Portrait of an ISFJ
Introverted Sensing Feeling Judging
(Introverted Sensing with Extraverted Feeling)

The Nurturer

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

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

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

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

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

The ISFJ has an extremely well-developed sense of space, function, and aesthetic appeal. For that reason, they're likely to have beautifully furnished, functional homes. They make extremely good interior decorators. This special ability, combined with their sensitivity to

other's feelings and desires, makes them very likely to be great gift-givers - finding the right gift which will be truly appreciated by the recipient.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ISFJ's generally have the following traits:

- Large, rich inner store of information which they gather about people
- Highly observant and aware of people's feelings and reactions
- Excellent memory for details which are important to them
- Very in-tune with their surroundings - excellent sense of space and function
- Can be depended on to follow things through to completion

- Will work long and hard to see that jobs get done
- Stable, practical, down-to-earth - they dislike working with theory and abstract thought
- Dislike doing things which don't make sense to them
- Value security, tradition, and peaceful living
- Service-oriented: focused on what people need and want
- Kind and considerate
- Likely to put others' needs above their own
- Learn best with hands-on training
- Enjoy creating structure and order
- Take their responsibilities seriously
- Extremely uncomfortable with conflict and confrontation

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

ISFJ Relationships

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

ISFJ Strengths

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

ISFJ Weaknesses

- Don't pay enough attention to their own needs
- May have difficulty branching out into new territory

- Extreme dislike of conflict and criticism
- Unlikely to express their needs, which may cause pent-up frustrations to build inside
- Have difficulty leaving a bad relationship
- Have difficulty moving on after the end of a relationship

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

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

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

- You are adept at seeing the right balance, the best way to make the world look and feel good. This talent enables you to make your world reflect your inner self and become a place of security and growth in which others can feel at ease too.
- You have a gift for knowing what will make another person feel better about the world and themselves. Your valuable input to their world comes back to you in ways which aid your own personal development.
- You see clearly what is right and wrong, what grates on yourself and others, what works for harmony and what does not. Your clear recognition of these things gains you the confidence and respect of others.
- You have a great memory for things, places and events, their curious details and the relationships between them. More than this, you also remember what was both good and bad about these things. These skills show in your ability to give no nonsense advice and aid to others

- Within yourself you know, even if others do not realize it, that for as long as they are trying to do their best, you will hold the line with them to the very end. You see this as simply doing the right thing, but in fact it is a special virtue and makes you one of the most worthy of partners and friends when the chips are down.
- You work hard to get the job done, and you can be counted on the stay with it till it is finished.

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

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

Potential Problem Areas

With any gift of strength, there is an associated weakness. 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.

ISFJ's are kind, steady and responsible beings with many special gifts. I would like for the ISFJ to keep in mind some of the many positive things associated with being an ISFJ as they read some of this more negative material. Also remember that the weaknesses associated with being an ISFJ are natural to your type. 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.

Many of the weaker characteristics that are found in ISFJ's are due to their dominant and Introverted Sensing function overshadowing the rest of their personality. This generally results in two notable effects: their Extraverted Feeling function is unable to balance their sharply rendered inner perceptions with a sense of human value, whilst at the same time these very perceptions often hint at strange associations and consequences which seem always to hover darkly in the background of the world

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

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

Explanation of Problems

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

The main driver to the ISFJ personality is Introverted Sensing, whose function is to define the properties of and locate and recognize the sometimes abstract and innate qualities of and between the objects of the outer world. If an ISFJ's picture of the world is threatened by external influences, the ISFJ generally tries to shut such new information out of their lives. This is totally natural, and works well to protect the individual psyche from getting hurt. However, the ISFJ who exercises this type of self-protection regularly will become closed within a small and ever decreasing circle of those family and friends who do not actively disturb their increasingly narrow and rigid world view. They will always find justification for their own inappropriate 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 close personal relationships because they will have a negatively polarized and therefore limited ability to communicate outside of the box of their own security needs.

It is not an uncommon tendency for the ISFJ to support their ideas and values by using only the value judgments they make about the world and other peoples behavior. However, if this tendency is given free reign, the resulting ISFJ personality is too self-centered to be happy or successful. Since the ISFJ's dominant function is Introverted Sensing, they must balance this with an auxiliary Extraverted Feeling function. If the ISFJ uses Extraverted Feeling only to serve the purposes of Introverted Sensing, then the ISFJ is not using Extraversion effectively at all. As a result, the ISFJ does not sufficiently recognize and sympathize with the way feelings affect the behavior of others in the world to have a good sense of why things happen as they do. They see nothing but their own perspective, and deal with the world only so far as they need to in order to support their perspective. These individuals usually come across as somewhat judgmental and full of fixed and often rather ambiguously polarized ideas about the world. Other people are often surprised by the vehemence of their ideas and are usually unable to understand how they came by them.

Solutions

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

The ISFJ who is concerned with personal growth will pay close attention to their motivation for deciding what is good and bad, right and wrong. Do they try to find the feeling values of others in a situation? Or, do they value only those feelings which support a personal idea or cause? At the moment when something is felt, is the ISFJ only concerned with whether that feeling supports something they recognize as correct? Or is she/he concerned with becoming truly empathetic? To achieve a better understanding of others and the world in which they live, the ISFJ should try to put themselves into the minds of others, to locate and recognize how they have come to feel the way they do,

before making judgments. They should consciously be aware of their tendency to discard anything that doesn't agree with their carefully ordered concepts, and work towards lessening this tendency. They should try to feel the way others would feel in situations, without making personal judgments about the actual situations. In general, they should work on exercising their Feeling in a truly extraverted sense. In other words, they should use Feeling to locate the their true connections to and relationship with others for the sake of gaining a wider perspective, rather than only allowing such feeling values to support their own conclusions. The ISFJ who successfully feels things objectively may be quite a powerful force for positive change.

Living Happily in our World as an ISFJ

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

Take care to try and discover why others feel the way they do. Try to notice the connections between their feelings and the way they see the world. Don't immediately compare your own value judgments about the world to theirs; simply accept that for them this is a real and perfectly valid way of responding.

Think of those times and situations in your life when you felt misunderstood or disregarded by others. Now try to understand how one or two other people would see the situation. Don't try to assume they would judge as you do: "she would have to feel the same way if that happened to her", or "he would change his tune if he saw things from my point of view". Rather, try to understand how they would truly see the situation. Would it be seen as a problem, or as an opportunity? Would it be taken seriously or lightly? Try to determine their point of view without passing judgment or comparing it to your own.

When having a conversation with a friend or relative, dedicate at least half of your time to finding out how the other person feels about what they are describing. Concentrate on

really sensing their emotional state. Tell them how you feel and compare. Ask questions about why they feel as they do.

Think of the people who are closest to you. As you think of each person, tell yourself "this person has their own life going on, and they are more concerned with their own life than they are with mine." Remember that this doesn't mean that they don't care about you. It's the natural order of things. Try to visualize what that person is feeling right now. What emotions are they enacting, what thoughts are they having? Don't pass judgment, or compare their situation to your own.

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

Ten Rules to Live By to Achieve ISFJ Success

1. Feed Your Strengths! Let your talent for recognizing harmony and balance spill out into the world around you, show your gifts to the world. Allow yourself to take opportunities to design, reorganize and rebalance things to make your home and work environments better for yourself and others. Find work or a hobby which allows you to realize these strengths.
2. Face Your Weaknesses! Realize and accept that some things are never going to be how you would like them to be. Understand that other peoples feelings are sometimes more important than whether they are right or wrong. Facing and dealing with discord or differences in others doesn't mean that you have to change who you are; it means that you are giving yourself opportunities to grow. By facing your weaknesses, you 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 relationship, and recognition that their world might be very different, yet just as valid as your own.
4. Don’t be too hasty. Try to let things settle before you make a judgment, allowing others to discover the best for themselves while you feel your way into their way of seeing things.
5. Look Carefully at the World. Remember, things are not always what they seem on the surface. You might need to look deeper to discover the truth, particularly when it seems you are sure of your first quick judgment. There are layers of meaning and truth beneath everything.
6. Try to Let Others Take Some of the Load. By letting others help, you are not letting things get out of control, but are validating their own need to be a part of your life. Remember, it is better to guide another to see your point of view than keeping them out of the picture.
7. Be Accountable to Others. Remember that they need to understand you and your needs too. Express your feelings and reasons and let them become partners to your goals.
8. Don’t Hem Yourself in. Staying in your comfort zone is self defeating in the end. Try to make every day one where you get out and discover a little

something different about the world and others. This will broaden your horizons and bring new ideas and opportunities into focus.

9. Assume the Best and Seek for it. Don't wait for others to live up to your expectations. Every person has a goldmine of worth in them, just as every situation can be turned to some good. If you let yourself believe this, you will find yourself discovering ways to make it true for you.
10. When in Doubt, Ask For Help! Don't let your sense of self sufficiency leave you on the horns of a dilemma or lead you into disaster. If you are uncertain of something or someone then get input from others you trust.

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