

# Profile of the INFP (Healer / Idealist)

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This document contains detailed information about the *INFP* 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 be 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 Healer

In the Keirsey Temperament version of the Jung personality type system, the *INFP* profile is known as the *Healer*, though that is not necessarily a career suggestion. Here is Keirsey's description.

Healers present a calm and serene face to the world, and can seem shy, even distant around others. But inside they're anything but serene, having a capacity for personal caring rarely found in the other types. Healers care deeply about the inner life of a few special persons, or about a favorite cause in the world at large. And their great passion is to heal the conflicts that trouble individuals, or that divide groups, and thus to bring wholeness, or health, to themselves, their loved ones, and their community.

Healers have a profound sense of idealism that comes from a strong personal sense of right and wrong. They conceive of the world as an ethical, honorable place, full of wondrous possibilities & potential goods. To understand Healers, we must understand that their deep commitment to the positive and the good is almost boundless and selfless, inspiring them to make extraordinary sacrifices for someone or something they believe in. Set off from the rest of humanity by their privacy and scarcity, Healers can feel even more isolated in the purity of their idealism.

Also, Healers might well feel a sense of separation because of their often misunderstood childhood. Healers live a fantasy-filled childhood—they are the prince or princess of fairy tales – an attitude which, sadly, is frowned upon, or even punished, by many parents. With parents who want them to get their head out of the clouds, Healers begin to believe they are bad to be so fanciful, so dreamy, and can come to see themselves as ugly ducklings. In truth, they are quite OK just as they are, only different from most others—swans reared in a family of ducks.

At work, Healers are adaptable, welcome new ideas and new information, are patient with complicated situations, but impatient with routine details. Healers are keenly aware of people & their feelings, and relate well with most others. Because of their deep-seated reserve, however, they can work quite happily alone. When making decisions, Healers follow their heart not their head, which means they can make errors of fact, but seldom of feeling. They have a natural interest in scholarly activities and demonstrate, like the other Idealists, a remarkable facility with language. They have a gift for interpreting stories, as well as for creating them, and thus often write in lyric, poetic fashion. Frequently they hear a call to go forth into the world and help others, a call they seem ready to answer, even if they must sacrifice their own comfort.

## Portrait II – The Idealist

The *INFP* profile is also often called the *Idealist*, though it should not to be confused with the Keirsey Temperament also called the Idealist that groups all NF types. That's why I prefer the profile name the *Flower Child*, though it is not used here. Please see the [Digital Citizen](#) website for more on Temperaments. This is how the INFP profile is also often summarized.

As an INFP, 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 personal value system. Your secondary mode is external, where you take things in primarily via your iNtuition.

INFPs, more than other iNtuitive Feeling types, are focused on making the world a better place for people. Their primary goal is to find out their meaning in life. What is their purpose? How can they best serve humanity in their lives? They are idealists and perfectionists, who drive themselves hard in their quest for achieving the goals they have identified for themselves

INFPs are highly iNtuitive about people. They rely heavily on their iNtutions to guide them, and use their discoveries to constantly search for value in life. They are on a continuous mission to find the truth and meaning underlying things. Every encounter and every piece of knowledge gained gets sifted through the INFP's value system, and is evaluated to see if it has any potential to help the INFP define or refine their own path in life. The goal at the end of the path is always the same – the INFP is driven to help people and make the world a better place.

Generally thoughtful and considerate, INFPs are good listeners and put people at ease. Although they may be reserved in expressing emotion, they have a very deep well of caring & are genuinely interested in understanding people. This sincerity is sensed by others, making the INFP a valued friend and confidante. An INFP can be quite warm with people he or she knows well.

INFPs do not like conflict, and go to great lengths to avoid it. If they must face it, they will always approach it from the perspective of their feelings. In conflict situations, INFPs place little importance on who is right and who is wrong. They focus on the way that the conflict makes them feel, and indeed don't really care whether or not they're right. They don't want to feel badly. This trait sometimes makes them appear irrational and illogical in conflict situations. On the other hand, INFPs make very good mediators, and are typically good at solving other people's conflicts, because they iNtuitively understand people's perspectives and feelings, and genuinely want to help them.

INFPs are flexible and laid-back, until one of their values is violated. In the face of their value system being threatened, INFPs can become aggressive defenders, fighting passionately for their cause. When an INFP has adopted a project or job which they're interested in, it usually becomes a "cause" for them. Although they are not detail-oriented individuals, they will cover every possible detail with determination and vigor when working for their "cause".

When it comes to the mundane details of life maintenance, INFPs are typically completely unaware of such things. They might go for long periods without noticing a stain on the carpet, but carefully and meticulously brush a speck of dust off of their project booklet.

INFPs do not like to deal with hard facts and logic. Their focus on their feelings and the Human Condition makes it difficult for them to deal with impersonal judgment. They don't understand or believe in the validity of impersonal judgment, which makes them naturally rather ineffective at using it. Most INFPs will avoid impersonal analysis, although some have developed this ability & are able to be quite logical. Under stress, it's not uncommon for INFPs to misuse hard logic in the heat of anger, throwing out fact after (often inaccurate) fact in an emotional outburst.

INFPs have very high standards and are perfectionists. Consequently, they are usually hard on themselves, and don't give themselves enough credit. INFPs may have problems working on a project in a group, because their standards are likely to be higher than other members' of the group. In group situations, they may have a "control" problem. The INFP needs to work on balancing their high ideals with the requirements of everyday living. Without resolving this conflict, they will never be happy with themselves, and they may become confused & paralyzed about what to do with their lives.

INFPs are usually talented writers. They may be awkward and uncomfortable with expressing themselves verbally, but have a wonderful ability to define and express what they're feeling on paper. INFPs also appear frequently in social service professions, such as counseling or teaching. They are at their best in situations where they're working towards the public good, and in which they don't need to use hard logic.

INFPs who function in their well-developed sides can accomplish great and wonderful things, which they will rarely give themselves credit for. Some of the great, humanistic catalysts in the world have been INFPs.

## Jungian Preference Ordering

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

## Famous Healers

- Albert Schweitzer
- Princess Diana
- Richard Gere
- Audrey Hepburn
- George Orwell
- Mia Farrow
- Isabel Myers
- Aldous Huxley
- Karen Armstrong
- Mother Teresa

## INFP 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.

INFPs generally have the following traits:

- Strong value systems
- Warmly interested in people
- Service-oriented, usually putting the needs of others above their own
- Loyal and devoted to people and causes
- Future-oriented
- Growth-oriented; always want to be growing in a positive direction
- Creative and inspirational
- Flexible and laid-back, unless a ruling principle is violated
- Sensitive and complex
- Dislike dealing with details and routine work
- Original and individualistic - “out of the mainstream”
- Excellent written communication skills
- Prefer to work alone, and may have problems working on teams
- Value deep and authentic relationships
- Want to be seen and appreciated for who they are

The INFP is a special, sensitive individual who needs a career which is more than a job. The INFP needs to feel that everything they do in their lives is in accordance with their strongly-felt value systems, and is moving them and/or others in a positive, growth-oriented direction. They are driven to do something meaningful and purposeful with their lives. The INFP will be happiest in careers which allow them to live their daily lives in accordance with their values, and which work towards the greater good of humanity. It's worth mentioning that nearly all of the truly great writers in the world have been INFPs.

## **Career Suggestions for the ENFP**

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.

- Writers
- Counselors / Social Workers
- Teachers / Professors
- Psychologists
- Psychiatrists
- Musicians
- Clergy / Religious Workers

## 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 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 & 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".

## **INFPs in Relationships**

INFPs present a calm, pleasant face to the world. They appear to be tranquil and peaceful to others, with simple desires. In fact, the INFP internally feels his or her life intensely. In the relationship arena, this causes them to have a very deep capacity for love and caring which



is not frequently found with such intensity in the other types. The INFP does not devote their intense feelings towards just anyone, and are relatively reserved about expressing their innermost feelings. They reserve their deepest love and caring for a select few who are closest to them. INFPs are generally laid-back, supportive and nurturing in their close relationships. With Introverted Feeling dominating their personality, they're very sensitive and in-tune with people's feelings, and feel genuine concern and caring for others. Slow to trust others and cautious in the beginning of a relationship, an INFP will be fiercely loyal once they are committed. With their strong inner core of values, they are intense individuals who value depth & authenticity in their relationships, and hold those who understand and accept the INFP's perspectives in especially high regard. INFPs are usually adaptable and congenial, unless one of their ruling principles has been violated, in which case they stop adapting and become staunch defenders of their values. They will be uncharacteristically harsh and rigid in such a situation.

### ***Relationship Strengths***

- Warmly concerned and caring towards others
- Sensitive and perceptive about what others are feeling
- Loyal and committed - they want lifelong relationships
- Deep capacity for love and caring
- Driven to meet other's needs
- Strive for "win-win" situations
- Nurturing, supportive and encouraging
- Likely to recognize and appreciate other's need for space
- Able to express themselves well
- Flexible and diverse

### ***Relationship Weaknesses***

- May tend to be shy and reserved
- Don't like to have their "space" invaded
- Extreme dislike of conflict
- Extreme dislike of criticism
- Strong need to receive praise and positive affirmation
- May react very emotionally to stressful situations
- Have difficulty leaving a bad relationship
- Have difficulty scolding or punishing others
- Tend to be reserved about expressing their feelings
- Perfectionist tendencies may cause them to not give themselves enough credit
- Tendency to blame themselves for problems, and hold everything on their own shoulders

## **INFP 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 *INFP's natural partner* is the *ENFJ*, or the *ESFJ*. See their profiles on the [Digital Citizen](#) website. The INFP's dominant function of Introverted Feeling is best matched with a partner whose dominant function is Extraverted Feeling. The INFP/ENFJ combination is ideal, because it shares the Sensing way of perceiving, but the INFP/ESFJ combination is also a good match.

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.

## INFPs 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

INFPs feel tremendous loyalty & commitment to their relationships. With the Feeling preference dominating their personality, harmony & warm feelings are central to the INFP's being. They feel a need to be in a committed, loving relationship. If they are not involved in such a relationship, the INFP will be either actively searching for one, or creating one in their own minds.

INFPs' tendency to be idealistic and romantically-minded may cause them to fantasize frequently about a "more perfect" relationship or situation. They may also romanticize their mates into having qualities which they do not actually possess. Most INFPs have a problem with reconciling their highly idealistic and romantic views of life with the reality of their own lives, and so they are constantly somewhat unsettled with themselves and with their close personal relationships. However, the INFP's deeply-felt, sincere love for their mates and their intense dislike of conflict keeps the INFP loyal to their relationships, in spite of their troubles achieving peace of mind.

Unlike other types who tend to hold their mates up on a pedestal, the INFP's tendency to do so does not really turn into a negative thing in the relationship. INFPs hold tightly to their ideals & work hard at constantly seeing their mates on that pedestal. The frequent INFP result is a strongly affirming, proud and affectionate attitude towards their mates which stands the test of time.

INFPs are not naturally interested in administrative matters such as bill-paying and house-cleaning, but they can be very good at performing these tasks when they must. They can be really good money managers when they apply themselves.

One real problem area for the INFP is their intensive dislike of conflict and criticism. The INFP is quick to find a personal angle in any critical comment, whether or not anything personal was intended. They will tend to take any sort of criticism as a personal attack on their character, and will usually become irrational and emotional in such situations. This can be a real problem for INFPs who are involved with persons who have Thinking and Judging preferences. TJ types relate to others with a objective, decisive attitude that frequently shows an opinion on the topic of conversation. If the opinion is negative, the TJ's attitude may be threatening to the INFP, who

will tend to respond emotionally to the negativity and be vaguely but emphatically convinced that the negativity is somehow the INFP's fault.

For INFPs with extremely dominant Feeling preferences who have not developed their iNtuitive sides sufficiently to gather good data for their decision making processes, their dislike of conflict and criticism can foretell doom and gloom for intimate relationships. These INFPs will react with extreme emotional distress to conflict situations, and will not know what to do about it. Since they will have no basis for determining what action to take, they will do whatever they can to get rid of the conflict - which frequently means lashing out irrationally at others, or using guilt manipulation to get their mates to give them the positive support that they crave. This kind of behavior does not bode well for healthy, long-term relationships. Individuals who recognize this tendency in themselves should work on their ability to take criticism objectively rather than personally. They should also try to remember that conflict situations are not always their fault, and they're definitely not the end of the world. Conflict is a fact of life, and facing it & addressing it immediately avoids having to deal with it later, after it has become a much larger problem.

INFPs are very aware of their own space, and the space of others. They value their personal space, & the freedom to do their own thing. They will cherish the mate who sees the INFP for who they are, and respects their unique style & perspectives. The INFP is not likely to be overly jealous or possessive, and is likely to respect their mate's privacy & independence. In fact, the INFP is likely to not only respect their mate's perspectives and goals, but to support them with loyal firmness.

In general, INFPs are warmly affirming and loving partners who make the health of their relationships central in their lives. Although cautious in the beginning, they become firmly loyal to their committed relationships, which are likely to last a lifetime. They take their relationships very seriously, and will put forth a great deal of effort into making them work.

### *Sexual Tendencies*

Sexually, the INFP is initially slow to open up to their mates. Once their trust has been earned, the INFP will view sexual intimacy as an opportunity for expressing their deep love and affection. More than the actual sexual act, they will value giving and receiving love and sweet words. With their tendency to enjoy serving others, they may value their mates satisfaction above their own.

### **INFPs 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

INFPs are "natural" parents. They accept and enjoy the parental role, seeing it as the natural extension of their value systems. They make use of the parental role for developing and defining their values further, and consider it their task to pass their values on to their children. They take

their role quite seriously. Warm, affirming, and flexible, the INFP generally makes a gentle and easy-going parent in many respects.

INFPs do not like conflict situations, and will keep themselves flexible and diverse to promote a positive, conflict-free environment in their home. The INFP is not naturally prone to dole out punishment or discipline, and so is likely to adapt to their mate's disciplinary policy, or to rely on their mates to administer discipline with the children. In the absence of a mating parent, the INFP will need to make a conscious effort of creating a structure for their children to live within.

Although the INFP dislikes punishing others, they hold strong values and will not tolerate the violation of a strongly-held belief. If they feel that their child has truly committed a wrong, the INFP parent will not have a problem administering discipline. They will directly confront the child, stubbornly digging in their heels and demanding recourse.

The INFP parent is likely to value their children as individuals, and to give them room for growth. They will let the children have their own voice and place in the family.

Extremely loving and devoted parents, INFPs will fiercely protect and support their children. If there is an issue involving "taking sides", the INFP will always be loyal to their children.

INFPs are usually remembered by their children as loving, patient, devoted and flexible parents.

## **INFPs as Friends**

INFPs are warm and caring individuals who highly value authenticity and depth in their personal relationships. They are usually quite perceptive about other people's feelings and motives, and are consequently able to get along with all sorts of different people. However, the INFP will keep their true selves reserved from others except for a select few, with whom they will form close and lasting friendships. With their high ideals, they are likely to be drawn to other iNtuitive Feelers for their closer friendships.

With their strong need for harmony and dislike of conflict, INFPs may feel threatened by people with strong Judging and Thinking preferences. Although they're likely to be able to work well professionally with such individuals, they may have difficulty accepting or appreciating them on a personal level. They generally feel a kinship and affinity with other Feeling types.

INFPs will be valued by their confidantes as genuine, altruistic, deep, caring, original individuals.

## **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.

## **ENFP Personal Growth**

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

INFPs are creative, sensitive souls who take their lives very seriously. They seek harmony and authenticity in their relationships with others. They value creativity, spirituality, and honoring the individual self above all else. They are very tuned into inequity and unfairness against people, and get great satisfaction from conquering such injustices. An INFP is a perfectionist who will rarely allow themselves to feel successful, although they will be keenly aware of failures. INFPs also get satisfaction from being in touch with their creativity. For the INFP, personal success depends upon the condition of their closest relationships, the development of their creative abilities, and the continual support of humanity by serving people in need, fighting against injustice, or in some other way working to make the world a better place to be.

### *Allowing Your Strengths to Flourish*

As an INFP, 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 INFPs 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. INFPs are natural artists. They will find great satisfaction if they encourage and develop their artistic abilities. That doesn't mean that an INFP 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 INFP. An INFP 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 INFPs have strong Faith. Those that don't may feel as if they're missing something important. An INFP should nourish their faith.
- INFPs are very aware of social injustice, and empathize with the underdog. Their empathy for the underdog & hyper-awareness of social injustice makes them extremely compassionate and nurturing towards disadvantaged members of our society. INFPs will feel most useful & fulfilled when they are fighting to help people who have been misfortunate in our society. They may be teachers, ministers, writers, counselors or psychologists, but they will spend a lot of extra time trying to help people with special problems. An INFP can find a tremendous amount of satisfaction by enacting some kind of social change that will help the underdog.
- 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 INFP 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. They can see something positive in everyone. They believe in individuals. If they give themselves the opportunity, an INFP can become a much-needed source of self-esteem and confidence for people who cannot find it on their own. In this way, they can nurture a "sick soul" back to health.
- Usually deep and intelligent, they're able to grasp difficult concepts with relative ease. They usually do quite well academically, and will find that educating their minds nourishes their need to think deeply.

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

- They will have a great deal of insight into people's characters. They will quickly & thoroughly understand where a person is coming from by assessing their motives and feelings. These well-developed INFP individuals make outstanding psychologists (such as Isabel Briggs Myers herself) and counselors. They might also be great fiction writers, because they're able to develop very complex, real characters.
- They will quickly understand different situations, and quickly grasp new concepts. 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 INFPs. Although they're able to conquer many different kinds of tasks and situations, these INFPs 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 are living their lives with authenticity and depth.

- The INFP who augments their strong, internal value system (Introverted Feeling) with a well-developed iNtuitive way of perceiving the world (Extraverted iNtuition) can be a powerful force for social change. Their intense values and strong empathy for the underprivileged, combined with a reliable and deeply insightful understanding of the world that we live in, creates an individual with the power to make a difference (such as Mother Teresa – an INFP).

## *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.

INFPs are rare, intelligent, creative beings with many special gifts. I would like for the INFP to keep in mind some of the many positive things associated with being an INFP as they read some of this more negative material. Also remember that the weaknesses associated with being an INFP 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 INFPs are due to their dominant Feeling function overshadowing the rest of their personality. When the dominant function of Introverted Feeling overshadows everything else, INFPs can’t use Extraverted iNtuition to absorb information in a truly objective fashion. In such cases, INFPs may show these following weaknesses in varying degrees:

- May be extremely sensitive to any kind of criticism
- 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 INFP, or disapproval of the INFP
- 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 obsess about details that are unimportant to the big picture of things
- Under stress, may obsessively brood over a problem repeatedly
- May have unreasonable expectations of others
- May have difficulty maintaining close relationships, due to unreasonable expectations

### *Explanation of Problems*

Nearly all of the problematic characteristics described above can be attributed in various degrees to the common INFP problem of only taking in data that justifies their personal opinions. INFPs 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 INFP does not learn how to deal with this perceived criticism, the INFP will begin to shut out the incoming information that causes them pain. This is a natural survivalist technique for the INFP personality. The main driver to the INFP personality is Introverted Feeling, whose purpose is to maintain and honor an intensely personal system of values and morals. If an INFP's personal value system is threatened by external influences, the INFP 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 INFP 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.

INFPs have a tendency to look to the external world primarily for information that will support their ideas & values. However, if this tendency is given free reign, the resulting INFP personality will be too self-centered to be happy or successful. Since the INFP's dominant function to their personality is Introverted Feeling, they must balance this with an auxiliary Extraverted iNtuitive function. The INFP takes in information via Extraverted iNtuition. This is also the INFP's primary way of dealing with the external world. If the INFP uses Extraverted iNtuition only to serve the purposes of Introverted Feeling, then the INFP is not using Extraversion effectively at all.

As a result, the INFP 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 INFP 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 INFP is able to perceive and consider data that is foreign to their internal value system, the INFP needs to know that its value system is not threatened by the new information. The INFP must consciously tell himself/herself that an opinion that does not concede with their own is not an indictment of their entire character.

The INFP 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/cause? At the moment when something is perceived, is the INFP 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 INFP 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 iNtuition in a truly Extraverted sense. In other words, they should use iNtuition 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 INFP who successfully perceives things objectively may be quite a powerful force for positive change.

## *Living Happily*

Some INFPs have difficulty fitting into our society. Their problems are often a result of an 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 iNtuition in a diminished manner. An INFP 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. He or she 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 INFPs 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 iNtuition in an Extraverted direction. It's

difficult to even understand what that means, much less to incorporate that directive into your life, so give the specific suggestions below a try for some life improvements.

### **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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