Portrait of an ESFJ - Extraverted Sensing Feeling Judging (Extraverted Feeling with Introverted Sensing)

The Caregiver

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

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

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

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

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

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

ESFJ's who have had the benefit of being raised and surrounded by a strong value system that is ethical and centered around genuine goodness will most likely be the kindest, most generous souls who will gladly give you the shirt off of their back without a second thought. For these individuals, the selfless quality of their personality type is genuine and pure. ESFJ's who have not had the advantage of developing their own values by weighing them against a good external value system may develop very questionable values. In such cases, the ESFJ most often genuinely believes in the integrity of their skewed value system. They have no internal understanding of values to set them straight. In weighing their values against our society, they find plenty of support for whatever moral transgression they wish to justify. This type of ESFJ is a dangerous person indeed. Extraverted Feeling drives them to control and manipulate, and their lack of Intuition prevents them from seeing the big picture. They're usually quite popular and good with people, and good at manipulating them. Unlike their ENFJ cousin, they don't have Intuition to help them understand the real consequences of their actions. They are driven to manipulate other to achieve their own ends, yet they believe that they are following a solid moral code of conduct.

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

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

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

ESFJ’s incorporate many of the traits that are associated with women in our society. However, male ESFJ’s will usually not appear feminine at all. On the contrary, ESFJ’s are typically quite conscious about gender roles and will be most comfortable playing a role that suits their gender in our society. Male ESFJ’s will be quite masculine (albeit sensitive when you get to know them), and female ESFJ’s will be very feminine. ESFJ’s at their best are warm, sympathetic, helpful, cooperative, tactful, down-to-earth, practical, thorough, consistent, organized, enthusiastic, and energetic. They enjoy tradition and security, and will seek stable lives that are rich in contact with friends and family.

Jungian functional preference ordering:
Dominant: Extraverted Feeling
Auxiliary: Introverted Sensing
Tertiary: Extraverted Intuition
Inferior: Introverted Thinking

ESFJ’s generally have the following traits:

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

The ESFJ has two primary traits which will help define their best career direction: 1) they are extremely organized and enjoy creating order, and 2) much of their self-satisfaction is gotten through giving and helping others. Accordingly, they will do well at tasks which involve creating or maintaining order and structure, and they will be happiest when they are serving others.

ESFJ Relationships
ESFJ’s are warm-hearted individuals who highly value their close personal relationships. They are very service-oriented, and their own happiness is closely tied into the happiness and comfort of those around

them. They are valued for their genuine warm and caring natures, and their special ability to bring out the best in others. They usually do not handle conflict well, and may tend to be very controlling or manipulative. Relationships are central to their lives, and they put forth a great amount of energy into developing and maintaining their close interpersonal relationships. They expect the same from others.

ESFJ Strengths

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

ESFJ Weaknesses

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

What does Success mean to an ESFJ?

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

Allowing Your ESFJ Strengths to Flourish

As an ESFJ, you have gifts that are specific to your personality type that aren't natural strengths for other types. By recognizing your special gifts and encouraging their growth and development, you will more readily see your place in the world, and how you can better use your talents to achieve your dreams. Nearly all ESFJ’s will recognize the following characteristics in themselves. They should embrace and nourish these strengths:

- A strong sense of what is right and wrong
- Easily empathizes with another person
- Able to share feelings with other people
- Cares greatly about the welfare of others
- Open, honest and forthright about the way they see things

- Sensitive to the needs of others, particularly those judged to be less fortunate.
- Strongly upholds traditional and safe ways of living

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

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

Potential Problem Areas

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

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

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

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

- May be unable to correctly judge what really is for the best
- May become spiteful and extremely intractable in the face of clear logical reasoning.
- May be unable to shrug off feelings that others are not "good people".
- May be unable to acknowledge anything that goes against their certainty about the "correct" or "right" way to do things
- May attribute their own problems to arbitrary and improvable notions about the way people "ought" to behave.
- May be at a loss when confronted with situations that require basic technical expertise or clear thinking.
- May be oblivious to all but their own viewpoint, valuing their own certainties to the exclusion of others.
- May be unable to understand verbal logic, and quickly cut off other's explanations
- May be falsely certain of the true needs and feelings of others.
- May be extremely vulnerable to superstitions, religious cults and media manipulation.

- May react too quickly and too emotionally in a situation better dealt with in a more pragmatic fashion.

Explanation of Problems

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

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

The main driver to the ESFJ personality is Extraverted Feeling, whose function is to judge the relative human value of the ideas, behaviors, situations and objects they perceive. The resulting world view is tidy, and ordered according to its worth to the ESFJ's own particular character: "Everything has its place and everything in its place". If this picture of the world is threatened by external influences, the ESFJ generally tries to shut such new information out of their lives. This is totally natural, and works well to protect the individual psyche from getting hurt. However, the ESFJ who exercises this type of self-protection regularly will find they can only connect and relate with those who do not actively disturb their increasingly narrow and rigid world view. They will always find justification for their own inappropriate behaviors, and will always find fault with the outside world for problems that they have in their lives. It will be difficult for them to maintain the flexibility needed for a healthy relationship with the messy world outside because the differing ways others value things is a constant affront to their personal judgments.

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

Solutions

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

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

Living Happily in our World as an ESFJ

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

Unless you really understand Psychological Type and the nuances of the various personality functions, it's a difficult task to suddenly start to use Sensation in an unambiguous and totally introverted direction. It's difficult to even understand what that means, much less to incorporate that directive into your life. With that in mind, I am providing some specific suggestions that may help you to begin exercising your Introverted Sensation more fully:

Take care to try and discover how others see things. Try to notice the connections they make between ideas and objects. Don't immediately compare your own vision of things to theirs; simply accept that for them the world fits together in a valid way.

Think of those times and situations in your life when you felt misunderstood or disregarded by others. Now try to understand how one or two other people would see the situation. Don't try to assume they would judge as you do: "she would have to feel the same way if that happened to her", or "he would change his tune if he saw things from my point of view". Rather, try to understand how they would truly see the situation. Would they analyze it through a code of values, or see it as an opportunity to grasp a wider perspective in which a solution can be found? Would it affect them personally or would they view it impartially? Try to determine their point of view without passing judgment or comparing it to your own.

When having a conversation with a friend or relative, dedicate at least half of your time to finding out how the other person sees the world around them. Concentrate on really sensing the relationships within what they describe. Tell them how you see the world and compare. Ask questions about why things seem so to them.

Think of the people who are closest to you. As you think of each person, tell yourself "this person has their own life going on, and they are more concerned with their own life than they are with mine." Remember that this doesn't mean that they don't care about you. It's the natural order of things. Try to visualize what

that person is seeing right now. What connections are they making or enacting, what thoughts are they having? Don't pass judgment, or compare their situation to your own.

Try to identify the personality type of everyone that you come into contact with for any length of time.

Ten Rules to Live By to Achieve ESFJ Success

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

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