Portrait of an ISFP - Introverted Sensing Feeling Perceiving (Introverted Feeling with Extraverted Sensing)

The Artist

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ISFP’s generally have the following traits:

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

- Need space and freedom to do things their own way
- Dislike mundane, routine tasks, but will perform them if necessary

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

ISFP Relationships

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

ISFP Strengths

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

ISFP Weaknesses

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

What does Success mean to an ISFP?

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

Allowing Your ISFP Strengths to Flourish

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

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

- ISFP’s are very quick-witted and spatial in their thinking. If they have the desire, they can be very good at individual sports like golf, skiing, biking, etc., because they're extremely observant and have quick reactions.
- They're usually good listeners who genuinely want to hear about someone's problems, and genuinely want to help them. This makes them outstanding counselors, and good friends. An ISFP may find great satisfaction from volunteering as a counselor.
- They accept and value people as individuals, and are strongly egalitarian. They believe that an individual has the right to be themselves, without having their attitudes and perspectives brought under scrutiny. Accordingly, they have a great deal of tolerance and acceptance dealing with people who might encounter negative judgment from society in general. They can see something positive in everyone. They believe in individuals. If they give themselves the opportunity, an ISFP 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.
- Practical and detail-oriented, ISFP’s are great at handling the details of a project.
- ISFP’s live for the current day, and have an ability to enjoy the present moment without stressing out about the future or the past.
- They have a good ability to concentrate and focus. Accordingly, they can do well in school if they set their mind to it.
- ISFP’s who have developed their Extraverted Sensing to the extent that they can perceive the world about them objectively and quickly will find that they enjoy these very special gifts:
- Their strongly passionate nature combined with their natural sense of aesthetic beauty may make them gifted artists (such as Picasso, or Barbra Streisand, both reportedly ISFP’s).
- Their awareness of what's going on around them combined with their great capacity to love will make them outstanding parents and caregivers.
- They will quickly identify the opportunities of a situation, and quickly act to take advantage of them. They will find that they're able to do anything that they put their mind to, although they may not find it personally satisfying. Things may seem to come easily to these ISFP’s. Although they're able to conquer many different kinds of tasks and situations, these ISFP’s will be happiest doing something that seems truly important to them. Although they may find that they can achieve the "mainstream" type of success with relative ease, they are not likely to find happiness along that path, unless they have especially rich and rewarding personal relationships.
- The ISFP who augments their strong, internal value system (Introverted Feeling) with a well-developed ability to recognize opportunities (Extraverted Sensing) can be a powerful force for social change.

Potential Problem Areas

With any gift of strength, there is an associated weakness. Without "bad", there would be no "good". Without "difficult", there would be no "easy". We value our strengths, but we often curse and ignore our weaknesses. To grow as a person and get what we want out of

life, we must not only capitalize upon our strengths, but also face our weaknesses and deal with them. That means taking a hard look at our personality type's potential problem areas.

ISFP's are kind and creative beings with many special gifts. I would like for the ISFP to keep in mind some of the many positive things associated with being an ISFP as they read some of this more negative material. Also remember that the weaknesses associated with being an ISFP are natural to your type. Although it may be depressing to read about your type's weaknesses, please remember that we offer this information to enact positive change. We want people to grow into their own potential, and to live happy and successful lives.

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

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

Explanation of Problems

Nearly all of the problematic characteristics described above can be attributed in various degrees to the common ISFP problem of only taking in data that justifies their personal opinions. ISFP's are usually very intense and sensitive people, and feel seriously

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

It’s not an uncommon tendency for the ISFP to look to the external world primarily for information that will support their ideas and values. However, if this tendency is given free reign, the resulting ISFP personality is too self-centered to be happy or successful. Since the ISFP's dominant function to their personality is Introverted Feeling, they must balance this with an auxiliary Extraverted Sensing function. The ISFP takes in information via Extraverted Sensing. This is also the ISFP's primary way of dealing with the external world. If the ISFP uses Extraverted Sensing only to serve the purposes of Introverted Feeling, then the ISFP is not using Extraversion effectively at all. As a result, the ISFP does not take in enough information about the external world to have a good sense of what's going on. They see nothing but their own perspective, and deal with the world only so far as they need to in order to support their perspective. These individuals usually come across as selfish and unrealistic. Depending on how serious the problem is, they may appear to be anything from "a bit eccentric" to "way out there". Many times other people are unable to understand or relate to these people.

Solutions

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

The ISFP who is concerned with personal growth will pay close attention to their motivation for taking in information. Do they take in information to better understand a situation or concept? Or, do they take in information to support a personal idea or cause? At the moment when something is perceived, is the ISFP concerned with twisting that perception to fit in with their personal values? Or is she/he concerned with absorbing the information objectively? To achieve a better understanding of the external world, the ISFP should try to perceive information objectively, before fitting it into their value

system. They should consciously be aware of their tendency to discard anything that doesn't agree with their values, and work towards lessening this tendency. They should try to see situations from other people's perspectives, without making personal judgments about the situations or the other people's perspectives. In general, they should work on exercising their Sensing in a truly Extraverted sense. In other words, they should use Sensing to take in information about the world around them for the sake of understanding the world, rather than take in information to support their own conclusions. The ISFP who successfully perceives things objectively may be quite a powerful force for positive change.

Living Happily in our World as an ISFP

Some ISFP's 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 Sensing in a diminished manner. An ISFP who takes in information for the sake of understanding the world around them, rather than one who takes in information only to support their own ideas, will have a clearer, more objective understanding of how society values social behaviors and attitudes. 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 ISFP'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 Sensing in an 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 Sensing more fully:

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 ISFP 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.

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