they are just as impulsive as the other Artisans. They do not wait to consider their moves; rather, they act in the here and now, with little or no planning or preparation. Composers are seized by the act of artistic composition, as if caught up in a whirlwind. The act is their master, not the reverse. Composers paint or sculpt, they dance or skate, they write melodies or make recipes—or whatever—simply because they must. They climb the mountain because it is there. 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.

This ability to lose themselves in action accounts for the spectacular individual accomplishments of some Composers, and yet on their social side they show a kindness unmatched by all the other types. Composers are especially sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, and they sympathize freely with the sufferer. Some have a remarkable way with young children, almost as if there were a natural bond of sympathy and trust between them. A similar bond may be seen between some Composers and animals, even wild animals. Many Composers have an instinctive longing for the wilds, and nature seems to welcome them.

Composers are just as plentiful as the other Artisans, say nine or ten per cent of the population, but in general they are very difficult to observe and thus greatly misunderstood. Very likely the difficulty comes from their tendency not to express themselves verbally, but through their works of art. Composers are usually not interested in developing ability in public speaking, or even in

the art of conversation; they prefer to feel the pulse of life by touch, in the muscles, in the eyes, in the ears, on the tongue. Make no mistake, Composers are just as interested as other types in sharing their view of the world, and if they find a medium of non-verbal communication, or some art form, then they will express their character quite eloquently. If not, they simply remain unknown, their quietness leaving their character all but invisible.

## Portrait II – The Artist

The *ISFP* profile is also often called the *Artist*. This is how the ISFP profile is also often summarized.

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

ISFPs live in the world of sensation possibilities. They are keenly in tune with the way things look, taste, sound, feel and smell. They have a strong aesthetic appreciation for art, and are likely to be artists in some form, because they are unusually gifted at creating and composing things which will strongly affect the senses. They have a strong set of values, which they strive to consistently meet in their lives. They need to feel as if they're living their lives in accordance with what they feel is right, and will rebel against anything which conflicts with that goal. They're likely to choose jobs and careers which allow them the freedom of working towards the realization of their value-oriented personal goals.

ISFPs tend to be quiet and reserved, and difficult to get to know well. They hold back their ideas and opinions except from those who they are closest to. They are likely to be kind, gentle and sensitive in their dealings with others. They are interested in contributing to people's sense of well-being and happiness, and will put a great deal of effort and energy into tasks which they believe in.

ISFPs have a strong affinity for aesthetics and beauty. They're likely to be animal lovers, and to have a true appreciation for the beauties of nature. They're original and independent, and need to have personal space. They value people who take the time to understand the ISFP, and who support the ISFP in pursuing their goals in their own, unique way. People who don't know them well may see their unique way of life as a sign of carefree light-heartedness, but the ISFP actually takes life very seriously, constantly gathering specific information and shifting it through their value systems, in search for clarification and underlying meaning.

ISFPs are action-oriented individuals. They are "doers", and are usually uncomfortable with theorizing concepts and ideas, unless they see a practical application. They learn best in a "hands-on" environment, and consequently may become easily bored with the traditional teaching methods, which emphasize abstract thinking. They do not like impersonal analysis, and are uncomfortable with the idea of making decisions based strictly on logic. Their strong value systems demand that decisions are evaluated against their subjective beliefs, rather than against some objective rules or laws.

ISFPs are extremely perceptive and aware of others. They constantly gather specific information about people, and seek to discover what it means. They are usually penetratingly accurate in their perceptions of others.

ISFPs are warm and sympathetic. They genuinely care about people, and are strongly service-oriented in their desire to please. They have an unusually deep well of caring for those who are close to them, and are likely to show their love through actions, rather than words.

ISFPs have no desire to lead or control others, just as they have no desire to be led or controlled by others. They need space and time alone to evaluate the circumstances of their life against their value system, and are likely to respect other people's needs for the same.

The ISFP is likely to not give themselves enough credit for the things which they do extremely well. Their strong value systems can lead them to be intensely perfectionist, and cause them to judge themselves with unnecessary harshness.

The ISFP has many special gifts for the world, especially in the areas of creating artistic sensation, and selflessly serving others. Life is not likely to be extremely easy for the ISFP, because they take life so seriously, but they have the tools to make their lives and the lives of those close to them richly rewarding experiences.

## Jungian Preference Ordering

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

## Famous Composers

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- Neil Simon
- Jackie Onasis
- Steven Spielberg
- Barbra Streisand
- Mel Brooks
- Cher
- Bob Dylan
- Alan Ayckbourn

## ISFP 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.

ISFPs generally have the following traits:

- Keen awareness of their environment

- Live in the present moment
- Enjoy a slower pace – they like to take time to savor the present moment
- Dislike dealing with theory or abstract thought, unless they see a practical application
- Faithful and loyal to people and ideas which are important to them
- Individualistic, having no desire to lead or follow
- Take things seriously, although they frequently appear not to
- Special bond with children and animals
- Quiet and reserved, except with people they know extremely well
- Trusting, sensitive, and kind
- Service-oriented; they're driven to help others
- Extremely well-developed appreciation for aesthetic beauty
- Likely to be original and unconventional
- Learn best with hands-on training
- Hate being confined to strict schedules and regimens
- Need space and freedom to do things their own way
- Dislike mundane, routine tasks, but will perform them if necessary

The ISFP is a very special individual who needs to have a career which is more than a job. The middle of the road is not likely to be a place where they will be fulfilled and happy. They need to have a career which is consistent with their strong core of inner values. Since they prefer to live in the current moment, and take the time to savor it, they do not do well with some of the more fast-paced corporate environments. They need a great deal of space & freedom if they're going to function in their natural realm of acute sensory awareness. If they give free reign to their natural abilities, they may find a wonderful artist within themselves. Almost every major artist in the world has been an ISFP. Since the ISFP is so acutely aware of people's feelings and reactions, and is driven by their inner values to help people, the ISFP is also a natural counselor and teacher.

## **Career Suggestions for the ISFP**

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.

- Artist
- Musician / Composer
- Designer
- Child Care / Early Childhood Development
- Social Worker / Counselor
- Teacher
- Psychologist
- Veterinarian
- Forest Ranger
- Pediatrician

## 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”.

## ISFPs in Relationships

ISFPs are warmhearted, gentle people who take their commitments seriously, and seek lifelong relationships. They are very private people, who keep their true feelings and opinions reserved or hidden from others. This may cause them to constantly defer to their mates in their intimate relationships, which may cause problems if their mates are not extremely aware of the ISFP's feelings. Some ISFPs who are in the habit of not expressing their needs & feelings find themselves in situations throughout their life where they feel overshadowed, overlooked, or even "tread upon" by others. Highly practical and cynical by nature, these feelings may cause the ISFP to become bitter, and to either give up on their relationships, or to start using their relationships for their own personal gain. Although this problem is observed sometimes in the ISFP type, it does not seem to be present in those ISFPs who consistently express their feelings to those closest to them. These ISFPs have a very positive, warm outlook on life and love, and are not as likely to find themselves in relationships where they are taken for granted or taken advantage of. ISFPs go to great lengths to please their partners. They're very loyal and supportive, with a deep capacity for love. They detest conflict and discord, and highly value being seen and understood for who they are. They need space to live their lives in their own unique way, and will respect other's need for space.

### *Relationship Strengths*

- Warm, friendly and affirming by nature
- Usually optimistic
- Good listeners
- Good at dealing with practical day-to-day concerns
- Flexible and laid-back, usually willing to defer to their mates
- Their love of aesthetic beauty and appreciation for function makes them likely to have attractive, functional homes
- Take their commitments seriously, and seek lifelong relationships
- Likely to value and respect other's personal space
- Likely to enjoy showing their affection through acts and deeds
- Sensuous and earthy

### *Relationship Weaknesses*

- Not good at long-range financial (or other) planning
- Extreme dislike of conflict and criticism
- Focused on enjoying the present moment, they may appear lazy or slow-moving at times
- Need to have their own space, and dislike having it invaded
- May be slow to show their affection with words
- Tendency to hold back their thoughts and feelings, unless drawn out
- May become overly cynical and practical

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

## ISFPs 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

ISFPs are warm and giving people, who have a depth of emotion and caring which is not often obvious to others, except those who know them extremely well. They are usually intense people, who experience their emotions on an intense level. Although they may appear to be light-hearted, they are in fact extremely serious, and take their relationships seriously. Unlike other SP types, people with the ISFP type desire and seek lifelong, committed relationships.

ISFPs may have a problem with communication. With Introverted Feeling dominating their personality, they are more vulnerable than most to being hurt. Perhaps because of this, they tend to hold back part of themselves from others, and do not always say what they think or feel. This is especially true during conflict situations, which the ISFP abhors more than anything in the world. Confrontations and arguments are very difficult for the ISFP to deal with. They feel personally threatened in these situations. If the ISFP falls into the habit of not communicating their feelings with their partner, this could cause serious problems in the relationship over the long haul.

ISFPs need positive affirmation to be happy and feel good about themselves. They need to be praised, although they are usually uncomfortable with "gushy" praise. The greatest gift their partners can give them is the expression of their affection and admiration.

## *Sexual Tendencies*

Sexually, the ISFP approaches intimacy with complete attention, seriousness and depth. They experience lovemaking through their senses, and welcome the chance to interact with their mate at this level. They are not likely to express their feelings verbally, believing that actions speak louder than words.

## ISFPs 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

ISFPs enjoy their parenting role, and take great pride and comfort in their children. Most have a special affinity with babies and young children, and form bonds with their children when they are very young. They are very laid-back parents, and are not likely to have highly defined expectations of their children. They will gently guide their behavior, and suggest a particular direction, but their own respect of the individual psyche will cause them to be quite easy-going and non-demanding as parents. The ISFP is likely to treat their children as individuals, and encourage them to have their own role in the family.

ISFPs love to have fun, and live in the current moment. All ISFPs have a bit of little kid inside themselves, and they love to play games alongside their children. They’re special affinity towards nature and animals makes them likely to lead their children in fun outdoors activities.

ISFPs are not likely to provide a very structured environment for their children. They are also likely to have a problem with disciplining or punishing their kids. The gentle manner and kind heart of the ISFP makes it hard for them to make others unhappy – especially their own children. However, structure and discipline are important for growing children. If the other parent encourages & promotes structure, and is able to administer discipline when necessary, the parent combination may work very well without there being an obvious lack of structure. However, if the other parent is also not strong with structure or discipline, this is an area which needs to have special attention. Growing children do not have experience to decide on their own the difference between Right & Wrong. They need barriers set down in a tangible way, to help them decide.

ISFPs like to show their love in deeds rather than words, which is manifested in their doing a lot for their children. They may lavish them with gifts on Christmas day, or go out of their way to do special things for them.

The ISFP is a service-oriented person, who defines their personal worth in some part by how happy they make others. This is typical of people with the Feeling preference. The special potential problem that ISFPs face is their service-oriented attitude combined with their habit of not expressing their own needs and feelings. This combination causes some ISFPs to get taken for granted. If this happens frequently to an ISFP, they may become bitter and angry. They think of themselves as victims, and may erect barriers to keep out those who have hurt them. This may be a serious problem if the ISFP parent feels that their children are taking them for granted. The best defense against such a situation occurring is for the ISFP to get into the habit of verbalizing and communicating their needs.

ISFP parents will be loyal, dedicated and self-sacrificing to their children until they leave home. When the kids have left the nest, the ISFP will enjoy their time alone to do things for themselves. If the ISFP has not allowed themselves to become victims or victimizers in their life, they will be very good parents, and will be remembered fondly and affectionately by their children.

## **ISFPs as Friends**

ISFPs are able to get along with most of the other personality types, although they tend to be reserved around those they don't know well. They will enjoy spending time with others who share their interests, and who understand and accept the ISFP for who they are. They greatly value their space and autonomy, and appreciate other's respect for that.

The ISFP is not likely to have much patience or tolerance for those who are strongly Judging. ISFPs celebrate their own uniqueness, as well as everybody else's, and don't appreciate being judged harshly for their differences.

In work settings, the ISFP is likely to get along with most everyone, unless someone inhabits their space too much, in which case sparks may fly. Generally, the ISFP is kind-hearted and generous with those they care about, and makes a true-blue friend.

## **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 & 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.

## **ISFP Personal Growth**

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

ISFPs are creative, sensitive souls with a great capacity for love. They seek harmony, validation, and affection in their relationships with others. They value creativity and spirituality. Very sensitive and easily hurt by rejection and harshness, they are sometimes drawn to turn their love towards creatures who will love them back unconditionally, such as animals and small children. They believe heartily in unconditional love, and in an individual’s right to be themselves without being judged harshly for who they are. Of all of the types, the ISFP is most likely to believe that “Love is the answer.” For the ISFP, personal success depends upon the condition of their closest relationships, their aesthetic environment & development of their artistic creativity, their spiritual development, and how much they feel valued & accepted for their individual contributions.

### *Allowing Your Strengths to Flourish*

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

- Highly creative, artistic and spiritual, they can produce wonderful works of art, music and literature. ISFPs are natural artists. They will find great satisfaction if they encourage and develop their artistic abilities. That doesn’t mean that an ISFP has to be a famous writer or painter in order to be content. Simply the act of “creating” will be a fulfilling source of renewal and refreshment to the ISFP. An ISFP should allow himself or herself some artistic outlet, because it will add enrichment and positive energy to their life.
- They’re more spiritually aware than most people, and are more in touch with their soul than others. Most ISFPs have strong Faith. Those that don’t may feel as if they’re missing something important. An ISFP should nourish their faith.
- ISFPs have an extremely well-developed ability to appreciate aesthetic qualities. They’re usually very aware of their environment, and can easily see what works well and what doesn’t from an aesthetic perspective. If they allow this strength to flourish, they’re likely to be stylish dressers who live in a home that’s aesthetically pleasing.

- ISFPs have passionate and intense feelings.
- ISFPs are very quick-witted and spatial in their thinking. If they have the desire, they can be very good at individual sports like golf, skiing, biking, etc., because they're extremely observant and have quick reactions.
- They're usually good listeners who genuinely want to hear about someone's problems, and genuinely want to help them. This makes them outstanding counselors, and good friends. An ISFP may find great satisfaction from volunteering as a counselor.
- They accept and value people as individuals, and are strongly egalitarian. They believe that an individual has the right to be themselves, without having their attitudes and perspectives brought under scrutiny. Accordingly, they have a great deal of tolerance & acceptance dealing with people who might encounter negative judgment from society in general. They can see something positive in everyone. They believe in individuals. If they give themselves the opportunity, ISFPs can become a much-needed source of self-esteem & confidence for people who cannot find it on their own. In this way, they can nurture a "sick soul" back to health.
- Practical and detail-oriented, ISFPs are great at handling the details of a project.
- ISFPs live for the current day, and have an ability to enjoy the present moment without stressing out about the future or the past.
- They have a good ability to concentrate and focus. Accordingly, they can do well in school if they set their mind to it.

ISFPs who have developed their Extraverted Sensing to the extent that they can perceive the world about them objectively and quickly will find that they enjoy these very special gifts:

- Their strongly passionate nature combined with their natural sense of aesthetic beauty may make them gifted artists (such as Picasso, or Barbra Streisand, both reportedly ISFPs).
- Their awareness of what's going on around them combined with their great capacity to love will make them outstanding parents and caregivers.
- They will quickly identify the opportunities of a situation, and quickly act to take advantage of them. They will find that they're able to do anything that they put their mind to, although they may not find it personally satisfying. Things may seem to come easily to these ISFPs. Although they're able to conquer many different kinds of tasks and situations, these ISFPs will be happiest doing something that seems truly important to them. Although they may find that they can achieve the "mainstream" type of success with relative ease, they are not likely to find happiness along that path, unless they have especially rich and rewarding personal relationships.
- The ISFP who augments their strong, internal value system (Introverted Feeling) with a well-developed ability to recognize opportunities (Extraverted Sensing) can be a powerful force for social change.

## *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.

ISFPs are kind and creative beings with many special gifts. I would like for the ISFP to keep in mind some of the many positive things associated with being an ISFP as they read some of this more negative material. Also remember that the weaknesses associated with being an ISFP are natural to your type. Although 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.

Most of the weaker characteristics found in ISFPs are due to their dominant Feeling function overshadowing the rest of their personality. When the dominant function of Introverted Feeling overshadows everything else, the ISFP can’t use Extraverted Sensing to absorb information in a truly objective fashion. In such cases, an ISFP may show some or all of the following weaknesses in varying degrees:

- May be extremely sensitive to any kind of criticism
- May be unable to see the opportunities inherent to a situation
- May perceive criticism where none was intended
- May have skewed or unrealistic ideas about reality
- May be unable to acknowledge or hear anything that goes against their personal ideas and opinions
- May blame their problems on other people, seeing themselves as victims who are treated unfairly
- May have great anger, and show this anger with rash outpourings of bad temper
- May be unaware of appropriate social behavior
- May be oblivious to their personal appearance, or to appropriate dress
- May come across as eccentric, or perhaps even generally strange to others, without being aware of it
- May be unable to see or understand anyone else’s point of view
- May value their own opinions and feelings far above others
- May be unaware of how their behavior affects others
- May be oblivious to other people’s need
- May feel overwhelmed with tension and stress when someone expresses disagreement with the ISFP, or disapproval of the ISFP
- May develop strong judgments that are difficult to displace against people who they perceive have been oppressive or suppressive to them

- Under great stress, may feel out of control & fearful, dwelling on the “dark side” of things

## *Explanation of Problems*

Nearly all of the problematic characteristics described above can be attributed in various degrees to the common ISFP problem of only taking in data that justifies their personal opinions. ISFPs are usually very intense and sensitive people, and feel seriously threatened by criticism. They are likely to treat any point of view other than their own as criticism of their own perspective. If the ISFP does not learn how to deal with this perceived criticism, the ISFP will begin to shut out the incoming information that causes them pain. This is a natural survival technique for the ISFP personality. The main driver to the ISFP personality is Introverted Feeling, whose purpose is to maintain and honor an intensely personal system of values and morals. If an ISFP's personal value system is threatened by external influences, the ISFP shuts out the threatening data in order to preserve and honor their value system. This is totally natural, and works well to protect the individual psyche from getting hurt. However, the ISFP who exercises this type of self-protection regularly will become more and more unaware of other people's perspectives, and thus more and more isolated from a real understanding of the world that they live in. They will always find justification for their own inappropriate behaviors, and will always find fault with the external world for problems that they have in their lives. It will be difficult for them to maintain close personal relationships because they will have unreasonable expectations, and will be unable to accept blame.

It's not uncommon for the ISFP to look to the external world primarily for information that will support their ideas and values. However, if this tendency is given free reign, the resulting ISFP personality is too self-centered to be happy or successful. Since the ISFP's dominant function to their personality is Introverted Feeling, they must balance this with an auxiliary Extraverted Sensing function. The ISFP takes in information via Extraverted Sensing. This is also the ISFP's primary way of dealing with the external world. If the ISFP uses Extraverted Sensing only to serve the purposes of Introverted Feeling, then the ISFP is not using Extraversion effectively at all. As a result, the ISFP does not take in enough information about the external world to have a good sense of what's going on. 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 selfish and unrealistic. Depending on how serious the problem is, they may appear to be anything from “a bit eccentric” to “way out there”. Many times other people are unable to understand or relate to these people.

## *Solutions*

To grow as an individual, the ISFP needs to focus on opening their perspective to include a more accurate picture of what is really going on in the world. In order to be in a position in which the ISFP is able to perceive and consider data that is foreign to their internal value system, the ISFP needs to know that its value system is not threatened by the new information. The ISFP must consciously tell himself/herself that an opinion that does not concede with their own is not an indictment of their entire character.

The ISFP who is concerned with personal growth will pay close attention to their motivation for taking in information. Do they take in information to better understand a situation or concept? Or, do they take in information to support a personal idea or cause? At the moment when something is perceived, is the ISFP concerned with twisting that perception to fit in with their personal values? Or is she/he concerned with absorbing the information objectively? To achieve a better understanding of the external world, the ISFP should try to perceive information objectively, before fitting it into their value system. They should consciously be aware of their tendency to discard anything that doesn't agree with their values, and work towards lessening this tendency. They should try to see situations from other people's perspectives, without making personal judgments about the situations or the other people's perspectives. In general, they should work on exercising their Sensing in a truly Extraverted sense. In other words, they should use Sensing to take in information about the world around them for the sake of understanding the world, rather than take in information to support their own conclusions. The ISFP who successfully perceives things objectively may be quite a powerful force for positive change.

## *Living Happily*

Some ISFPs have difficulty fitting into our society. Their problems are often from unawareness of appropriate social behavior, an unawareness of how they come across to others, or unrealistic expectations of others. Any one of these three issues stem from using Extraverted Sensing in a diminished manner. An ISFP who takes in information for the sake of understanding the world around them, rather than one who takes in information only to support their own ideas, will have a clearer, more objective understanding of how society values social behaviors and attitudes. S/he will also be more aware of how they are perceived by others, and will have more realistic expectations for others' behavior within a relationship. Such well-adjusted ISFPs 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 Sensing in an 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 notice what people look like in different social situations. Look at their hair, their skin, their makeup (or lack thereof), their clothes, the condition of their clothes, their shoes, their facial expressions. Don't compare others to your own appearance, or pass judgment on their appearance, simply take in the information.
- Think of a situation in your life in which you weren't sure how to behave. Now try to understand how one or two other people would see the situation. Don't compare their behavior to your own, *i.e.* "she would know better than me what to do", or "why is it so easy for her, but so hard for me". Rather, try to understand how they would 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 talking about the other person. Concentrate on really understanding where that person is coming from with their concerns. Ask questions.

- 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 doing right now. What things are they encountering, 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!** Encourage your natural artistic abilities and creativity. Nourish your spirituality. Give yourself opportunities to help the needy or underprivileged.
2. **Face Your Weaknesses!** Realize and accept that some traits are strengths and some are weaknesses. Facing and dealing with your weaknesses doesn’t mean that you have to change who you are, it means that you want to be the best You possible. By facing your weaknesses, you are honoring your true self, rather than attacking yourself.
3. **Express Your Feelings.** Don’t let unexpressed emotions build up inside of you. If you have strong feelings, sort them out and express them, Don’t let them build up inside you to the point where they become unmanageable!
4. **Listen to Everything.** Try not to dismiss anything immediately. Let everything soak in for awhile, then apply judgment.
5. **Smile at Criticism.** Remember that people will not always agree with you or understand you, even if they value you greatly. Try to see disagreement and criticism as an opportunity for growth. In fact, that is exactly what it is.
6. **Be Aware of Others.** Remember that there are 15 other personality types out there who see things differently than you see them. Try to identify other people’s types. Try to understand their perspectives.
7. **Be Accountable for Yourself.** Remember that YOU have more control over your life than any other person has.
8. **Be Gentle in Your Expectations.** You will always be disappointed with others if you expect too much of them. Being disappointed with another person is the best way to drive them away. Treat others with the same gentleness that you would like to be treated with.
9. **Assume the Best.** Don’t distress yourself by assuming the worst. Remember that a positive attitude often creates positive situations.
10. **When in Doubt, Ask Questions!** Don’t assume that the lack of feedback is the same thing as negative feedback. If you need feedback and don’t have any, ask for it.

## References

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- [Keirse.com](http://Keirse.com)