

# INFJ

PREMIUM PROFILE



16 Personalities

## What Will You Find in This Profile?

This profile is designed to cover all the main aspects of your personality and areas of your life – your type description, relationships, academic path, career and professional development, your communication and friend-making skills, parenting tips and advice, and much, much more. It combines the personality type theory with practical, real-world advice coming directly from other people who share your personality type.

Personality types have been the topic of many discussions, some of them dating back to ancient times – it is wise to draw from that source of knowledge and experience, especially when you are unsure how to handle a particular situation. This kind of knowledge gives you a lot of power – the power to control and understand yourself. As Aristotle said millennia ago, “the hardest victory is the victory over self”. Consider this profile your battle plan.

## What Does It Mean to Be an INFJ?



INFJs belong to the **Diplomat** type group, along with ENFJs, ENFPs and INFPs. They have an Introverted, Intuitive, Feeling and Judging personality:

Introverted – INFJs listen carefully, prefer solitary activities, feel more comfortable when alone than when around other people and get exhausted by social interaction.

Intuitive – INFJs are introspective, rely on their imagination, are absorbed in ideas and focus on what might happen as opposed to what is happening or has already happened.

Feeling – INFJs are sensitive, follow their hearts, keep feelings close to the surface, and focus on harmony and cooperation.

Judging – INFJs are decisive, prefer clear rules, respect deadlines, are eager to commit and seek closure.

All Diplomats prefer ideas to facts and focus on achieving consensus.

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## *The Puzzle of Personality*

Often the very first question people ask after completing our personality test is “What do these four letters mean?” We are of course referring to those mysterious acronyms like INTJ, ENFP, or ESTJ. As you may have already read in the free Type Descriptions or additional articles available on our website, each letter refers to a specific trait, with an additional variant listed at the end. But before we discuss those traits, let’s first take a brief historical detour.

Since the dawn of time, we have tried to describe and categorize ourselves in many ways. From the four temperaments of the Ancient civilizations – sanguine, choleric, melancholic and phlegmatic – to the latest advances in psychology, people have been restless in their pursuit of a good, reliable way to fit something as complex and fluid as human personality into a well-defined model. We are still some time away from being able to do that, although the current models account for the majority of our personality traits and can often predict with a high degree of confidence how we are likely to behave in specific circumstances.

That said, it is important to bear in mind that regardless of which model we rely on, our personality is just one aspect of many – our actions are also influenced by our environment, experience, and individual goals. In these profiles, we describe how people belonging to a specific personality type are *likely* to behave – however, remember that these are just indicators and tendencies, not definitive guidelines or answers. There’s a big difference between scoring 10% on a trait, and scoring 80%. This information is meant to inspire personal growth and better understanding of others, not to be taken as gospel.

Our approach has its roots in two different philosophies. One dates back to early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was the brainchild of Carl Gustav Jung, the father of analytical psychology. Jung’s theory of psychological types is perhaps the most influential creation in personality typology, and it has inspired a number of different theories, including our own. One of Jung’s key contributions was the development of the concept of *Introversion* and *Extraversion* – he theorized that each of us falls into one of these two categories, either focusing on the internal world (Introvert) or the outside world (Extravert). These terms are usually defined differently nowadays, with Extraversion being synonymous with social prowess – however, the original Jungian definitions focused on where the person tends to get their energy from. In that sense, Introversion does not imply shyness, and Extraversion does not necessarily mean good social skills.

Besides Introversion and Extraversion, Jung also coined several additional concepts. The ones most relevant to us are the so-called *Judging* functions (either *Thinking* or *Feeling*) and *Perceiving* functions (either *Sensing* or *Intuition*). According to Jung, each person prefers one of these cognitive functions and finds it most natural to rely on it in everyday situations. However, other functions also have their place and can emerge depending on the circumstances. These functions are also defined by the person's Introversion or Extraversion – e.g. someone whose dominant function is Introverted Feeling is likely to think differently from someone with Extraverted Feeling at the helm.

In the 1920s, Jung's theory was noticed by Katharine Cook Briggs, who later co-authored one of the most popular personality indicators used today, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®). Briggs was a teacher with an avid interest in personality typing, having developed her own type theory before learning of Jung's writings. Together with her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, they developed a convenient way to describe the order of each person's Jungian preferences – this is how the four-letter acronyms were born. There were four possible pairs of personality traits:

- Introversion (I) or Extraversion (E)
- Intuition (N) or Sensing (S)
- Thinking (T) or Feeling (F)
- Judging (J) or Perceiving (P)

You'll recall these terms from the paragraphs dedicated to Jung. According to the Myers-Briggs model, the first letter determines the *attitudes* of the dominant and subsequent functions, while the last letter shows which function *is* dominant. For Extraverts, the dominant function is focused on the outside world. J means that one of the Judging functions (Thinking or Feeling) is dominant; P points to one of the Perceiving functions (Intuition or Sensing). For Introverts, J and P show the auxiliary rather than dominant function – the dominant function itself is internalized. Of course, this is just a very simplified description of the Myers-Briggs theory – readers interested in learning more should read "Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type" by Isabel Briggs Myers.

Due to its simplicity and ease of use, the four-letter naming model is now shared by a number of diverse theories and approaches, such as Socionics, Keirsey Temperament Sorter®, Linda Berens' Interaction

Styles and many others. However, it is important to remember that while these acronyms may be identical or very similar, their meanings do not always overlap. One of the reasons behind such a lengthy introduction is that we want to make it clear that there is no single definition assigned to these type concepts – each theory defines them in their own way and it is entirely possible that if you meet five people who all say “I am an INFJ”, their definitions of what INFJ means are going to differ. There is certainly a lot of overlap between the theories sharing these type names – however, their type descriptions are by no means identical.

But let’s leave the typological theories aside for a moment. A different way to look at people’s personalities is through the lens of a *trait-* rather than *type-based* model. What do we mean by that? Instead of attempting to create 4 (or 8, 16, 32...) type constructs and fit people within them, we could simply define a number of traits and measure people’s preferences using well-defined scales, looking at their scores but not categorizing them. You may have heard the term *Ambivert*, which is a perfect example in this case. Ambiversion means that someone is more or less directly in the middle of the Introversion-Extraversion scale, being neither too social or outgoing, nor too withdrawn – which flies in the face of Jungian models described above. Every type-based theory is likely to have difficulties categorizing people whose scores end up right on the dividing line, regardless of how many dividing lines you have.

Trait-based theories would simply say that an Ambivert is a moderately Extraverted person and leave it at that, without assigning them a personality type. Such an approach certainly makes it much easier to reliably measure correlations between personality traits and other characteristics (e.g. political attitudes), which is why trait-based approaches dominate psychometric research – but that’s it, more or less. Unlike with type-based theories, it becomes impossible to define categories and types which could then be used as easily accessible concepts for discussions and recommendations. Consequently, while categories such as Extravert or Introvert are unavoidably limiting, they also give us a chance to describe a significant part of human personality and create theories that attempt to explain *why* we do what we do – something that a more scientifically reliable, but nondescript statement such as “you are 37% Extraverted” simply cannot do.



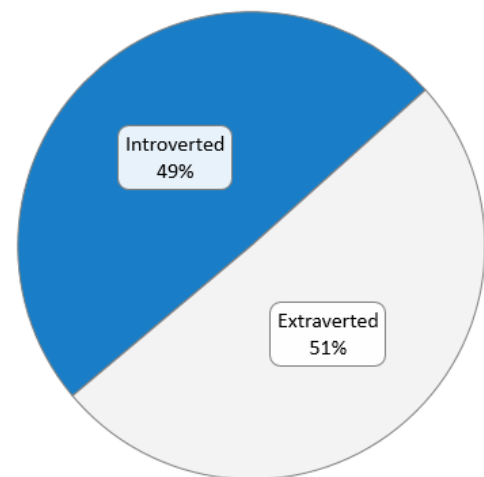
With our model, we've combined the best of both worlds. We use the acronym format introduced by Myers-Briggs due to its simplicity and convenience – however, we have redefined several Jungian traits and introduced an additional one, simplifying our model and bringing it closer to the latest developments, namely the dimensions of personality called the Big Five personality traits. Furthermore, unlike Myers-Briggs or other theories based on the Jungian model, we have not incorporated cognitive functions such as Extraverted Thinking or Introverted Sensing, or their prioritization, instead choosing five independent scales and building our types around them. This has allowed us to achieve high test accuracy while also retaining the ability to define and describe distinct personality types.

Let us now go through our five personality aspects one by one. The pie charts in each section will show the estimated distribution of each trait, based on our research and testing data.

## Five Personality Aspects

### *Mind: Introverted vs. Extraverted*

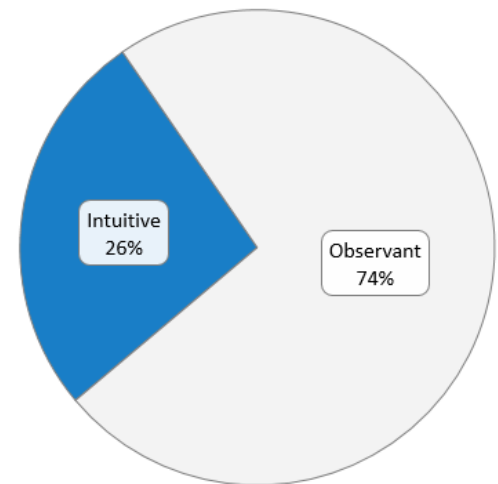
It is safe to say that this is probably the oldest notion in the history of personality theories. It has long been observed that some people are expressive, outgoing and comfortable in social situations – while others are reserved, quiet and more comfortable alone. It is as if the former (Extraverted individuals) sincerely enjoy engaging with the external world and recharge by communicating with other people, and the latter (Introverted individuals) prefer to rely on themselves and their own inner world instead of seeking stimulation from the outside. However, being Extraverted does not necessarily imply that the person will be an excellent public speaker; likewise, being Introverted does not mean that the individual is bound to be clumsy or antisocial. Rather, this trait shows the average degree of expressiveness and the overall tendency to seek stimulation from one or the other source.



INFJs are Introverted – this is why they are usually self-sufficient, have little desire to make lots and lots of friends, prefer working with ideas rather than people, and don't put a lot of emphasis on social skills. Again, these are just tendencies and likely consequences, not black-and-white, unchangeable traits. For instance, INFJs are perfectly capable of honing their social skills and becoming experts in negotiation or small talk – however, these skills would be used out of necessity, not because they find them natural or exciting. Socializing depletes INFJs' internal energy reserves quite quickly, and they always need to be able to return to their home base to recharge when that happens.

*Energy: Intuitive vs. Observant*

All personality types can be divided into groups of those who favor the Intuitive energy style (more interested in ideas, focusing on the inner world) and those of the Observant energy style (more interested in facts and observable things, focusing on the external world). In our opinion, this dichotomy is the most important – while the other four determine how you interact with the world (Introverted / Extraverted), make decisions (Thinking / Feeling) and schedule your activities (Judging / Prospecting), the chasm between Intuitive and Observant individuals is far more significant as it actually determines how you see the world and what kind of information you focus on. It may seem like your decisions are the most important, but a decision is only as good as the understanding that backs it up.



Individuals with the Intuitive preference prioritize introspection, relying on their imagination, ideas and theories. They dream, fantasize and question why things happen the way they do, always feeling slightly detached from the actual, concrete world. One could even say that these individuals never actually feel as if they truly belong to this world. They may observe other people and events, but their mind remains directed both inwards and somewhere beyond – always questioning, wondering and making connections.

In contrast, individuals with the Observant trait focus on observing the actual world. They enjoy seeing, touching, feeling and experiencing things – and leave theories to others. They want to keep their feet on the ground and focus on the present, instead of wondering why or when something might happen. Consequently, people with this preference tend to be better at dealing with facts, tools and concrete objects as opposed to introspecting or theorizing.

These traits determine the communication style as well – Intuitive individuals talk about ideas and have no difficulties with allusions or reading between the lines, while Observant types focus on facts and practical matters. This is why Intuitive types are likely to find it quite challenging to understand someone with the Observant trait, maybe even thinking that the latter is materialistic, unimaginative and simplistic. Likewise, an Observant individual is likely to think that their Intuitive conversation partner is impractical, naïve and unobservant. Both sets of assumptions can be quite damaging and it takes a mature person to get past them – but statements like these are fairly common.

INFJs are Intuitive individuals – this is why they are so good at coming up with plans, strategies and ideas. People with this personality type spend far more time engaging in various internal discussions than observing concrete things around them. INFJs are not that concerned about what *is* happening – they focus on what *might* happen or *why* something has happened. This is the skill INFJs keep improving throughout their lives, which makes them bright and imaginative thinkers.

Of course, every stick has two ends. Introspection comes at a cost – by directing all their mental resources inwards, INFJs inevitably have to discard the information that is being provided by their senses. They are likely to have difficulties dealing with concrete, practical matters, or managing large collections of facts – even missing things happening right under their nose if they are not paying attention. This is also one of the reasons INFJs tend to have so many difficulties finding a partner – as the majority of the population have the Observant trait, people with this personality type often find it very challenging to connect with others.

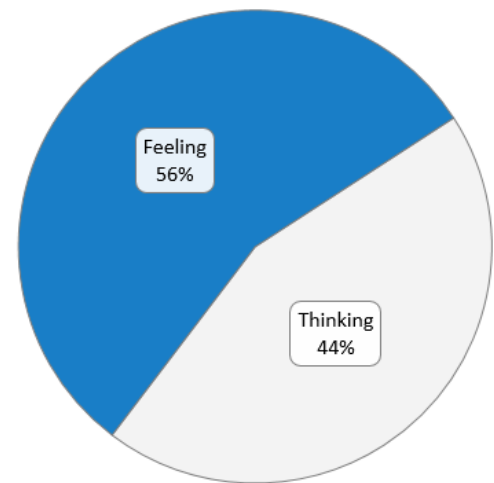
### *Nature: Thinking vs. Feeling*

This trait determines how we make decisions and cope with emotions. People with the Thinking trait seek logic and rational arguments, relying on their head rather than their heart. They also do their best to safeguard their emotions, shielding them from the outside world and making sure that they are not clearly visible. “Whatever happens, you must always keep a cool head” – this is the motto of Thinking types.

In contrast, people with the Feeling trait follow their hearts and emotions and care little about hiding them. From their perspective, we should not be afraid to listen to our innermost feelings and share them with the world – these individuals tend to be compassionate, sensitive and highly emotional.

That being said, it is important not to make the mistake of thinking that the first group is cold-blooded and indifferent, and that the second one is sentimental and irrational. This is a false dichotomy – people with the Thinking trait are often just as emotional as those with the Feeling trait, they simply try to hide and suppress their emotions; and people with the Feeling trait are fully capable of being rational, although they are likely to use different arguments, putting compassion and cooperation above efficiency and hard facts. It is unreasonable to dismiss or disparage either of these perspectives – both are perfectly valid.

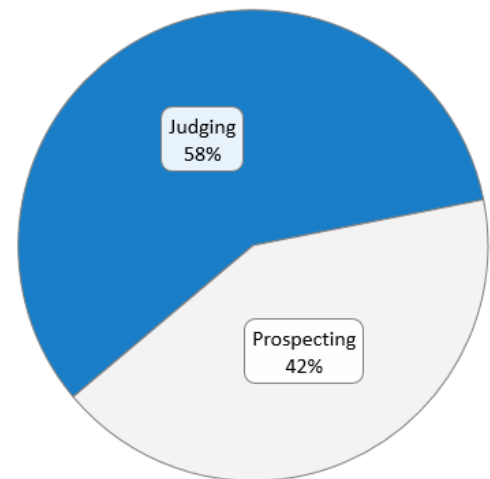
INFJs have the Feeling trait – they trust and prioritize feelings, relying on moral and ethical arguments, and doing everything they can to stay true to their deeply held principles. People with this personality type are kind and sensitive, always able to find something positive regardless of the circumstances. The Intuitive and Feeling traits form the core of the INFJ personality, making them very insightful, idealistic and open-minded individuals, capable of amazing feats, especially in fields related to morality, philosophy or diplomacy. However, they also push INFJs away from the majority of the population, sometimes making it difficult for them to relate to other people, especially when it comes to accepting what they see as egoism and self-interest.



### *Tactics: Judging vs. Prospecting*

This set of traits determines how we approach planning and available options. People with the Judging preference do not like to keep their options open – they would rather come up with five different contingency plans than just go ahead and deal with the challenges as they come. They prefer clarity and closure, always going with the plan rather than the flow. People with this trait likely keep a checklist, and when something is crossed off that list, it is done and not open to reassessment. This goes as much for groceries (“Was it on the list?”) as it does for life goals, like buying a house. Furthermore, these individuals also tend to have a very strong work ethic, putting their duties and responsibilities above everything else.

In contrast, Prospecting individuals are always scanning for opportunities and options, willing to jump at them at a moment’s notice. People with this preference are perfectly aware that life is full of possibilities and are reluctant to commit to something that might well prove to be an inferior option in the future. They are also likely to focus more on what makes them happy as opposed to what their parents, employers, or teachers expect – if a specific task is not that important or interesting, a Prospecting individual will always be able to come up with something better to do.



INFJs are Judging individuals – they are decisive and usually find it difficult to cope with uncertainty. This is what makes them excellent strategists, both willing and able to dedicate time to devising complex plans. That being said, people with this personality type are not as meticulous or rule-bound as Sentinels – they seek closure, but do not obsess over tiny details or procedures. INFJs are idea people rather than logisticians.

### *Identity: Assertive vs. Turbulent*

You may have noticed that we did not highlight either of these options, unlike before – this is because this particular trait affects all others, showing how confident you are in your abilities and decisions. Assertive individuals are emotionally stable, calm, relaxed and refuse to worry too much about minor

matters. In contrast, individuals with Turbulent identity tend to care about their image, be self-conscious, success-driven and perfectionists. This does not necessarily mean that having an Assertive identity is better – for instance, Turbulent individuals perform better in certain roles as they push themselves to achieve superior results, while Assertive ones do not care about the outcome that much. However, Assertive individuals tend to benefit from higher emotional stability and increased self-confidence.

## Type Groups

Now you know what each type consists of. But how do they fit together?

Our system has two layers: the first (inner) one defines our **Roles**, the second (outer) one – our **Strategies**.

### *Roles*

The Role layer determines our goals, interests and preferred activities. Each of the four roles covers a set of personality types that are very similar; we will use these groups later in this profile to draw contrasts and similarities between personalities. They also serve to highlight the importance we have placed on the Energy trait – each personality type will share either the Observant or the Intuitive trait with all other members of their group, as well as one other key trait.

#### *ANALYSTS (INTUITIVE AND THINKING [ \_NT\_ ] TYPES, BOTH ASSERTIVE AND TURBULENT VARIANTS)*

These personality types embrace rationality and impartiality, excelling in intellectual debates and scientific or technological fields. They are fiercely independent, open-minded, strong-willed and imaginative, approaching many things from a utilitarian perspective and being far more interested in what works than what satisfies everybody. These traits make Analysts excellent strategic thinkers, but also cause difficulties when it comes to social or romantic pursuits.

#### *DIPLOMATS (INTUITIVE AND FEELING [ \_NF\_ ] TYPES, BOTH ASSERTIVE AND TURBULENT VARIANTS)*

Diplomats focus on empathy and cooperation, shining in diplomacy and counselling. People belonging to this type group are cooperative and imaginative, often playing the role of harmonizers in their workplace or social circles. These traits make Diplomats warm, empathic and influential individuals, but also cause issues when there is a need to rely exclusively on cold rationality or make difficult decisions.

*SENTINELS (OBSERVANT AND JUDGING [ \_S\_J ] TYPES, BOTH ASSERTIVE AND TURBULENT VARIANTS)*

Sentinels are cooperative and highly practical, embracing and creating order, security and stability wherever they go. People belonging to one of these types tend to be hard working, meticulous and traditional, and excel in logistical or administrative fields, especially those that rely on clear hierarchies and rules. These personality types stick to their plans and do not shy away from difficult tasks – however, they can also be very inflexible and reluctant to accept different points of view.

*EXPLORERS (OBSERVANT AND PROSPECTING [ \_S\_P ] TYPES, BOTH ASSERTIVE AND TURBULENT VARIANTS)*

These types are the most spontaneous of all and they also share the ability to connect with their surroundings in a way that is beyond reach of other types. Explorers are utilitarian and practical, shining in situations that require quick reaction and ability to think on your feet. They are masters of tools and techniques, using them in many different ways – ranging from mastering physical tools to convincing other people. Unsurprisingly, these personality types are irreplaceable in crises, crafts and sales – however, their traits can also push them towards undertaking risky endeavors or focusing solely on sensual pleasures.

*Strategies*

The Strategy layer shows our preferred ways of doing things and achieving goals. There are four strategies:

*CONFIDENT INDIVIDUALISM (INTROVERTED AND ASSERTIVE [ I\_\_\_ (A) ] TYPES)*

Confident Individualists prefer doing things alone, choosing to rely on their own skills and instincts as opposed to seeking contact with other people. They know what they are good at and have high self-confidence. These personality types firmly believe that personal responsibility and trust in yourself are very important values. Confident Individualists do not pay much attention to other people's opinions and prefer to rely on themselves.

*PEOPLE MASTERY (EXTRAVERTED AND ASSERTIVE [ E\_\_\_ (A) ] TYPES)*

People Masters seek social contact and tend to have very good communication skills, feeling at ease in social events or in situations where they need to rely on or direct other people. These types are confident

in their abilities and do not hesitate to express their opinions. Playing an active role in the society and knowing what makes other people tick mean a lot for People Masters; however, they are not too concerned about what other people think about them.

*CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT (INTROVERTED AND TURBULENT [ I\_\_ (T) ] TYPES)*

Constant Improvers are quiet, individualistic people. They tend to be perfectionistic and success-driven, often spending a lot of time and effort making sure that the result of their work is the best it can be. As their name says, Constant Improvers are high achieving individuals dedicated to their craft – however, they also tend to worry too much about their performance.

*SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT (EXTRAVERTED AND TURBULENT [ E\_\_ (T) ] TYPES)*

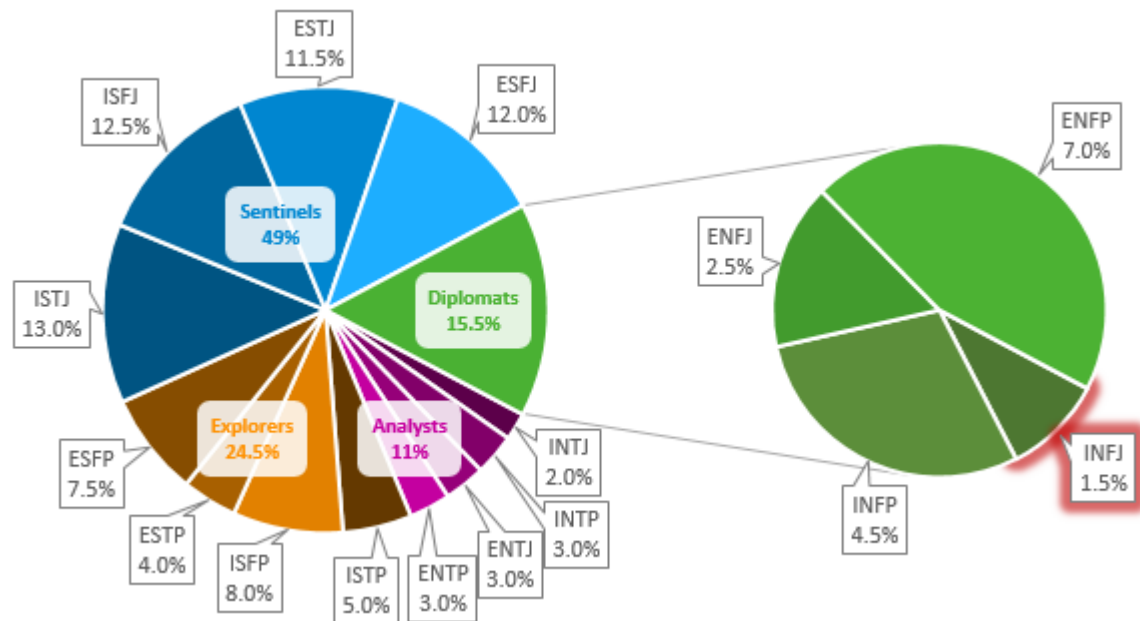
The last strategy is adopted by sociable, energetic and success-driven types. Social Engagers tend to be restless, perfectionistic individuals, prone to experiencing both very positive and very negative emotions. Their curiosity and willingness to work hard also mean that they are usually high-achieving, even if quite sensitive people. Types favoring this strategy also tend to place a lot of importance on other people's opinions; they value their social status and are eager to succeed in everything they do.

With all this in the background, let's now proceed to discussing your personality type and its place in the world!



## Type Overview

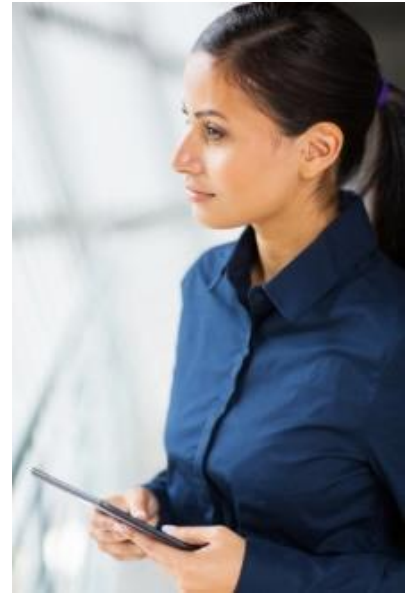
The INFJ personality type is very rare, making up less than one percent of the population, but they nonetheless leave their mark on the world. As Diplomats (NF), they have an inborn sense of idealism and morality, but what sets them apart is the accompanying Judging (J) trait – INFJs are not idle dreamers, but people capable of taking concrete steps to realize their goals and make a lasting positive impact.



INFJs tend to see helping others as their purpose in life, but while people with this personality type can be found engaging rescue efforts and doing charity work, their real passion is to get to the heart of the issue so that people need not be rescued at all.

INFJs indeed share a very unique combination of traits: though soft-spoken, they have very strong opinions and will fight tirelessly for an idea they believe in. They are decisive and strong-willed, but will rarely use that energy for personal gain – INFJs will act with creativity, imagination, conviction and sensitivity not to create advantage, but to create balance. Egalitarianism and karma are very attractive ideas to INFJs, and they tend to believe that nothing would help the world so much as using love and compassion to soften the hearts of tyrants.

INFJs find it easy to make connections with others, and have a talent for warm, sensitive language, speaking in human terms, rather than with pure logic and fact. It makes sense that their friends and colleagues will come to think of them as quiet Extroverted types, but they would all do well to remember that INFJs need time alone to decompress and recharge, and to not become too alarmed when they suddenly withdraw. INFJs take great care of other's feelings, and they expect the favor to be returned – sometimes that means giving them the space they need for a few days.



Really though, it is most important for INFJs to remember to take care of themselves. The passion of their convictions is perfectly capable of carrying them past their breaking point and if their zeal gets out of hand, they can find themselves exhausted, unhealthy and stressed. This becomes especially apparent when INFJs find themselves up against conflict and criticism – their sensitivity forces them to do everything they can to evade these seemingly personal attacks, but when the circumstances are unavoidable, they can fight back in highly irrational, unhelpful ways.

To INFJs, the world is a place full of inequity – but it doesn't have to be. No other personality type is better suited to create a movement to right a wrong, no matter how big or small. INFJs just need to remember that while they're busy taking care of the world, they need to take care of themselves, too.

Some famous INFJs:

- Jimmy Carter, former U.S. president
- Goethe, writer and politician
- Mel Gibson, actor
- Mother Teresa, missionary
- Martin Luther King, civil rights activist
- Nelson Mandela, politician
- Nicole Kidman, actress
- “James Wilson” from *House M.D.*

## *Strengths and Weaknesses*

Rare and mysterious INFJs are a puzzle not just to outsiders, but to themselves as well. They are passionate, strong-willed and insightful – a chillingly powerful combination of traits that can be used for both good and ill. INFJs are idealists and perfectionists, seeking to develop and grow in all areas. Such an approach enriches and improves their lives – however, INFJs need to have a clear direction and goal. Not only are they brimming with passion,



INFJs are very sensitive and this makes them quite vulnerable. If the INFJ wishes to grow and develop in a meaningful way, they will have to learn how to channel their energy and passion in one specific direction.

INFJs are tremendously energized by opportunities to help other people grow and develop. However, this must be preceded by and combined with their own personal growth. Only by recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses can INFJs become the leaders they have the potential to be.

## *Strengths*

- **Creative** – Combining a vivid imagination with a strong sense of compassion, INFJs use their creativity to resolve not technical challenges, but human ones. People with the INFJ personality type enjoy finding the perfect solution for someone they care about, and this strength makes them excellent counselors and advisors.
- **Insightful** – Seeing through dishonesty and disingenuous motives, INFJs step past manipulation and sales tactics and into a more honest discussion. INFJs see how people and events are connected, and are able to use that insight to get to the heart of the matter.
- **Inspiring and Convincing** – Speaking in human terms, not technical, INFJs have a fluid, inspirational writing style that appeals to the inner idealist in their audience. INFJs can even be

astonishingly good orators, speaking with warmth and passion, if they are proud of what they are speaking for.

- **Decisive** – Their creativity, insight and inspiration are able to have a real impact on the world, as INFJs are able to follow through on their ideas with conviction, willpower, and the planning necessary to see complex projects through to the end. INFJs don't just see the way things ought to be, they act on those insights.
- **Determined and Passionate** – When INFJs come to believe that something is important, they pursue that goal with a conviction and energy that can catch even their friends and loved ones off guard. INFJs will rock the boat if they have to, something not everyone likes to see, but their passion for their chosen cause is an inseparable part of their personality.
- **Altruistic** – These strengths are used for good. INFJs have strong beliefs and take the actions that they do not because they are trying to advance themselves, but because they are trying to advance an idea that they truly believe will make the world a better place.

## Weaknesses

- **Sensitive** – When someone challenges or criticizes INFJs' principles or values, they are likely to receive an alarmingly strong response. People with the INFJ personality type are highly vulnerable to criticism and conflict, and questioning their motives is the quickest way to their bad side.
- **Extremely Private** – INFJs tend to present themselves as the culmination of an idea. This is partly because they believe in this idea, but also because INFJs are extremely private when it comes to their personal lives, using this image to keep themselves from having to truly open up, even to close friends. Trusting a new friend can be even more challenging for INFJs.
- **Perfectionistic** – INFJs are all but defined by their pursuit of ideals. While this is a wonderful quality in many ways, an ideal situation is not always possible – in politics, in business, in romance – and INFJs too often drop or ignore healthy and productive situations and relationships, always believing there might be a better option down the road.

- **Always Need to Have a Cause** – INFJs get so caught up in the passion of their pursuits that any of the cumbersome administrative or maintenance work that comes between them and the ideal they see on the horizon is deeply unwelcome. INFJs like to know that they are taking concrete steps towards their goals, and if routine tasks feel like they are getting in the way, or worse yet, there is no goal at all, they will feel restless and disappointed.
- **Can Burn Out Easily** – Their passion, poor patience for routine maintenance, tendency to present themselves as an ideal, and extreme privacy tend to leave INFJs with few options for letting off steam. People with this personality type are likely to exhaust themselves in short order if they don't find a way to balance their ideals with the realities of day-to-day living.

## *Motivation and Self-Esteem*

Closely related but different, your self-esteem, self-respect and self-confidence are the sources of your motivation. Self-esteem speaks to your sense of your own worth. Self-respect speaks to how much you like yourself. Self-confidence is where you find the energy that moves you forward in your life. Much of our core motivation comes from trying to successfully satisfy these core aspects of ourselves. Think of them as three powerful psychological engines that, when understood and harnessed, can lead to a successful and fulfilling life.

However, like anything in life, if you allow these engines to overheat, they can overwhelm you, becoming a source of great difficulty. This usually happens because something in our psychological make-up needs support, so we overcompensate to gird that which feels weak to us. If for some reason we're not feeling self-confident, we might pour on the thing that gives us confidence. The problem is that sometimes we crank this compensation up too high.

We begin each of these sections by discussing the tendencies in their healthy form. When these motivators are used in a balanced way, they can help us be productive and happy. This represents the ideal expression of the motivator.

We follow with the tendencies to watch out for if the engine begins to overheat. The purpose is not to describe anyone specifically. The descriptions in the second part may sound extreme, and they probably

are for most INFJs and other Diplomats. People generally exist with different degrees of expression, somewhere between fully this and fully that. Life has a way of socializing us and balancing us regardless of our foundational traits. When reading the second part, think of it in terms of tendencies and regard it more as a cautionary tale.

Self-improvement is about stepping outside of our comfort zone to expand our lives for the better. Lastly, we suggest a simple way to get along more effectively in the world through some simple rebalancing exercises.

## Self-Esteem

**Ideal Self-Esteem:** INFJs get their sense of worth from their compassion. They need to know they have connected with other people, but not in a simple social sense – it must be deeper, perhaps even spiritual. INFJs need to exercise empathy and feel they have a purpose. Leading with their intuition and feelings, they gravitate to causes and activities that provide focus on larger, idealistic concerns. These causes also create a perfect opportunity for INFJs to connect with others and to express their passions. INFJs are altruistic and find their identity and worth in the good they do in the world. They frequently work in helping or teaching professions where they can more readily express their compassion or feel a sense of community.

**Unbalanced Self-Esteem:** Since compassion is so strongly connected to an INFJs' sense of worth, they may overcompensate to gain it should they feel it's lacking. When they do, they may take on too much. They might even become vulnerable to those who would take advantage of their need for a connection.

In the first case, the world is full of people with needs. INFJs, driven to satisfy their need to gain a stronger sense of their worth, may find themselves signing on to too much. As they go into overdrive to help others, they may end up losing themselves. Achieving sainthood may have its attractions, but living a balanced and full life is usually not one of them. Burn-out is a real danger for INFJs as they take on other people's problems – sometimes even going so far as to take full ownership of them.

Though INFJs are usually insightful when assessing other people's character, if their self-esteem is weak, they may develop blind spots. An INFJ's intense need to connect at these times may allow others to

victimize them. And unfortunately, there are plenty of people in the world who are willing to take advantage of that. People who work in prisons are advised to be careful how they demonstrate compassion. It is often seen as a sign of weakness among inmates. Not all of those who take advantage are criminals though. Sometimes bosses, families, or life-partners can begin to see INFJs as someone who cares “too much”, or they simply lean on that caring spirit like a crutch, without even realizing it. If they begin to see the INFJ as an “easy mark”, it becomes something different. When an unbalanced relationship forms, it begins to damage everyone involved.

**Rebalanced Self-Esteem:** While INFJs lead with their feelings, it’s essential that they expand their comfort zones and apply some common sense and logic, especially when dealing with others. Most would agree that there’s not enough compassion in the world, but adopting or developing a logic-based strategy for compassionate interests may help INFJs slow down and stay on a more reasonable course.

INFJs must learn to apply the same compassion they have for others to the person they see in the mirror. INFJs need to take care of themselves physically, mentally, and spiritually if they hope to continue connecting with others on a satisfying level. At times they need to practice being more objective about the people in their lives and be a bit more rational around those they care about. One way for INFJs to reframe their response to others who might be taking advantage of them is to remember that allowing such behavior is ultimately neither good for the victim nor the victimizer.

## Self-Respect

**Ideal Self-Respect:** INFJs feel good about who they are when they are doing good for others. But the good they do is more than simple good deeds. INFJs live in a world of ideas and theories and are heavily influenced by their feelings. For them, how they do good is more likely influenced by a larger ideological framework rather than random opportunism. They feel best about themselves when they stand up against evil in all its forms.

INFJs respect themselves most when they stand against injustice and cruelty. They want to see themselves as a benevolent force in the world. It doesn’t necessarily have to involve any big act – just a big idea. It can be about something as simple as dealing with a single child’s self-esteem to something as

overwhelming as world hunger. The act of doing good might be personal or global – it all depends on the other factors in their lives.

**Unbalanced Self-Respect:** It's universally accepted that we all have bad thoughts and impulses at times. We keep them mostly in check through different psychological mechanisms and self-control. It can deeply trouble INFJs that such feelings and thoughts even exist in their minds. When these malicious thoughts collide with their tendency to be both idealistic and perfectionistic, it can lead to outright self-loathing.

To INFJs, such thoughts are not the kind of thoughts a good person has. INFJs may work overtime to provide a counterbalance and to try to make sure the malicious thoughts remain subdued or overshadowed by their deeds. It's a little like everlasting penance. Perfectionism can be a hard taskmaster, especially for Turbulent INFJs. The battle to suppress these primal tendencies can sometime occur on a subconscious level. The only sign may be an overworked individual whose life is severely out-of-balance from the pursuit of so many causes.

**Rebalanced Self-Respect:** There is a Japanese aesthetic concept that encapsulates imperfection as a part of beauty called *wabi-sabi*. According to this idea, the perfect is unreal and, therefore, lacks a certain depth. A piece of pottery that's not symmetrical or has a chip is seen as beautiful, not despite its flaw, but because of it. INFJs would do well to learn to embrace the beauty of their sometimes flawed but human existence which includes occasional bad thoughts and even acts that may not be an expression of goodness. If they did so, overcompensation would become unnecessary. They wouldn't always have to be the consummate do-gooders just to like themselves. Perhaps they could even learn to like themselves *because* of their human flaws not despite them.

Some good general advice for INFJs is to get out of their heads every once in a while, in order to grow. Taking a step away from the theoretical and the ideal can go a long way in balancing INFJs' lives. There are hundreds of ways to reconnect with the physical, tangible world, such as meditation, playing a sport, dancing, doing yoga, eating mindfully, gardening, even having sex.



The trick is to reengage the physical senses in order to connect with the concrete world. Approaching the world with something as finite as touch or smell can rebalance the INFJs' drive for self-respect by helping them reconnect to that small and imperfect world of which they are a part. Such activities remind them that it's okay to be human.

## Self-Confidence

**Ideal Self-Confidence:** INFJs' confidence comes from feeling connected to their true selves. They hate anything that they regard as phony and always strive to be as real as they can. Masks, lies and insincerity are offensive to INFJs. To feel confident, INFJs have to know they are being true to who they are.

**Unbalanced Self-Confidence:** When INFJs lack confidence, it's because they begin to doubt that they are acting in accordance with their true selves. Foundational to that, INFJs have to know themselves. Since being genuine is crucial to their confidence, not knowing oneself may cause a kind of "identity panic". This overcompensation may cause them to fill in the blanks with ideas of who they think they should be instead of who they actually are. Should INFJs begin to suspect that they possess flawed self-knowledge, it can lead to further loss of confidence and a vicious cycle.

The rare INFJ identity crisis can cause a lot of confusion. It can strip INFJs of their confidence and they may begin to second-guess themselves. INFJs need to trust the answer they come up with when they ask the question, "Who am I?"

Does it sound like there's a lot going on in the mind with this scenario? That's because there is. INFJs depend greatly on their intuition and sense of how things are or should be. The battle for acquiring or maintaining the energy to go forward will be almost entirely decided in the realm of the mind for the INFJ.

**Rebalanced Self-Confidence:** INFJs naturally have an inclination to grow and to discover who they are. When Socrates reportedly advised his students to "Know Thyself", the INFJs among them certainly didn't have to be told twice. Continued self-examination should aid INFJs in focusing on their true selves and help to ensure their genuineness. From this reassurance of the nature of their genuine selves, they

will find the self-confidence they need to move forward in life. INFJs can restore their self-confidence by simply being who they are and doing what they do.

Having said that, there are many ways to accelerate the work of getting to know oneself better: seeking solitude, testing oneself by trying new and different things, critiquing different ideas and developing opinions, journaling, nurturing friendships... The list is endless. It will feel quite natural to INFJs to go on deliberate journeys of self-discovery. From there, being true to who they are and maintaining this source of confidence is the next reasonable, organic step.

## *Personal Growth*

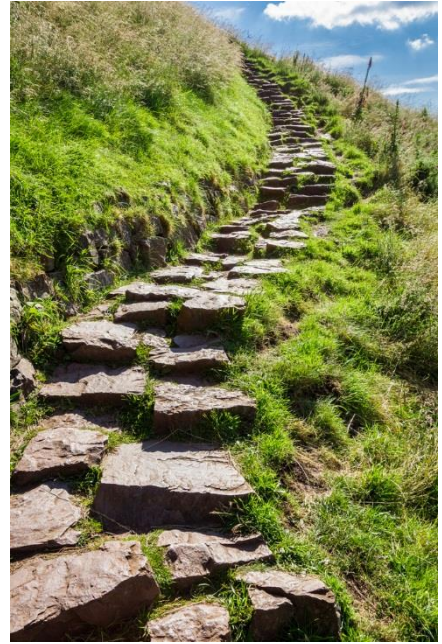
Knowing your strengths and weaknesses is great, but leveraging or addressing them is even better. Let us take a look at some of the ways to do that.

### What Things Cause the Most Problems for INFJs?

The main problem for INFJs is that they can often be too idealistic when it comes to other people and too demanding when it comes to themselves. INFJs can be visionaries and truly inspiring leaders, but their poetic justice and idealism do not always survive contact with reality. This can cause immense stress to the INFJ, which also leads to other issues such as nervousness or inability to relax. It is very important for the INFJ to recognize that the world we live in is not ideal and other people may be too preoccupied with other things to pay attention to the INFJ's ideas, no matter how noble they might be.

INFJs can also be quite intolerant when it comes to other people's weaknesses. They might fantasize about helping those who are poor and oppressed, but will probably see everybody else in a different light. INFJs find it easy to inspire and encourage people, but also expect them to go above and beyond their duties. The problem is that the INFJ is likely to set the bar very high and not everyone can meet his or her expectations. If this happens, the INFJ may feel very disappointed and may even resort to insults or, at the very least, sarcasm.

Another problem that many INFJs face is their tendency to take ownership of things – beliefs, causes, issues, and projects. People with this personality type are very dedicated and strong-willed, willing and able to spend a lot of time and effort pursuing causes that are dear to them. However, this can also overload and exhaust the INFJ, especially if they develop a deep emotional attachment to a specific cause. Giving up and letting go is a tremendous challenge for INFJs. One way to deal with this issue is to recognize what truly drives people with this personality type. The most important goal for any INFJ is to find their true self, their true identity. Consciously or unconsciously, INFJs are always seeking self-



realization, trying to understand who and what they really are. This is one of the reasons why INFJs get so attached to things they can relate to – however, it is important to realize that regardless of what a specific cause is about, it is only a reflection of certain principles. Those principles are far more important than an individual cause, as they can manifest themselves in many different ways. Consequently, it is better to leave and fight another day than to stick to a specific issue, potentially sacrificing your own happiness as a result.

INFJs are very sensitive to criticism, especially if it is directed at one of their many principles and convictions. In such situations the INFJ can fly into a rage, surprising everyone around them – naturally, this causes great emotional disturbance and can even lead to health problems later on in life. Ideas, convictions and principles are incredibly important to INFJs and are the driving force behind their idealism; however, people with this personality type should also try to develop their “rational thinking filter” to the point where it can process incoming ideas and criticism without sending their emotions and intuition into overdrive. Inability to handle criticism in a positive manner may also encourage the INFJ to refrain from asking for other people’s feedback or opinions, which may then create distance in personal and professional relationships. Caring too much what others think and trying to please everybody is a hopeless exercise, as even the best intentions may not be enough for some people. You can be the nicest, kindest person in the world, and there is still going to be somebody who would take pleasure in criticizing you.

Relentless perfectionism is another weakness that many INFJs share. People with this personality type are often highly critical of themselves, but that attitude may be directed towards others as well. It is important to remember that not everyone shares your principles, goals or dedication – different people seek different things and what is important for an INFJ may be trivial to someone with another personality type. Do not give so much that you forget to care for yourself. Perfectionism also leads to more stress, which is never a good thing, especially for someone who is Introverted – the frustration and disappointment can start building up inside, like a ticking bomb that can cause health issues and damage relationships later on. You can only learn and progress if you make mistakes, so embrace them instead of trying to be perfect.

Moving forward, it is also important to mention that INFJs are likely to have some problems due to their tendency to believe that they are always right. Mature and experienced INFJs may not be affected by this as much as the younger ones, but such a trait unavoidably comes with the idealism that is evident in all areas of the INFJ's life. INFJs should remember that even though their idea may be truly commendable, this does not necessarily mean that it is the best one or that they are bound to be right about the best way to implement it. INFJs are naturally warm and able to connect to other people quite effortlessly – they should not hesitate to use such traits to share their idealism with others and get constructive feedback instead of pushing forward with a specific idea. The latter approach often provokes resistance from other people, even though the idea may be perfectly valid. This will confuse and hurt the INFJ, pushing them towards the (wrong) conclusion that other people are too close-minded or careless to appreciate their ideas.

INFJs also need to make sure that they do not get distracted by the big ideas. Being goal-oriented and idealistic, people with this personality type often direct all their attention to the ultimate goal, missing little yet important details. Sometimes a great and noble project can fail because someone forgot to check the legal details, handle administrative tasks, or estimate the workload. The tactical preference for Judging pushes INFJs to commit sooner rather than later, but it is important to learn how to exercise control over your ideas and to avoid getting too excited too fast.

Another area that we should cover here is INFJs' social skills. This is one thing that always comes up in our surveys – many INFJs state outright that they have issues in this area. Let us first discuss why this happens.

All Diplomats share the combination of Intuitive and Feeling traits, feeling most comfortable in the world of ideas and principles as opposed to facts and strictly down-to-earth, practical matters. This is why they dislike small talk – it forces Diplomats to discuss topics that they are mostly unfamiliar with. Gossip, sports and various details of daily life (“Guess what I saw at the bus stop this morning...”) rarely interest people belonging to this type group – consequently, finding something to talk about can be a real challenge. While silence works well as a negotiation tactic, it makes most people really uncomfortable in casual conversations. Out of all Diplomats, INFJs are the ones most likely to be hindered by this – people

with this personality type are Introverted, which means that they are used to being alone and engaging in self-reflection as opposed to relying on external connections; and they also prefer Judging to Prospecting when it comes to tactics, which forces them to seek closure instead of simply going with the flow of conversation. The combination of these traits can make it difficult for INFJs to engage in small talk and leads to awkwardness in social situations, especially if the other person is not willing to take the lead. In turn, the INFJ may often experience anxiety well in advance of a social event, knowing that it is likely to be a challenge.

There are two things to be considered here. One is that the ability to make small talk can be developed just like any other skill. INFJs are good at coming up with plans and ideas, and there is no reason why small talk should not be approached just like any other challenge. There is plenty of advice available on the internet (for instance, [Lifehack](#) suggests focusing on F.O.R.M. – Family, Occupation, Recreation and Money), so we will not go into specifics here – however, it is worth pointing out that everything boils down to the fact that the main purpose of small talk is to serve as a gateway leading to a deeper, more meaningful conversation. It also has other uses, such as getting a quick glimpse into another person's personality and making them feel more important – so there are plenty of reasons why you should take time to develop this skill.

Another thing is that the ability to make small talk does not represent the entire spectrum of social skills. INFJs can be very eloquent and convincing when they are talking about something that greatly interests them – they are perfectly capable of painting an impressive picture with their words. Likewise, they are unlikely to have any difficulties keeping up their side of the conversation if they are talking with another like-minded Diplomat. There is no reason to think that there is something wrong with you if you simply have poor small talk skills – in all likelihood, you have spent just a tiny amount of time practicing them, when compared to nearly any Extrovert. Of course you will be at a disadvantage. However, if you break this issue down into its basic building blocks and strategies, you will find that it is far less scary than it looks. Most people love talking about themselves, all they need is a little encouragement. For instance, simply try to listen to what they are saying and then ask some basic follow-up questions (e.g. “I was thinking about joining the Army, but went into hotel management instead”) leads to at least two questions – one about the Army, another one about hotels. Do not focus on what you are going to say

next or think that you are obliged to immediately offer some information about yourself in return. There are plenty of things that make small talk much easier – just do the necessary research. This (and practice, of course) will make your life much easier in social situations.

However, it is worth remembering that small talk is just the exterior layer, the tool that is used to ease into more serious topics. Knowing all the tips and strategies in the world will not help if you start feeling fidgety and anxious the moment someone asks you a question. If you are feeling really uncomfortable in social situations, your true self-confidence will show, and this is what you need to work on. It is often said that actual talking is just one part of the conversation, and a small one at that – your body language is far more critical. Just a quick example to illustrate the value of self-confidence: imagine two well-dressed gentlemen in a high-end restaurant, both having chicken for dinner. One is anxiously trying to cut some meat off the bone using a fork and a knife, doing his best to maintain composure. The other one is completely relaxed and is simply holding the chicken drumstick with one of his hands. The latter will look infinitely better – you may wonder for a moment why he is eating this way in a really nice restaurant, but his calmness and self-confidence will be far more important than his use of utensils. The same applies to social situations – you need to know the basic techniques, but they will not really mean anything if your body language is screaming “I am uncomfortable”. It is very important to work on the presentation of self-confidence as well, especially if you are actively trying to meet new people, e.g. a potential partner. We have already covered this in the previous section – focus on things that make you tick and you should have no problems building your self-confidence.

Now that we have covered the main weaknesses of this personality type, let us move on to their strengths.

## How to Make Good Use of INFJ Traits

To begin with, INFJs are extremely perceptive and can easily notice patterns and connections that may not be as obvious to other people. This allows them to design complex systems and process flows – this trait is very rare among Feeling types. Still more impressive, INFJs are able to base such systems on human beings rather than technology. Such an approach unlocks truly unlimited potential, allowing

INFJs to tap into the pool of other people's talents and ideas. An INFJ should recognize that this one of their key strengths and try to develop their perceptive and planning abilities.

INFJs are also great at written communication. Their writing style is very smooth, pleasant and convincing – every INFJ should develop such skills and rely on them when it comes to conveying a message or an idea. The rapid expansion of the internet has been an enormous boon to INFJs, giving them many excellent opportunities to exercise those writing skills and reach a global audience. Unfortunately, many people are still quite unfamiliar with the way the internet works and that includes many INFJs, as they are not naturally interested in technology and science. However, things like blogging are a great way to express your thoughts and ideas – INFJs should not be afraid to express themselves, especially in writing.

INFJs tend to be very empathic, wise and determined – these traits should be cherished and used in a way that is beneficial to society. It is possible that, after overestimating their abilities or other people's willingness to follow their idealistic ideals, the INFJ will feel burned and will try to withdraw from social activities. This is one of the worst mistakes an INFJ can make – this personality type is meant to guide and inspire people, and it would be a shame to see such talents go to waste. Later on in life, INFJs can easily become powerful and influential community leaders or politicians, but such achievements require impressive personal growth and constant exposure to people who do not necessarily share the same ideals. That being said, it is important to remember that people may not always want to hear what you have to say, especially if it concerns their fears and insecurities – even if they are the ones asking for advice. It takes a strong person to recognize that they are imperfect, and many people will actively fight that idea, expecting the INFJ to reaffirm that they are doing the right thing, instead of looking for honest advice or criticism. Bear this in mind when you are asked for help – that person may not actually want it.

Next, INFJs are capable of looking at a problem from many different perspectives. This trait should be recognized and fostered, as people with this personality type are also prone to rushing ahead with their ideas without spending much time reflecting on them. This is one area where perfectionistic and idealistic tendencies should definitely be kept at bay – INFJs should try to analyze the idea from several



different angles first and only then start thinking of the possible ways to implement it. INFJs are both dreamers and doers – and both sides are equally important.

The INFJ's mind is at its best when it comes to analyzing tendencies and hidden meanings or devising unusual ways to achieve a specific goal. INFJs can process incoming information in a systematic way, quickly determining its usefulness and validity, and then place that piece of the puzzle in the right drawer deep within their mind. This makes them insightful and imaginative, but there is one caveat. In order to achieve the full potential of their abilities, INFJs need to maintain a balance between their Intuitive and Feeling traits. Think of this in terms of checks and balances. Used properly, the Intuitive trait should be given the priority when it comes to generating ideas, but the Feeling trait should then step in and force the INFJ to make the decision and pick one idea, setting aside the others. Similarly, the Feeling trait should be used to make decisions, provided that it also leaves enough room for the Intuitive trait that is responsible for coming up with fresh ideas.

INFJs can be very determined and passionate if they truly care about something. However, they should make a conscious effort to keep their mind focused on one project instead of jumping from one topic to another. The INFJ mind is not meant for routine things or following steps A, B, C, D... - it will jump from A to D, then back to C, then think of a better way to handle B and so on. It is important for an INFJ to keep this tendency in check in order to guarantee a project's success. As Thomas Edison once said, "Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety nine percent perspiration." INFJs need to make sure that their mind always stays on track, especially if that phase of the process is relatively dull – never lose sight of the actual goal.

We will finish this section by pointing out that one of the most surprising (and inspiring) things about INFJs is that regardless of all their weak points, people with this personality type often say that they would not change one thing about themselves. INFJs know they are not perfect, but they are very good at drawing upon their inner strength and imagination. There are plenty of people who like to say that they would "fix" themselves in so many ways if they had a chance – this is not the case with INFJs. We have recently conducted a survey of 50+ INFJs, asking them what aspect of their personality they would change given a chance – and a strikingly high number of respondents stated that they would not change

a thing or that they would simply like to learn how to use their gifts in a more effective way. Not a single INFJ stated that they would like to change something radical, in stark contrast with other personality types.

At first glance, this may seem strange, bearing in mind that INFJs have some very unusual and potentially challenging traits. However, it is perfectly understandable why people with this personality type may feel that way. INFJs like to explore everything – secrets of human nature, principles and causes, depths of their own mind – and more often than not they are able to find a way to improve things they do not like. Unsurprisingly, most INFJs are well aware of what their weaknesses are and they know how to address them, if necessary. Many even say that there is no such thing as a weakness, and that it is all a matter of perspective. And they are right – some people are better at certain things than others, but that does not mean that everyone should strive to be good at everything.

Most importantly, you need to be happy with yourself – do not try to meet other people’s expectations, or work hard on developing traits that society says are valuable but that go against who you are. As you are probably well aware, INFJs (especially INFJ men) are really rare, so it is completely understandable that many of the things that the wider society seems to value – such as seeking materialistic rewards, socializing, or following the well-travelled path of study-work-buy a house – may seem forced and unnatural to you. Society, especially in the Western world, is dominated by Observant types (especially Sentinels), who usually get to set the rules spelling out which traits are considered strengths and which ones are seen as weaknesses. However, this does not mean that you need to change who you are in order to be successful – recognize your weak points, but do not try to mold your personality to suit someone else’s expectations.

## Your Dark Side

Each personality type has its dark side – it may emerge under extreme stress or fatigue, especially if the individual is frustrated by their real or perceived weaknesses. In those cases, their “evil twin” may manifest itself as the complete opposite of their personality, throwing the underdeveloped shadow traits into the light. Outwardly, it would seem as if the individual has suddenly decided to adopt a completely

different approach to many things, including their career, romantic relationships, habits and so on. Inside, the individual is likely to feel confused and split between two completely different worldviews.

In some circumstances, such a change may not be sudden or short-lived – the individual may choose, either consciously or unconsciously, to behave in this way for a very long time if, for instance, they seek to fight their overly protective parents, restrictive environment, or bad memories. Some examples of such behavior could be: an exemplary student leaving their parents' house and becoming a party animal in college; a sociable, friendly and sensitive guy purposefully isolating himself from the outside world and being obsessed by radical ideas after a senseless crime committed against his close friend; or a quiet, conservative girl suffering from a bad break-up suddenly becoming far more liberal, or embracing a completely different philosophy when it comes to choosing partners.

It is not impossible that the individual's social circle will encourage them as well, by complimenting the clearly visible changes, e.g. more spontaneity, sensitivity or willingness to take risks – this would also reassure the individual, maybe even leading them towards a conclusion that this is actually their “real” personality and their previous persona was just a repressed version of their “real” self.

INFJs are not an exception to this rule. Your “evil twin” would be an unhealthy version of the ESTP personality – it may push you towards things like being very cynical, taking extreme risks, engaging in pointless repetitive activities, befriending random strangers, drinking, or gambling. This may even feel liberating at times – for instance, you may feel strangely energized by social interaction or risky decisions that pay off – but that state is likely to be short-lived, succeeded by feelings of emptiness and confusion.

In such circumstances, it is important to remember to stop and think hard about who you truly are and whether your behavior is a true reflection of your inner self, or only a temporary mirage created by your mind to serve some kind of purpose (e.g. to try something completely different). Do not think about what you *are* (an engineer, a nice guy or a brilliant student) – that is irrelevant. Rather, think about what you can *do*. Pick up a blank sheet of paper and a pen, sit down and try to think of your purpose in life, of something that you would really, really want to create, experience or achieve in 5, 10 or 20 years. Any random thought will do, just keep writing them all down. You will definitely know when you have hit the right one – it may even make you cry. That will be the definition and reflection of your true self.

Simply being familiar with the fact that each one of us has a dark side is a good thing – this will enable you to spot when that “switch” has happened, either within yourself or within someone close to you. Otherwise, you may be oblivious to what is going on and even think that it would be a good idea to shut down any doubts and simply “double up” on whatever you are doing, getting drawn deeper into the never-ending spiral of cheating yourself. It is one thing to use and develop your weaker traits wisely – it is quite another to give in and let them lead the way completely unchallenged.

## Emotional Stability

Another important area related to INFJs’ personal growth is emotional stability. This is determined by the last trait that we discussed in the “INFJ Type Traits” section above (the “Identity” subsection) – you would have also seen your personal score after completing our personality test. There are two sides of the “Identity” scale:

- Assertive – people with the Assertive identity are emotionally stable, calm, relaxed and refuse to worry too much.
- Turbulent – people with the Turbulent identity are self-conscious, perfectionists, care about their image and tend to be success-driven.

Most individuals are close to the middle on this particular scale, although that depends on the social environment and sex of the individual. For instance, women tend to be further to the right side of the scale (i.e. more likely to have a Turbulent identity), although that varies from region to region – sex differences are negligible in Africa and Asia, but rather significant in the Western world.

If you are an Assertive INFJ, you are likely to be quite comfortable with your identity – you know what your strengths and weaknesses are, and do not hesitate to leverage them where possible. You may be relatively perfectionistic, but you do not go overboard with it, knowing that no one is perfect and no project is worth obsessing too much about. Similarly, you do not feel threatened by minor challenges, remaining calm and focused in stressful situations. All INFJs tend to be rather firm when it comes to principles and ideals that are important to them, but Assertive INFJs go further, feeling confident about their convictions regardless of the opposition. Furthermore, Assertive individuals are unlikely to

internalize emotions, instead choosing to express them freely – this means that even deep down, they are not really affected by either negative or positive feelings. They rarely get stressed or excited, staying calm and composed at all times.

On the other hand, Assertive identity is not always a positive thing. A certain level of self-consciousness or occasional “emotional rollercoasters” can be quite useful, especially from the personal development perspective – for instance, Assertive INFJs are likely to have a lower drive, and potentially productivity, due to lower sensitivity to negative outcomes. People with this variant of the INFJ personality also tend to be more forceful and self-confident, which can isolate them from other people – it is important to remember that INFJs have a rather unique set of traits and skills, and these differences set them apart, even without taking Assertive identity into account.

In contrast, if you have a Turbulent identity, you are likely to be rather anxious about your performance and prone to worrying too much about the consequences of your actions. As an INFJ, you would still be rather confident in your ideas, knowing that you are empathic, sensitive and moral – however, it is also likely that you would push yourself to the limit, internalizing all the stress and worry that would inevitably accompany your perfectionism. Deep down, you may also care about how other people perceive you (or how your ideal self would perceive you), even though you may do your best to not reveal that sensitive side of yours. This would lead to certain “emotional rollercoasters”, with you feeling at the top of the world when you see your ideas become reality, and then plunging into the abyss when you are forced to face your weaknesses or when you feel lost or can no longer cope with the workload. Turbulent identity is inseparable from higher stress levels, which can also lead to health problems if left unaddressed.

Then again, there are certain advantages to having a Turbulent identity. For instance, it could be argued that because Turbulent INFJs are more success-driven and self-conscious than their Assertive cousins, they can also potentially achieve better results and become more well-rounded individuals instead of feeling satisfied with where and who they are.

Regardless of whether you are an Assertive or a Turbulent INFJ, everything depends on your willingness and ability to address the challenges posed by your identity type. Each side has its own advantages and

disadvantages, although generally you should try to stay close to the middle of this scale in order to achieve optimal results and grow as an individual. If you have an Assertive identity, learn to recognize the benefits of setting more difficult goals for yourself and occasionally giving in to your emotions – they are an inseparable part of our lives and Assertive INFJs should not try to present themselves as principled warriors who cannot be affected by mood swings or social expectations. Similarly, if you have a Turbulent identity, learn how not to internalize stress or negative emotions, and do not see yourself as a superhuman who must always aim for the best and never fail.

## *Romantic Relationships*



When it comes to romantic relationships, INFJs take the process of finding a partner seriously. Not ones for casual encounters, people with the INFJ personality type instead look for depth and meaning in their relationships. INFJs will take the time necessary to find someone they truly connect with – once they’ve found that someone, their relationships will reach a level of depth and sincerity that most people can only dream of.

Getting to that point can sometimes be a challenge for potential partners, especially if they are the impatient type, as INFJs are often perfectionistic and picky. People with this personality type aren’t easily talked into something they don’t want, and if someone doesn’t pick up on that, it’s a trespass that is unlikely to be forgiven, particularly in the early stages of dating. Even worse is if a suitor tries to resort to manipulation or lying, as INFJs will see right through it, and if there’s anything they have a poor tolerance for in a relationship, it is inauthenticity. One of the things INFJs find most important is establishing genuine, deep connections with the people they care about.

INFJs will go out of their way to seek out people who share their desire for authenticity, and out of their way to avoid those who don’t, especially when looking for a partner. All that being said, INFJs often have the advantage of desirability – they are warm, friendly, caring and insightful, seeing past facades and the obvious to understand others’ thoughts and emotions.

INFJs are enthusiastic in their relationships, and there is a sense of wisdom behind their spontaneity, allowing them to pleasantly surprise their partners again and again. INFJs aren’t afraid to show their love, and they feel it unconditionally, creating a depth to the relationship that can hardly be described in conventional terms. Relationships with INFJs are not for the uncommitted or the shallow.

When it comes to intimacy, INFJs look for a connection that goes beyond the physical, embracing the emotional and even spiritual connection they have with their partner. People with the INFJ personality type are passionate partners, and see intimacy as a way to express their love and to make their partners happy. INFJs cherish not just the act of being in a relationship, but what it means to become one with another person, in mind, body and soul.

Ultimately, INFJs want to find their soulmate, their one true love, the person they can truly bond with – everything else is secondary. INFJs do not really want their relationship to be the source of intellectual stimulation (like Analysts do), or fun (sought by Explorers), or stability (cherished by Sentinels). The INFJ will not settle if they do not feel a connection at the deepest level. However, once they do settle, the INFJ's dedication and passion tend to leave all other personality types far behind – people with this personality type see their relationships as eternal, unbreakable bonds, throwing everything they have at making their partner happy.

Preferred partners: ENFP and ENTP types, as their Extraversion and Prospecting traits counterbalance INFJs' Introversion and Judging traits. INTJs are also a very strong match as the intuitive connection between INFJ and INTJ is likely to be instantaneous.

## Potential Pairings

Let us now take a look at all potential trait pairings – this will help you understand how those combinations work in romantic relationships. Each combination of traits brings different things into the relationship, sometimes positive and sometimes negative – knowing what to expect will definitely help you further down the road. However, please remember that each individual is unique, and what is true for one may not be true for another. Ultimately, you will be responsible for figuring out what exact role these traits play in your relationship.



### *An Introverted (I) Partner*

The best thing about being in a relationship with another Introvert is that you both are likely to be entirely self-sufficient. Spending time alone is not going to scare you that much – nor would the idea of staying at home and doing something together instead of going out. As an INFJ, you are not going to feel a strong need to be around other people – talking with your partner will suffice.



You will also be in a good position when it comes to resolving problems in a relationship. As Introverts, you will both be used to discussing something and then going through all the details in your mind, as opposed to dealing with it externally, i.e. by relying on the actual discussion process.

As Introverts, you will have been pushed to "go out and socialize" numerous times in your lives. This is not going to happen in your relationship – in all likelihood, having a couple of close friends will fulfill all your socialization needs. Perhaps surprisingly, many INFJs tend to have excellent social skills and are able to use them where necessary; therefore, it is quite likely that you will assume the leading role when it comes to socializing and making new connections.

On the other hand, this is what brings us to the next part, where we talk about the difficulties you are likely to face. As you are both going to be quite reserved, you will likely have a situation where neither partner is willing to step up and push the other to socialize – or take the lead in a social event that you cannot escape from (e.g. the wedding of a relative). Despite being Introverts, you are going to need at least some socialization if you want to avoid feeling isolated. The fact that you both are used to dodging social interaction is going to make this difficult.

You may also have difficulties when it comes to resolving conflicts. As mentioned above, introspection is great when you are analyzing your mistakes – the problem is that you need to become aware of those mistakes to begin with. As you both are likely to keep your thoughts to yourselves instead of throwing

them out in the open, you will probably encounter many situations where one of the partners is keeping feelings of resentment inside, allowing them to build up, instead of talking about them. INFJs are especially vulnerable to this due to their tendency to do everything possible to keep their sensitive inner core hidden from the world. You will have to consciously work on improving your communication and get used to opening up.

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Be patient.** Your potential partner may need a lot of time to open up to you.
2. **When dating, choose locations without much social pressure.** Your potential partner may feel uncomfortable with many other people around.
3. **Do not overcompensate.** Small talk is unavoidable in the dating phase, but you are unlikely to be good at it. Do not overcompensate by trying to appear chatty and sociable or pushing your potential partner to talk. At best, you will look insecure and the other person will feel uncomfortable.
4. **Speak up.** Once you transition into a relationship, you will need to remind yourself to share your thoughts with your partner instead of sticking to your habit of keep everything to yourself. Communication is key in an Introvert-Introvert relationship.
5. **Do not get stuck in a bubble.** You may both have difficulties when it comes to socializing with other people. Make sure that you do not falsely reassure each other that such interaction is completely unnecessary, even though this may seem to be an easy option.

### *An Extraverted (E) Partner*

The best thing about being in a relationship with someone who does not share your first trait is that you are going to balance each other out quite well. You will encourage the extravert to slow down and take a moment to think before acting, to spend more time reflecting on things before jumping straight into the action. The extravert, on the other hand, will draw your INFJ personality out from its shell, playing the role of the socializer in the relationship, encouraging you to establish new social links and taking care of any social obligations that you as a couple might have.

These differences will also be beneficial when it comes to resolving conflicts in the relationship. However, it is crucial that both partners are mature and willing to listen to each other instead of sticking to their own guns and refusing to accept different viewpoints most of the time. If all goes well, both partners will be able to cover each other's strengths and weaknesses.

That being said, each stick has two ends and personality differences may also have a negative impact on the stability and health of the relationship. If one (or both) of you is not very mature, you may have difficulties understanding the other person's perspective. In such circumstances, your extraverted partner may get frustrated by the fact that you are more reserved and private, or have poor social skills. And vice versa, you may get annoyed by their chattiness or need to socialize.

It is crucial that you both make conscious efforts to understand each other. In all likelihood, you will both think that your way of life is perfectly normal and it is the other person who is strange. The fact that we tend to surround ourselves with friends who are like us is not going to help either – this simply reinforces our positive perception of ourselves along with the idea that our traits are the right ones. The only way to get out of that bubble is to push the limits and try to see the world through another person's eyes. When an INFJ and someone with an Extraverted personality type form a relationship, they give each other an excellent opportunity to do just so.

Tips for you:

1. **Do not overcompensate.** Small talk is unavoidable in the dating phase, but INFJs are unlikely to be very good at it. Do not overcompensate by trying to appear chatty and sociable – let the extravert take the lead. Otherwise, you will simply look insecure.
2. **Speak up.** Once you transition into a relationship, you will need to remind yourself to share your thoughts with your partner instead of sticking to your habit of keeping everything to yourself. INFJs tend to be very private individuals, and opening up may not be an easy task for you.
3. **Do not get stuck in a bubble.** You will likely have difficulties when it comes to socializing with other people. Your extraverted partner will probably take care of this in social situations, but that does not mean that you should not make conscious efforts to bring something to the conversation. Do not get lazy.

4. **Be tolerant.** Your partner is likely to have difficulties when it comes to understanding why you need to spend time alone instead of talking to them. They might also worry that they have done something to offend you. As extraverts recharge while spending time with other people, your partner may not know that you need exactly the opposite. Take your time to explain how your mind works.

Tips for your partner:

1. **Be patient.** Your INFJ partner may need a lot of time to open up to you.
2. **When dating, choose locations without much social pressure.** Your partner may feel uncomfortable with many other people around.
3. **Do not be overbearing.** Small talk is often a challenge for Introverts, even though it is unavoidable in the dating phase. Do not be overbearing by trying to get your potential partner to talk extensively about themselves. At best, they will feel uncomfortable. INFJs can be incredibly private, even compared to other Introverts, so do not push them too much.
4. **Be tolerant.** Your partner is likely to have difficulties when it comes to socializing with other people or even yourself for an extensive amount of time. Remember that they get exhausted by social interaction, unlike you, who are recharged by it. There will be times when they will want to be alone – be understanding, give them space and do not ask them what is wrong. This has nothing to do with you – your INFJ partner simply needs some time alone to recharge.

### *An Intuitive (N) Partner*

As Intuitives, you are both likely to prefer introspection over observation – that is, you will spend more time exploring the world of ideas as opposed to keeping your feet on the ground. A relationship between two Intuitives is an amazing thing to observe – both partners are usually able to establish a connection that allows them to understand each other without words. The combination of intuition, introspection and imagination is likely to be a great driving force in your relationship. As an INFJ, you are also likely to be very empathic and compassionate, which will deepen your relationship even further.

Intuitives are relatively rare (only 15-25%), so the fact that you managed to find another Intuitive is impressive in itself. Usually, the connection between such partners is instantaneous, making them feel as if someone finally understands them. This is often a welcome break from all the comments about their tendency to have their heads in the clouds or to miss things that other personality types consider obvious. It is quite unlikely that two Intuitives will run out of things to talk about – this is a great advantage both in the dating phase and later on in the relationship.

Unfortunately, this is just one side of the coin. It is very important to be able to communicate with each other effectively, but it is often the practical matters that cause problems in Intuitive-Intuitive relationships. As both partners are going to favor abstract issues, ideas and future plans, one of them will inevitably have to take the lead and handle the practical things, such as shopping, cooking, maintenance, and money management. Intuitives tend not to be good at these matters and this may cause tension in the relationship.

Another problem that you are likely to face is your tendency to distract each other. Intuitives often get lost in their world of ideas and possibilities, drifting from one concept to another – and while this is a wonderful trait when it comes to creativity and innovation, it can also cause significant problems in the relationship. It is important to take time to enjoy the present and the simple things in life – otherwise both partners may feel overwhelmed and tired all the time. Keep your eyes on the stars, but also remember to keep your feet on the ground.

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Deal with practical tasks.** Neither partner is likely to enjoy (or be good at) handling routine, daily tasks – however, it is important to deal with them on time, avoiding the buildup of problems.
2. **Do things that engage your creativity.** You both will find it easier to deal with ideas than practical things, so do not try to mimic the behavior of other people and push your partner (or yourself) to participate in activities that require good use of all five senses. This is especially important in the dating phase.
3. **Be realistic.** As Intuitives, you will both have plenty of ideas that may or may not be realistic. Do not overcommit yourselves.

4. **Enjoy the present.** You are both likely to spend a lot of time thinking about the future. Find a way to enjoy the present as well – time flows quickly. As an INFJ, you probably try to plan your actions in advance whenever possible; try to embrace a more present-oriented approach in non-critical situations.
5. **Share your ideas.** Imagination is one of your greatest assets – use it. Your partner will likely be able to see some things from a different perspective, while at the same time staying on the same wavelength as you.

### *An Observant (S) Partner*

This is one of the most challenging, yet potentially most rewarding combinations. These traits determine how we see the world, how we think, how we communicate – and this is just scratching the surface. In some relationships, the schism between Intuitive and Observant traits is too great to bridge, and both partners may spend a lot of time thinking what they are doing wrong, why their significant other seems to misunderstand them all the time and why they just do not listen. In other cases, both individuals are able to acknowledge their differences and turn them into strengths, thus neutralizing each other's weaknesses.

Actually, the main difference between Intuitive and Observant traits is quite easy to define. The Intuitive partner will focus on abstract things – ideas, introspection, possibilities, dreams, and connections between events. Intuitives are *imaginaries* who spend more time thinking about the future than the present. The Observant partner, on the other hand, will prioritize concrete things – objects, senses, observation, facts, and daily matters. Observant types are *doers* who focus on the present moment rather than the future.

Not surprisingly, this affects everything else, from observational abilities to communication styles. It is absolutely crucial that you both take time to understand how the other person thinks and processes things – all other traits fade in comparison. It is also worth noting that Observant personality types dominate society and this often leads to Intuitives' traits being dismissed as impractical or unrealistic. The Observant partner should avoid labeling their partner as “odd” or getting frustrated because “this is not what most people do”. Respect the differences.

If all goes well, however, you are likely to have a very rewarding relationship. The Intuitive partner will be able to inspire their significant other and come up with a myriad of interesting ideas, always keeping the relationship fresh and interesting. The Observant partner will be able to ensure that those ideas are grounded in reality, as well as handle practical matters that the Intuitive may forget. As always, communication is key in such relationships – there will be plenty of misunderstandings, especially at the very beginning, but they are unlikely to cause lasting damage if both partners are open-minded and willing to compromise.

Tips for you:

1. **Be patient.** Your Observant partner is likely to have difficulties understanding some of your ideas.
2. **Improve your observation skills.** Imagination is one of the greatest assets of any INFJ, but it is not going to help when, for example, you have to remember your partner's favorite perfume or where you put the car keys.
3. **Keep your feet on the ground.** Intuitives often overestimate their abilities, enthusiastically embracing new and exciting ideas without thinking about the actual implementation.
4. **Remember to enjoy the present.** You are likely to spend way too much time thinking about the future. Find a way to enjoy the present as well – time flows quickly. Your Observant partner will certainly be able to help you with this.

Tips for your partner:

1. **Be patient.** Your Intuitive partner is likely to have difficulties handling practical tasks or noticing things.
2. **Improve your introspection skills.** You are likely to be practical and realistic, but it is also often necessary to spend some time reflecting on things. Forget the practical world and let yourself dream every once in a while. Your INFJ partner would likely be more than happy to help you here.

3. **Be imaginative.** Observant types often focus too much on routines or physical things. Embrace your imagination and do not be afraid of exploring ideas without knowing whether they are actually practical or implementable.
4. **Remember to think about the future.** You are likely to focus either on the past or the present – find some time to think about the future as well, no matter how scary this may be. This does not mean that you should make complex long-term plans – simply imagine and explore possibilities in your mind. Your Intuitive partner is probably doing this all the time – you need to meet each other halfway.

### *A Thinking (T) Partner*

This trait (Thinking or Feeling) determines how the individual makes decisions or explains their actions. Thinking individuals rely on logic rather than feelings in situations where tough choices must be made. They look at the facts and facts alone, trying to find a rational and logical solution. Everything else, such as personal sensitivities and emotions, takes the backseat. Feeling individuals, on the other hand, rely on their feelings and morals rather than facts, trying to achieve harmony and understanding. For them, being sensitive is more important than being right.

A relationship between an INFJ and someone who belongs to a Thinking type can be extremely rewarding, as both individuals will be able teach each other how to look at things from an entirely different perspective. However, it is crucial that both you and your partner understand and respect your differences – there is nearly always some unjustified criticism coming from both sides. Your Thinking partner may complain that you are too emotional or irrational, and you may respond by saying that they are cold and heartless.





Such criticism becomes even more damaging when the Thinking individual is a woman and the Feeling individual is a man, with various social expectations coming into play as well.

The Thinking trait does not imply that the individual is unemotional. Both Thinking and Feeling individuals are capable of deep feelings – however, the former tend to hide those feelings from the outside world. They want to stay in control, to not lose their heads regardless of the circumstances - and this is what creates that aura of indifference.

Likewise, the Feeling trait does not imply that the individual is irrational – they are simply using a different set of criteria, putting harmony and sensitivity above cold, hard facts. Feeling individuals tend to show their feelings quite clearly, as opposed to containing them as Thinking types do – however, their decision process is still perfectly rational.

Both these perspectives are perfectly valid and this is one of the most important lessons you will have to learn in your relationship. If both partners are tolerant and open-minded, a relationship between a Thinking person and a Feeling person can be very inspiring and successful, with the Thinking partner making fact-based decisions and the Feeling partner bringing warmth and harmony into the relationship.

Tips for you:

1. **Be tolerant.** Remember that your partner may be more interested in facts than in what other people feel - they are likely to focus on finding a rational solution.
2. **Stay calm.** Try not to take criticism personally – in some cases, your partner will simply be criticizing an idea or assessing a situation as opposed to pointing out your flaws.
3. **Observe.** Do not assume that your partner is completely calm and happy just because they are not showing their emotions. As already mentioned before, INFJs are very private individuals – but even they are likely to be better at managing and expressing their emotions than any individual belonging to a Thinking personality type.
4. **Be patient.** In all likelihood, your partner will not be as good as you are at gauging other people's emotional state – consequently, there will be times when they will completely misunderstand

your emotions or get frustrated by not being able to deduce what you want to say. Thinking types are used to dealing with data, not emotions.

Tips for your partner:

1. **Be tolerant.** Remember that your partner may not value the facts as much as you do - they are likely to prioritize harmony, values and morals.
2. **Observe.** Your partner is likely to be good at gauging other people's emotional state and they may expect the same from you – try to learn how to read the cues. Yes, it can be frustrating to hear “I am fine” when something is obviously wrong, but bear in mind that this is simply a mismatch of expectations. You are used to dealing with data, while your INFJ partner is used to dealing with emotions.
3. **Be careful with criticism.** Feeling types tend to be very vulnerable to criticism – be careful when you are pointing something out and try to do this in a calm, non-confrontational manner.
4. **Know how to relax.** There is no need to contain yourself when you are having fun with your partner - learn to stop worrying about whether something makes sense.

### *A Feeling (F) Partner*

A relationship between two Feeling individuals is usually full of uncontained excitement and expressions of love. You are both likely to wear your hearts on your sleeves, making your emotions quite clear – in all likelihood, physical expressions of affection such as hugs and kisses will also be abundant, both in public and in private.

However, each coin has two sides. As your feelings are always running close to the surface, there may be many dramas and emotional arguments in your relationship. You could have different values, different backgrounds or simply different opinions – and since neither partner is going to feel comfortable in the “just the facts, please” role that is usually required in such situations, there will be times when both sides will feel frustrated and unhappy. Your relationship may often hit 10 out of 10 on the affection and emotional expressivity scale, but it may also be volatile and unpredictable, depending on how mature and experienced you both are.

In order to avoid these pitfalls, you will both have to make conscious efforts to develop your rational mental filter. Being sensitive and kind is very important, but sticking to the facts when making certain decisions will not compromise these values. There is a difference between being open with your feelings and allowing them to control all your decisions, and you will need to find a balance there. This does not mean that you should feel embarrassed by your emotions or try to take them completely out of the equation – however, there will be times when you will both have to find the willpower to sit down and calmly assess the facts instead of giving in to emotions.

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Do not be afraid to deal with the facts.** There are times when you need to be sensitive and then there are times when emotions have to be brushed aside. Learn to recognize the difference between the two.
2. **Be open-minded.** As Feeling individuals, you may find it difficult to tolerate a point of view that does not correspond with your values. Accept the fact that your partner may have a different opinion.
3. **Be careful with criticism.** You are both likely to be quite vulnerable to criticism - be very careful when you are pointing something out and try to do this in a calm, non-confrontational manner. And vice versa, try not to take criticism personally – in some cases, your partner will simply be criticizing an idea or assessing a situation as opposed to pointing out your flaws. You will need to avoid letting your emotions cloud your judgment.
1. **Do not get stuck in a rut.** If you have very similar values and principles, there is a danger that you will find it difficult to explore other perspectives. Both partners should challenge their beliefs and get out of their comfort zone every once in a while in order to grow and develop - make sure you do not limit each other's growth by unconditionally reaffirming those beliefs all the time.

### *A Judging (J) Partner*

Judgers enjoy planning and committing to things as opposed to keeping their options open. As you both share this trait, it is unlikely that you will have difficulties making up your minds and sticking to specific

goals or plans. This will contribute greatly to the stability of your relationship, with both partners always staying on track and focusing on what has to be done.

As Judgers, you are also likely to be dedicated and patient partners, putting your duties above pleasure. You will both work hard on the relationship and have no difficulties making up your minds, especially when it comes to future plans.

On the other hand, there are two sides to every story and Judger-Judger relationships are not an exception. Planning and scheduling inevitably come with a degree of inflexibility and this can cause tension in the relationship. There may be times when you will commit to things that are in conflict, without checking with each other first. Not surprisingly, two Judgers may often clash with each other, with their need for closure demanding a clear solution and a clear path forward.

There is another problem that you may face. You are both likely to find it difficult to change your habits or long-held views – this is a good trait when it comes to duties and commitments, but it can also prevent you from keeping your eyes open for better alternatives. Consequently, you may never know what opportunities you have missed. This covers many things, ranging from hobbies to holiday plans – shaking things up can bring a lot of variety and novelty into the relationship. Do not be afraid to experiment or simply be more spontaneous every once in a while.

Unlike Prospectors (P), who are generally more relaxed about their duties and deadlines, Judgers are also likely to get stressed when things do not go according to their plans. Watch out for these tendencies and learn to step away from that strict work ethic in your relationship when a situation demands. This does not mean that you have to stop making plans or start living completely in the present – rather, there needs to be a balance between stability and spontaneity, and you will both have to decide where that balance is in your relationship.

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Be open-minded.** As Judgers, you may find it challenging to accept the fact that there may be more than one right answer to a problem. Try not to be stubborn and argumentative in cases where you both have different opinions.

2. **Experiment.** Your tendency to plan and prepare may make things difficult when there is a need to experiment or try something new. Learn to let go and act spontaneously from time to time.
3. **Do not exhaust yourselves.** Your desire to get things done can bring a lot of stress into your own lives and into the relationship. Learn to step back and relax – the world is not going to collapse if you miss a self-imposed deadline.
4. **Find time for each other.** Do not get so caught up in plans, tasks and order that you lose sight of what is really important. There is nothing wrong with being playful and simply having fun instead of doing yet another task. All work and no play is not the way to go in a relationship.

### *A Prospecting (P) Partner*

In contrast to Judgers, Prospectors like to keep their options open, always looking for alternatives and opportunities. A relationship between a Judger and a Prospector may often be rocky and challenging, but there is a lot of potential as well if both partners are willing to take time to explore and understand each other's differences.

The main difficulty is going to be the fact that you will likely hold diametrically opposite views when it comes to planning and the execution of those plans. The Judger will try to come up with an agenda and then stick to it until the end. The Prospector will refuse to lay out all the possibilities and probabilities, making things up as they go along – and then maybe even abandoning the project once the most interesting task has been completed. Not surprisingly, both partners can easily frustrate each other if these traits are not addressed or understood.

However, there are two sides to every story and Judger-Prospector relationships are not an exception. Judgers' planning and scheduling inevitably come with a degree of inflexibility and this can bring tension into the relationship – which can then be defused by the easygoing Prospector. Likewise, Prospectors can be indecisive or even somewhat lazy, only focusing on the fun tasks and ignoring the rest – this can be counterbalanced by the driven and dutiful Judger. As long as both partners refrain from name-calling and are willing to compromise, these differences can be turned into major strengths, covering each partner's respective weaknesses.

In order to achieve this, you will have to make a conscious effort to meet each other halfway. The Judging partner should not be afraid to experiment or simply be more spontaneous every once in a while, even if that means changing their habits or long-held views. Similarly, the Prospecting partner should resist the urge to always seek something new and exciting, even when it is very difficult to stick to the plan or manage all the chores. In all likelihood, each partner will be willing to help their significant other with things that they find challenging, but it is unreasonable to expect them to do this every single time. There needs to be a balance between Judger's stability and Prospector's spontaneity, and you will both have to decide where that balance is in your relationship.

Tips for you:

1. **Communicate.** Your partner's indecisiveness or relaxed attitude will often frustrate you. Do not resort to name-calling and try to understand what drives them and how you can both support each other. Remember that your partner may not be as interested in plans and schedules as you are – they are used to keeping their options open.
2. **Be open-minded.** As a Judger, you may find it challenging to accept the fact that there may be more than one right answer to a problem. Try not to be stubborn and argumentative in cases where your partner disagrees with you.
3. **Experiment.** Your tendency to plan and prepare may make things difficult when there is a need to experiment or try something new. Learn to let go and act spontaneously from time to time.
4. **Do not exhaust yourself.** Your desire to get things done can bring a lot of stress into your own life and into the relationship. Learn to step back and relax – the world is not going to collapse if you miss a self-imposed deadline.

Tips for your partner:

1. **Communicate.** Your partner's inflexibility or desire to have everything planned out will often frustrate you. Do not resort to name-calling and try to understand what drives them and how you can both support each other. Remember that your partner is used to putting their plans and schedules above play and rest – they may find it quite difficult to step back and relax.

2. **Focus.** As a Prospector, you probably enjoy trying out new things and often wonder whether the grass is greener on the other side. Learn to stick to your tasks and do not let your mind drift away when there is a job to be done.
3. **Watch your environment.** You will likely have a much higher tolerance for disorder compared to your Judging partner. Do not ignore your housekeeping duties.
4. **Do not be picky.** Prospectors tend to balk at doing routine, menial tasks, often wandering off in search of something more exciting. Not all work is fun, but you should make a conscious effort to do your fair share of household duties.

### *Assertive or Turbulent?*

The format of this section differs from those of the other traits, simply because we see this final trait as a variant of the personality rather than an integral part of the personality type itself. However, the importance of this trait should not be understated as it determines how confident we are in our abilities and decisions, which certainly affects our behavior in romantic relationships.

Assertive individuals tend to be emotionally stable, calm and relaxed – they do not easily get upset or excited, keeping their emotions even-keeled. Their calm temper allows them to sort out any disagreements without much stress, as opposed to being rattled even by the most insignificant issues. Furthermore, individuals with this personality trait tend to be quite optimistic and content about their achievements and life in general. That said, this relaxed attitude can also encourage Assertive individuals to not worry too much about goals or self-improvement in their relationships. Their self-confidence often overshadows any signs that might make someone else question whether more work needs to be done.

In contrast, Turbulent individuals tend to be much more self-conscious and more reactive to stress. They are prone to experiencing emotional roller coasters, perhaps feeling at the top of the world in the morning and being overrun by negative thoughts by evening. Turbulent types also tend to be more success-driven and perfectionistic than Assertive ones, often worrying way too much about their performance, image or future. On the other hand, this desire to do their best and never-ending quest for improvement often help these individuals achieve impressive heights in their careers, or pleasantly surprise their other half, simply because they really care about whether they are being good enough.

The Assertive trait is often viewed as preferable – after all, what is not to like about being self-confident and relaxed? However, somewhat ironically, being resistant to stress and pressure may not translate into being more successful, even in romance. Despite being more prone to emotional swings and worrying, Turbulent individuals are also likely to be more reflective and organized, often pushing themselves harder than necessary. However, it is exactly that “must do better” attitude that makes them put more effort into the relationship. Depending on other traits, Assertive individuals may also be more likely to take risks – where a Turbulent person may hesitate and weigh their options, an Assertive one may trust themselves just a little too much and make careless mistakes.

Ultimately, though, everything boils down to each partner’s willingness to recognize and address both the individual weaknesses inherent in each trait, and the potential ways their respective traits may complement or clash with each other. It is also important to remember that many things depend on how strongly expressed the trait is – the higher the score, the starker the characteristics are likely to be.

Let’s now briefly discuss three potential between Assertive and Turbulent partners.

### **Assertive + Assertive**

This is probably the most straightforward combination. You are likely to be confident, relaxed optimists, quite happy with your relationship and where it is going. If you are both Extraverted and Assertive, you are also likely to be more satisfied with life in general. You may rarely experience strong positive emotions, but you will not have many negative ones either. You will also probably feel quite relaxed about your work or your social status, instead trusting yourself and paying more attention to what you want, not what others say you should do.

On the other hand, you need to beware of the tendency to assume that everything is OK. The ability to simply not be perturbed by occasional issues in your relationship can cause to miss crucial signs that something is moving in the wrong direction or that you may potentially face bigger issues down the road. Too much confidence can be just as bad as too little confidence. Even if everything seems great and there is nothing that can upset you, finding some time for reflection and thinking about improvement can be a very healthy exercise.



## Assertive + Turbulent

As with all other traits, if partners are on opposite sides of the scale, there is a lot of potential for both mutual growth and for various misunderstandings. With the Assertive partner being the decisive, calm and level-headed half, and the Turbulent partner being the cautious, sensitive and self-conscious one, it is easy to see that they can both help and hurt each other. In such relationships, it is important to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses instead of assuming that there is something wrong with the other person's attitude.

If you are the Assertive individual in the relationship, you should recognize that your Turbulent partner is much more emotionally reactive and vulnerable to stressful situations. They may be more pessimistic, anxious and shy – however, the Turbulent trait also pushes such individuals to reflect on their decisions and try to improve themselves and their relationships as much as possible. As a side effect, Turbulent individuals are also likely to be more organized, driven and motivated. If they are able to master their emotions and use them as a driving force instead of simply giving in to the mood swings, this trait can actually be quite beneficial in a romantic relationship.

Similarly, if you are the Turbulent individual in your relationship, you should understand that your partner's calmness and relaxed attitude do not mean that they are unsupportive or disinterested in working on the relationship. Being less likely to feel nervous in challenging situations, Assertive individuals may seem somewhat detached or blasé, especially from the perspective of someone who is Turbulent – however, it is precisely that emotional stability that should be utilized wherever possible. While it is true that Assertive individuals may sometimes be too self-confident and not care much about achieving the best possible results where a good outcome is “good enough”, this level-headedness can also be invaluable in emotionally charged or unpredictable situations.

With this in mind, you and your partner should work on covering each other's weaknesses with your respective strengths instead of focusing on your differences and trying to “fix” each other. For instance, the Assertive individual could act as an emotional bedrock for their much more sensitive partner, showing that there is always a bright side, reassuring their other half that the matter at hand may not be

worth stressing about, and encouraging them to put their perfectionism aside and take a bolder, riskier step every now and then.

Similarly, the Turbulent individual could bring more organization and goal-setting into the couple's life. Their hard work and success-driven attitude pushes both partners to grow and develop instead of remaining content with where they are. The presence of the Turbulent trait may also act as a safeguard against decisions whose potential consequences may be underestimated by the Assertive partner, who may not care too much about choosing the best possible option or worry about how their actions may be perceived by others.

### **Turbulent + Turbulent**

This combination is likely to be the most tempestuous of all, with both partners leaning towards the emotional and anxious side of the scale. While the couple will probably experience very strong positive emotions, they will be accompanied by negative feelings as well – it is in those moments that both you and your partner must remember to take a couple of deep breaths and refocus your thoughts and emotions. Otherwise there is a risk that you will end up fuelling each other's anxiety, with minor frustrations boiling over and becoming a full-blown crises. Turbulent individuals are vulnerable to stress and you both may need to make a conscious effort to find mutually acceptable ways to fight it and relax instead of stressing each other out even further.

That said, the Turbulent trait can also work in your relationship's favor, if you are both able to recognize and address its accompanying weaknesses. Being reflective and self-conscious, you likely find the time to think about both the present and the future, readjusting your course as you go instead of blindly trusting yourselves. While this may lead to plenty of soul-searching conversations around the dinner table, focusing on all the stressors in your lives, the perfectionism and sensitivity shared by Turbulent partners also encourages you to address those issues and try to find good solutions instead of writing them off as irrelevant and going on with your lives. Nearly any weakness can be turned into a strength, and this is an excellent example.

## Friendships

There is a running theme with INFJs, and that is a yearning for authenticity and sincerity – in their activities, their romantic relationships, and their friendships. People with the INFJ personality type are unlikely to go for friendships of circumstance, like workplace social circles or chatting up their local baristas, where the only thing they really have in common is a day-to-day familiarity. Rather,



INFJs seek out people who share their passions, interests and ideologies, people with whom they can explore philosophies and subjects that they believe are truly meaningful.

From the start, it can be a challenge to get to know INFJs, as they are very private, even enigmatic. INFJs don't readily share their thoughts and feelings, not unless they are comfortable, and since those thoughts and feelings are the basis for INFJ friendships, it can take time and persistence to get to know them. Meanwhile, INFJs are very insightful and have a particular knack for seeing beyond others' facades, interpreting intent and compatibility quickly and easily, and weeding out those who don't share the depth of their idealism. In friendship it is as though INFJs are searching for a soul mate, someone who shares every facet of their passions and imagination.

INFJs are often perfectionistic, looking for ultimate compatibility, and yet also look for someone with whom they can grow and improve in tandem. Needless to say, this is a tall order, and INFJs should try to remember that they are a particularly rare personality type, and even if they find someone compatible in that sense, the odds that they will also share every interest are slim. If they don't learn to meet others halfway and recognize that the kind of self-improvement and depth they demand is simply exhausting for many types, INFJs are likely end up abandoning healthy friendships in their infancy, in search of more perfect compatibilities.

Further complicating things are INFJs' eloquence and persuasiveness, which lead to a lot of (unwanted) attention and popularity. Their quiet, determined idealism and imaginative expression naturally draw

influence, and if there's anything INFJs avoid, it's the accumulation of power over others – and the people who are drawn to that type of power. INFJs will find themselves more sought after than they'd ever care to be, making it even more difficult for them to find someone they truly have an affinity with. Really the only way to be counted among INFJs' true friends is to be authentic, and to have that authenticity naturally reflect their own.

Once a common thread is found though, people with the INFJ personality type make loyal and supportive companions, encouraging growth and life-enriching experiences with warmth, excitement and care. As trust grows, INFJs will share more of what lies beneath the surface, and if those ideas and motives are mutual, it's the sort of friendship that will transcend time and distance, lasting a lifetime. INFJs don't require a great deal of day-to-day attention – for them, quality trumps quantity every time, and over the years they will likely end up with just a few true friendships, built on a richness of mutual understanding that forges an indelible link between them.

We will now go through the main type groups, discussing the challenges and joyful moments that INFJs are likely to face if they decide to become friends with someone belonging to that type group.

## Analyst Friends

The best thing about having an Analyst friend is that they would be able to act as a rational, impartial advisor to the INFJ. Analysts pride themselves in being objective, even with their closest friends. Consequently, a friend belonging to this type group would have few qualms about criticizing the INFJ's latest idea or a specific action. People with the INFJ personality do not always appreciate such criticism, especially if it concerns topics that are dear to them, but having someone who is able and willing to keep you in check can be invaluable in many situations.

Analysts and Diplomats also share a fascination for ideas, concepts and mysteries. If the topic is right, an INFJ may spend hours discussing all possible nuances with their Analyst friend. Personality types belonging to these type groups are very intuitive and imaginative, so it is more than likely that an INFJ would find it very easy to communicate with their Analyst friends. Their arguments may not necessarily

focus on the same things, but this is also exactly why both the INFJ and their Analyst conversation partner would both benefit from an opportunity to share their thoughts with each other.

On the other hand, Analysts and Diplomats also have a fair share of differences that may cause tension in their friendship. The most important of such differences is the criteria these types use for decision making. Analysts can be ruthlessly efficiency-oriented, utilitarian and objective, while Diplomats pay more attention to morality, principles and cooperation. If both individuals are very direct, not too careful, and feel strongly about a specific issue, they may certainly hurt each other. INFJs are quite vulnerable to criticism and tension in any relationship, and Analysts do not appreciate having their logical conclusions challenged. Consequently, both friends may want to avoid controversial or highly sensitive topics when it comes to serious discussions.

Unlike INFJs and other Diplomats, Analyst types usually find it difficult to support their friends emotionally. Analysts can have very strong feelings, but they are neither comfortable with not experienced in coping with other people's emotions. If the INFJ is not familiar with such a trait, it may surprise or even hurt them. For instance, the INFJ may truly enjoy having deep and meaningful discussions with their Analyst friend, developing a strong friendship – but then being surprised by the Analyst's confusion when they need emotional support or guidance. INFJs should be careful not to put their friends on an imaginary pedestal and not to forget that not everyone shares the same set of strengths, principles and ideals.

## Diplomat Friends

For an INFJ, having a close Diplomat friend is a bit like looking into a mirror. All Diplomats are enthusiastic, passionate and imaginative individuals, so it is very unlikely that such friends would ever run out of topics to discuss or ideas to explore. Furthermore, Diplomats are quite rare compared to other personality types, so it is likely that two Diplomat friends will try hard to maintain their friendship regardless of the difficulties, often forging life-long bonds.

The key challenge for two Diplomat friends is likely to come from the same source that fuels their friendship – their similarity. Having a friend who thinks just like you can be very reassuring and

inspiring, but it can also put you in a certain bubble, isolating you from criticism and different opinions. There is a risk that one Diplomat will convince another that their ideas are worth pursuing, even when objectively that is clearly not the case. The same applies to situation where their interests diverge. As both friends would know what makes each other tick, they could find it quite easy to manipulate each other, often unknowingly.

Another issue that two Diplomat friends may face is that they both are likely to place more importance on imagination and mental exercises than practical, down-to-earth things. Consequently, it may be a good idea for both friends to encourage each other to remember that real things and activities can be fun too. This is easier if one of the friends belongs to a Prospecting type, bringing in more spontaneity into the relationship; however, there is also no reason why two Judging Diplomat friends would not be able to, for instance, arrange a paintball session or come up with a spontaneous idea to spend a day hiking.

Regardless of these hiccups, it is likely that two Diplomat friends will feel as if they have found a true soulmate. Diplomats' empathy, imagination and tendency to seek win-win situations make them kind and inspiring friends, and give them tools to resolve any conflicts that arise. The main challenge for the INFJ, however, is probably going to be finding another Diplomat (especially with similar principles and values), not keeping such a friendship alive.

## Sentinel Friends

Sentinels are numerous and they will probably form a significant part of an INFJ's social circle, unless the INFJ is particularly selective. These personality types are likely to be loyal, practical and down-to-earth friends, always eager to advise and support. A Sentinel friend will be able to help the INFJ stay focused and realistic when that is necessary – for instance, when the INFJ gets so caught up in the pursuit of their ideas that they forget to attend to daily matters or social obligations. Sentinels' patience, stability and sense of loyalty can be invaluable in situations where the INFJ feels particularly dejected or uncertain about their chosen path.

Both Sentinel and Diplomat types tend to be kind, supportive and altruistic. It may be that the INFJ will often find it difficult to explain their fresh, unfocused ideas to their Sentinel friend, who is unlikely to

allow themselves to be carried away by abstract concepts – however, it is precisely this ability to stay focused on what makes the most practical sense that allows Sentinel friends to counterbalance INFJ’s dreamy, idealistic nature.

On the other hand, INFJs and other Diplomats tend to be more open-minded and flexible compared to Sentinel types. INFJ tend to see many things as exciting and worthy of attention, maybe even daring to experiment with them if that is in line with their morals and principles; whereas Sentinels care deeply about social norms, values and traditions, often actively resisting anything that challenges the established order of things. For example, an INFJ may be very supportive of a protest movement (e.g., “Occupy Wall Street”), even if the issue in question does not really affect them or their social circle. In contrast, a Sentinel friend may see such protests as a threat to a public order and established institutions, and be quite vocal in depending their position. Such arguments probably pose the greatest risk to the stability of such friendship.

This clash of idealism and practicality can be both very beneficial and very challenging, depending on how dedicated both friends are to understanding each other. If they are flexible enough, these differences can give them a great opportunity for personal growth. The INFJ will help their Sentinel friend see the benefits of occasionally letting go of daily concerns and engaging in “what if” discussions; similarly, the Sentinel will be able to lend a hand when the INFJ starts struggling with practical tasks or challenges. However, if they do decide to stick to their guns, arguments will be inevitable. All Sentinels share the Judging trait, which means they prefer planning and clarity, and the same applies to INFJs – consequently, both friends will likely find it very difficult to give way and accept a different opinion, regardless of the importance of a particular debate.

## Explorer Friends

This is the most challenging, yet a very interesting combination – for many reasons. First of all, Explorers and INFJs do not really have anything in common: unlike INFJs, Explorers are more opportunistic than idealistic; they are also far more practical and in tune with the practical world; and they could not care less about plans and goals, which are quite important to INFJs (although less so than to Analyst or Sentinel types). In all likelihood, the initial impression that the INFJ will have of a potential Explorer

friend will revolve around the latter's spontaneity, unpredictability and complete focus on the present moment. Similarly, the Explorer will likely see the INFJ as incurably idealistic, withdrawn and impractical. So what could possibly bring these two types together?

The answer lies in their differences. Although challenging, such obstacles are by no means impossible to overcome – and if both individuals are dedicated enough, such friendship will offer them plenty of opportunities for personal growth, exciting activities, professional development and so on. Being able to cover completely different aspects of intellectual, social and professional interaction, the INFJ and their Explorer friend would ensure that no chance slips by, no avenue is left unexplored, and no weakness stays unaddressed. For instance, the Explorer will have few difficulties pulling their INFJ friend from deep thoughts and helping them see the brighter, relaxed side of life; similarly, the INFJ will act as a stable, moral compass for their far more spontaneous and often relatively self-focused friend.

Furthermore, it is quite likely that the INFJ and their Explorer friend will discover that some of their goals and values overlap, even if they see them differently. The most obvious example would be the love of freedom shared by these types. INFJs seek freedom to pursue their goals and ideals without being slowed down by naysayers telling them to stop being so dreamy; Explorers seek freedom because they simply want to enjoy life and cannot bear being constrained by rules, expectations and traditions. While their motivations are very different, this rebellious attitude can often help both friends overcome their individual differences and find some common ground.

The unlikely friendship between an INFJ and someone belonging to one of the Explorer types is the epitome of “opposites attract” – if it works, it will likely be an amazing experience for both friends, despite an occasional clash, and it will leave other people wondering how both individuals can get along. Such a friendship will certainly require a lot of mutual understanding, effort and quite possibly time – but if the INFJ and their Explorer friend are dedicated enough, their relationship will be anything but boring and unrewarding.



## *Parenthood*

Like all Diplomat parents, INFJs mostly focus on morality. They tend to be very principled, driven and compassionate, doing their best to ensure that their children are able to fight for causes they believe in and separate the good from the bad. This does not mean that INFJ parents are likely to encourage their children to become fanatical about something. However, they will certainly stress the importance of having a clear moral compass and noble goals.



INFJs place a lot of importance on imagination and creativity. It is likely parents with this personality type will encourage their children to explore various hobbies and activities, hoping that they will eventually find something that will truly inspire and motivate them. INFJ parents want their children to be true to what they really are, regardless of how difficult it is to find the right path. This is also why INFJs can often be rather demanding parents. On the other hand, such tendency to cherish and adhere to one's principles and goals is clearly visible in the INFJs themselves. An INFJ parent will not even blink an eye if they need to do something for their children, no matter how difficult that might be; they will bear that burden with a smile on their face. This devotion and idealism that all INFJ personalities share makes them very warm and dedicated parents.

People with the INFJ personality type are very sensitive and empathic, especially when it comes to their family members. An INFJ parent will always be ready to sit down with their child and discuss matters that are troubling them. It is very unlikely that an INFJ's child will ever say that they did not have enough emotional support growing up. Furthermore, INFJ parents will encourage their children to listen to their own emotions and not be afraid to be sensitive and kind wherever possible. Having their children grow up as empathic yet principled individuals is one of the key goals for any parent with the INFJ personality type. INFJs trust their instincts and their hearts, and they will likely teach their children to do the same.

However, it is important that the INFJ does not go overboard with this. In some cases, the emotional bond between the INFJ parent and the child can be so strong, that they both will have difficulties accepting the fact that the child has become an adult and needs to lead an independent life.

Having covered the INFJ parents' goals, let us now talk about what is likely to keep them awake at night. INFJs' sensitivity and focus on morality mean that things that other personality types would probably shrug off may hurt INFJs deeply. This is especially true for Turbulent INFJs, who get stressed more often than their Assertive siblings, but both variants tend to be quite sensitive. One of the biggest fears that INFJ parents share is that their child may grow up cynical and irresponsible or, even worse, a law-breaker. Parents with this personality type do not worry too much about their child's achievements such as academic performance, often putting more emphasis on how the child feels or whether they are doing something that they truly enjoy. However, few things could be more hurtful to an INFJ than seeing their child go against something that they deeply believe in or something that they believe is noble and just. In such circumstances, the INFJ will likely blame themselves for being unable to instill the right values in their children, and they may try to fix that by resorting to emotional manipulation.

Parents with this personality type should be especially careful during their child's adolescent years. Teenagers often rebel against their parents' authority and INFJs should not immediately assume that their child is actively fighting their beliefs or that all their teachings were ignored. Otherwise, there is a possibility that the INFJ will feel deeply hurt and try to focus all their efforts on mitigating damage and strengthening their relationship with the child, which may provoke an even stronger pushback. INFJs should remember that they themselves probably craved freedom and independence when they were of that age, and try to control their anxiety and worries about their child's future prospects. An INFJ's child is likely to recognize and appreciate this, which should lead to a less turbulent adolescence.

As far as parent-child activities are concerned, INFJ parents are likely to prioritize creativity and emotional bonding. People with this personality type tend to enjoy things that excite their imagination and poetic spirit, and they will rarely have difficulties coming up with creative ideas. Many INFJs also love nature and everything it has to offer, believing in harmony and understanding among all living things – more likely than not, they will encourage their children to experience and enjoy nature as well.

Such activities also give INFJ parents an excellent opportunity to teach their children the importance of empathy, kindness and understanding.

INFJ parents may also push their children to explore arts – visual, performing or literary. People with this personality type like metaphors, hidden meanings and complex, intriguing concepts. If they believe their children are artistically minded, INFJs will encourage them to nurture and develop such skills. For INFJ parents, artistry and creative expression are far more important than, say, financial success associated with a specific profession. The same applies to spiritual or religious work – INFJs’ idealism and focus on morality mean that their children will likely be encouraged to pursue such paths, should they wish to. In all circumstances, INFJs will push their children to think independently and take responsibility for their own decisions, instead of attempting to push them toward certain occupations or activities.

Regardless of their child’s hobbies or interests, INFJ parents usually assume an inspirational role. People with this personality type are dedicated and attentive, although their practical and administrative skills tend to be subpar compared to their creative and empathic abilities. Consequently, INFJs often feel happiest when they are free to help their child develop their creative thinking skills or emotional intellect instead of worrying about bills, home improvement or other practical matters, which they would gladly leave to their partners. Similarly, INFJs are not too interested in intellectual exercises that usually fascinate Analyst types. Parents with this personality type place more importance on emotional rather than intellectual bonding with their children.

Let us now take a quick look at how INFJ parents are likely to interact with their children, depending on their personality type.

## Analyst Child

Analyst children are likely to be intellectually minded, curious and very imaginative. Their creativity and open-mindedness are likely to delight the INFJ parent, who will be intrigued by their child’s rich inner world and willingness to explore the unknown. Diplomats and Analysts share an interest in things that excite their imagination, which is why it is unlikely that the INFJ will have difficulties

communicating with their child or coming up with interesting activities. Furthermore, Analyst children tend to be focused and driven once they find something that interests them. INFJs share this trait as well, and they will probably be delighted to see that their child is as determined as they are.

On the other hand, the same mind that makes Analysts imaginative and focused also makes them highly rational and critical thinkers. An Analyst child will not hesitate to question their INFJ parent's beliefs or ideas, often simply because they are interested in why their parent thinks so, not necessarily because they do not trust them. However, such inquisitive and probing questions may also upset the INFJ, who probably places more importance on the morality and nobility of their ideas – concepts that do not hold much weight in Analyst's eyes. An Analyst child may not be persuaded by statements such as "because it is the right thing to do" or "because you should".

Analyst children also tend not to require much emotional support. They are more self-sufficient than Feeling (F) types, which may also confuse and maybe even worry the INFJ parent. As INFJs value emotional bonding very highly, they are likely to try to maintain a strong emotional connection with their Analyst child regardless of their age, while the child may often be unwilling to open up emotionally, choosing to hide and rationalize their feelings instead. Consequently, the INFJ may (wrongly) assume that their child is not empathic or even cynical. Parents with this personality type should bear in mind that unlike Diplomats, Analysts prioritize rationality and logic, and that their Analyst child's strengths and weaknesses are different from theirs.

## Diplomat Child

Naturally, INFJ parents will find it easiest to communicate with their child if he or she belongs to one of the Diplomat types. Diplomat children tend to be very imaginative and creative, often able to come up with very original ideas as long as they are encouraged and given enough freedom to express their creativity. INFJ parents will likely be fascinated by their child's poetic nature, finding it easy to relate to and communicate with them. Furthermore, Diplomat children tend to be very empathic and kind, often falling in love with nature and feeling very much in tune with the natural world. Nature-related activities are therefore likely to form a large part of an INFJ parent's repertoire.

Like INFJs themselves, Diplomat children are also likely to place a lot of importance on harmony and understanding, often being very open about their feelings and eager to understand the difference between right and wrong. INFJs will cherish the idea of being able to instill a clear understanding of what really matters in their Diplomat child. That being said, such sensitivity is a double-edged sword. Knowing that their child takes many things very personally, INFJs may be reluctant to discipline them or be firm in telling their child that, for example, time for play is over and they should get back to studying.

Tangentially, INFJ parents may also have difficulties teaching their Diplomat children to be firm and objective where necessary. INFJs can be very strong-willed and decisive, but they often internalize their feelings and avoid conflict where possible. Consequently, they may have difficulties teaching their Diplomat child to recognize the difference between being confrontational every time someone disagrees with them and the importance of standing up for principles and values that are important to you.

As INFJ parents focus more on emotional and intellectual matters, they tend to have difficulties with purely administrative and practical tasks. The Diplomat child will likely share this particular weakness, which is why parents with this personality type should make conscious efforts to teach their child the importance of being economical, able to make fact-based decisions, and knowing how to combine idealism with practicality.

## Sentinel Child

While INFJ parents are unlikely to encounter major difficulties communicating with an Analyst or a Diplomat child, a Sentinel child would likely require a different approach. Sentinels are far more practical and down-to-earth compared to Diplomats, although they also share some common traits. Let us start with the positives.

A Sentinel child is likely to be very dutiful and obedient, trying very hard to meet their parents' expectations. They will respect family hierarchy and traditional roles, expecting their parents to set up a clearly structured environment with well-defined rules. This is rarely the main goal of freedom-minded INFJs, although an INFJ parent is likely to appreciate their child's willingness to cooperate and listen to

what their parents have to say. Sentinel children usually seek a safe and stable atmosphere, which ties in nicely with the INFJ's dislike of conflicts and tension.

On the other hand, a Sentinel child may try too hard to be like their INFJ parent, feeling as if they are underperforming and not sufficiently creative. Sentinels' strengths revolve around responsibility, duty and practical matters such as daily or routine tasks; unlike INFJs, they are not fascinated by ideas, mysteries and hidden meanings. This different set of skills and attitudes can cause some misunderstandings between an INFJ parent and a Sentinel child, with the parent hoping that their child will share their idealism or enjoy creative activities, and the child trying to play along, but without much joy. INFJs should recognize these differences and remember that their Sentinel child is likely to be far more interested in what they can see, touch and experience than what they can imagine. These topics can be quite challenging for an INFJ parent, whose interests probably lie with intellectual, creative activities; they may need to rely on their partner or consciously pay more attention to practical matters in order to find things that excite and interest their Sentinel child.

Similarly, a Sentinel is likely to place much more importance on the approval of their peers or their social status compared to an INFJ, who is usually more focused on their own goals and principles. There is nothing wrong with such an attitude and INFJ parents should not criticize their child for wanting to be popular among their friends or for trying to meet other people's expectations. Sentinels are very community-oriented, even from a young age, and INFJ parents should not dismiss this trait. For a Sentinel child, feeling part of a group of friends will likely be far more important than it ever was for their INFJ parent.

## Explorer Child

Even though Diplomats and Explorers are complete opposites on many fronts, there is also some overlap among their traits. To begin with, an Explorer child is likely to be very inquisitive and comparatively restless, always looking for things to do and experience. This inborn desire for freedom and ability to experiment and improvise is likely to delight their INFJ parents as well. Explorer children tend to have an excellent grasp of reality, impressive practical skills and ability to focus completely on what is in front

of them, immersing themselves fully in the present moment. INFJs may have some difficulties recognizing and understanding such traits due to their detachment from the practical world.

It is likely that an Explorer child will always be able to find something to do, even without their INFJ parent's help. This is likely to delight the INFJ – however, parents with this personality type should ensure that their child has enough freedom to engage in their favorite activities. The nature of such activities depend on the child's personality type: ISTP children are likely to enjoy tools and mechanical experiments; ISFPs tend to focus on creative, artistic activities; ESTPs and ESFPs cherish social contact and group games. Explorers' love of freedom and independence is very much in tune with INFJs' values, although Explorers tend to be more individualistic than INFJs and other Diplomats. Explorer children are also likely to understand the importance of personal responsibility and the need to be able to make their own decisions. However, INFJ parents should not confuse this with their own tendency to develop strong inner principles and pick noble, often too idealistic goals. An Explorer child is likely to focus more on clearly defined, realistic goals and rewards, placing more importance on practical benefits than values and principles.

This particular aspect is likely to be responsible for most of the tension between an INFJ parent and an Explorer child. As Explorers tend to be very selective about what interests them and have little patience for things that do not fall into that category, even at a very young age, INFJ parents are likely to have many difficulties if they try to pass their principles to their child, or attempt to interest them in anything that promises few tangible rewards. At best, the Explorer child will pretend to be interested for a short period of time and then go back to more exciting activities; at worst, they will actively fight their INFJ parent, quite possibly making them wonder why their child is refusing to understand and appreciate their noble intentions.

INFJs should remember that Explorers have a completely different set of strengths and weaknesses compared to them and other Diplomats. Most importantly, their Explorer child will focus solely on the present moment and what it has to offer, refusing to worry about the past or the future; not surprisingly, this will often make them appear careless or self-centered. These traits are not necessarily negative as there are many areas where Explorers' ability to tune in completely to what is in front of them can be

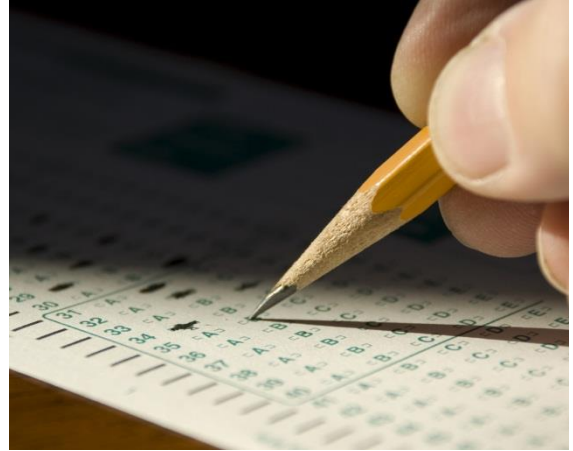
incredibly valuable – but not every parent is able to direct their Explorer child’s apparent carelessness, impatience and boldness toward productive activities.

INFJ parents should bear in mind that their Explorer child requires a completely different approach compared to what is natural for them, and they should not attempt to “fix” their curious and inquisitive child’s restless energy and desire to experience the world in every way they can. Rather, INFJ parents should try to appreciate (and learn from) their child’s enthusiasm, creativity and practical skills. Explorers’ abilities are often underappreciated and underdeveloped as parents try to suppress their child’s penchant for experimentation and pure desire to have fun, pushing them toward more structured roles. Such issues are even more important during the child’s teenage years. INFJ parents should encourage their Explorer child to look for a way to utilize their skills and talents and help them along the way instead of criticizing their habits or pushing them to look for more conventional career paths.



## *Academic Path*

Some people spend nearly one third of their lives studying. Some choose to enter the workforce earlier and don't spend as much time in classes or libraries. Regardless, most people spend at least some of their important formative years in school. No matter how long you remain in the academic world, your time there is important. These years can not only set a specific career path, but the school experience can also affect self-esteem and other aspects of psychology well into the future – in both positive and negative ways.



INFJs are rare and, because of this, those around them don't always understand them. This can create difficulties in school. Knowing the challenges INFJs face in the academic world can go a long way in helping them make the best use of their time and experience. To help INFJs get positive results from any academic path they follow, let's explore some guidelines based on their traits.

## **How INFJs Learn**

INFJs are intuitive thinkers. Some have described their style as absorbing details like a sponge, almost subconsciously, and then allowing their powerful intuition to combine the details into rich tapestry of custom ideas. This subconscious process doesn't involve much deliberate thought or design. It just "happens" without steps or techniques.

A loose analogy for the way INFJs learn is Georges Seurat's technique as an artist. This 19th century French painter was the one most associated with an art technique called pointillism. Pointillist painters used dots of paint rather than sweeping brush strokes to create their masterpieces. The mind then assembles the thousands of dots to form a picture filled with human activity, landscape and emotion. Without much thought and in a microsecond, the dabs of paint merge and beautifully represent a day in a French park. Focusing just on the tiny dots, the painting has no story. Without the dots, there would be

no painting. This is similar to how INFJs approach the world and is important to understanding INFJs' strengths in the classroom.

All this is to say that the pieces, while important, do not tell the story for INFJs in and of themselves. INFJs need to let the pieces organize themselves in their intuitive minds. The constellation of absorbed facts arranges itself in their brains to create a deep and perhaps even awe-inspiring "big idea". INFJs will focus on these abstractions well before they'll focus on anything that seems arbitrarily assigned in the classroom – even from a quite young age.

To get to that big idea and to allow learning according to their unique style, the teacher, the topic and the classroom methods need to free INFJs to run around in their mental playgrounds. Trying to pin them down and restrict the way they organize their thoughts is simply counterproductive. Their imaginations and creativity need room to explore. If the curriculum is too tight and too focused, INFJs will not only be uncomfortable, they may check out entirely and only go through the motions just to get through it as quickly as possible. For example, if INFJs are asked to turn in a paper with an outline, they will start with the essay and then organize the outline around their finished work in order to fulfill the requirement. Starting with an outline would be too restrictive for most INFJs.

That isn't to say INFJs wouldn't benefit from expanding their comfort zones a little. They might become more complete students if they learn to cope with and even embrace some of what they consider minutiae. But both students and instructors need to recognize that detailed and rote information is not where INFJs' academic strengths lie.

Communication is an important part of INFJs' learning style. INFJs sometimes solidify their rather abstract notions when they verbalize their thoughts or write them out. While not necessarily shy, INFJs may not be forthcoming with what is happening inside their minds – they are private people even at a young age. The act of talking or writing about their thoughts – turning them into words - can be helpful with their style of learning.

That's not to be mistaken with the idea that a teacher should force them to "perform". They like and need a good amount of time to deliberate before they present. However, instructors should encourage them

and give them an opportunity to share. Gently coaxing them to communicate what is on their minds can help them solidify the notions that are floating around in their heads, and can help other students who benefit from another perspective as well. They are verbally very capable, which can make turning their ideas into words exciting and satisfying work. For them, this is where most of the learning happens.

Finally, INFJs relish topics that involve humanity. They like their studies to have soul. Any time a subject or topic involves the human condition, in any form, INFJs are quite attentive students. Exploiting this interest leads to satisfying courses of study, research and finally, fulfilling careers for INFJs.

## INFJs in High School

**In the classroom:** INFJs start high school from a great place, just because of the way they approach the world. INFJs, especially Turbulent ones, are perfectionists and do whatever it takes to embrace high standards –usually ones of their own creation. They dedicate a great amount of time and effort to meet challenges or perform difficult tasks that they find engaging. As far as earning good grades goes, this comes naturally to INFJs – though they may falter if the subject is too mundane or detail-oriented for them. Their curiosity puts them well above the ordinary student when it comes to the amount of energy they apply to studying. However, all bets are off if they can't connect personally to the subject.

Other students can memorize cold, hard facts without much fuss, but INFJs need to have symbols and metaphors to play with if they are to perform at their full potential. Developmentally speaking, conceptualization is still a rather novel tool in the philosophical backpacks of INFJs entering high school. Like a new toy, abstract thoughts feel quite invigorating to young INFJs as they begin to enjoy a fuller experience within their intuitive selves.

The courses that speak to them most are the humanities and social sciences, since they appeal to the world of ideas in which they prefer to live. Literature, language, history, political science – INFJs enjoy any subject that allows them to play around with concepts, especially if they include an overtly human element. Empathizing with a character from a novel or a historical epoch feels like home and gets the most attention from INFJs in high school.

Science and technology, usually more concrete and lacking in as rich a sense of humanity, typically engages them less. They connect far more with something like Hamlet's existential crisis than with building models of atoms. However, discuss the story of Marie Curie's trailblazing efforts as a woman, and it may make even chemistry or physics a bit more interesting. Generally speaking though, they favor philosophy over physics when given the choice.

Even with all of their natural academic strengths though, INFJs' high school years aren't without certain challenges. In fact, these advanced academic abilities and loftier interests can be exactly what holds them back. Much of learning in school involves attention to small details, repetition and memorization, and anything with that sort of routine focus is a trial for INFJs' sensibilities.

When the subject matter is too centered on minutiae and concrete details, they may become bored and impatient – INFJs need a meaningful context. Learning a language to capture its syntax perfectly might feel too much like a meaningless exercise for INFJs. Learning a language as a tool to better immerse oneself in another culture, however, gets a greater commitment from them. There's a larger meaning in the latter, not simply the technical act of putting the right words in the right place. Teachers or curricula that insist on the first approach seem like they are just getting in the way of what's important.

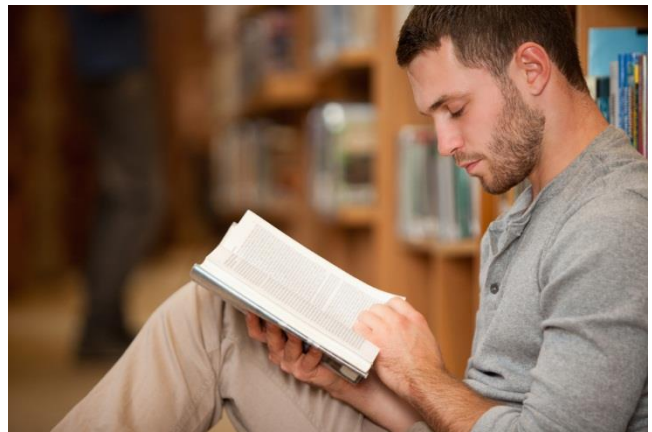
INFJs' ability to quickly pick up concepts sometimes leaves them restless as other students work to catch up. They have to be careful not to let this impatience be too obvious so as not to insult their classmates or irritate their teachers. Fortunately, INFJs usually temper this with their almost instinctive compassion, and deal with their irritation internally, putting on their best poker faces – but internalizing their frustrations can add to the stress their perfectionism already causes them.

INFJs may not apply a great deal of work to certain subjects when they see how easily things come to them. They may take it for granted that they will do well and not put as much effort into acing tests and papers, especially if the subject doesn't excite them. They are typically not as bound by conventional rules and structure in their inner lives. INFJs don't necessarily see this neglect as "being lazy" or not attending to their work. The bigger picture always takes priority, and putting a lot of labor into what they see as mundane or unimportant seems like a senseless act. If there's no challenge, what's the point?

This may not be wise on their part, as even the smallest details have value. Learning to be disciplined regardless of how one feels can be a valuable life lesson. In order to get by in life, we all have to do things we don't like. Nonetheless, not applying themselves fully to all their work doesn't cause INFJs to lose sleep at night. They will probably do just as well anyway, whether they put in the time and attention or not.

**Outside the classroom:** If you've been to high school, you don't have to watch a single one of the thousands of films about teenage angst to know that there's more to it than just classes. And most would agree that there are as many lessons in a school's yards and hallways as there are in the classroom. So, let's take a moment to consider high school as a place where some important social lessons unfold.

INFJs are likely the rarest personality type, and their uniqueness may not be appreciated in high school where "not being an oddball" is a social priority. They will always be more intuitive than most of their classmates, perhaps only with the exception of other Diplomat or Analyst types. They "get" their peers, but their peers probably won't be able to return the favor.



This may cause INFJs to be at least a little out of sync with their classmates. In the best case scenario, they may be seen as mysterious and interesting. In the worst, they may be seen as odd and without any practical value for those seeking positions in popular cliques. Feeling apart and misunderstood can be quite depressing for some INFJs.

Then there's the talkative Introvert paradox. Like other Diplomats, INFJs can be quite talkative, and eloquent at that, sometimes giving the impression that they are a lot more Extraverted than they really are. Since INFJs do need time alone, this contradiction between what INFJs appear to be and what they actually are can be confusing to others. High school friends, mistaking INFJs for Extraverts, may not understand when they withdraw to restore their energy, at times taking it as a rejection.

Regardless of how they are treated, INFJs maintain an underlying desire to help others feel good about themselves, approaching others with sensitivity and their unique insight. While all teens want to be liked though, being genuine is more important to INFJs than receiving the approval of others. Popularity being the overbearing force that it is in high school, INFJs' sense of authenticity may make life difficult, as they put little effort into building social status. They usually ignore peer pressure, much to the irritation of those more concerned with conformity.

Extra-curricular activities often pigeon-hole the modern teen into stereotypical niches – cheerleaders are seen as the popular kids and Audio-Visual Club is for the nerds. Considering INFJs' desire to be genuine, how others see them isn't as much of a concern for them when they choose to sign up for a group as it may be for others. They choose what seems important, meaningful and interesting over what elevates their social or academic status. While others may consider how choosing an extra-curricular activity will look on a college application, INFJs assess the value of the group in its own right.

Generally speaking, INFJs feel more comfortable in a service group than a social, sports, or even an academic one. Social justice and charity groups are very attractive to them. They may embrace the Model U.N., applying themselves to learning the plight and points of view of people in other countries, or to the debate team, with their love of words and ideas, so long as it focuses more on what is being debated and less on the "Rules of Debate" (though these rules can be a healthy counterbalance to their usual intuitive methods). They may even be those brave students who start their school's gay/straight alliance, regardless of their own sexual orientations.

Food drives and serving dinner to the homeless during the holidays are also attractive options, and INFJs may enjoy organizing such activities through a Bible Study or other community-oriented group. Drama and the arts may also catch their attention, but to be truly attractive, it must focus more on getting across meaningful messages than on dictating technique and style.

INFJs may be more surprised than anyone when they find themselves in a leadership position in a group, something they dislike being forced into. However, their intellectual agility, vision and genuine passion often make up for their lack of organizational skill, impressing the club's faculty sponsor and enough of their peers to elevate them to such a role. It may not necessarily be something that INFJs seek but,

depending on the thrust of the group, they may be the natural choice. They will need some very practical people around to support their leadership, but there's hardly a better type to recognize and appreciate such support.

## Work or College?

While there are many other reasons for deciding whether to go college than just personality types, they can play a role in the equation. Not long ago, most thought of college or university as the quickest path to success and security. Now some of those same people are vigorously arguing against higher education for everyone, having seen college dropouts succeed on a grand scale in our technological age. Steve Jobs and Bill Gates are two famous examples. There's a niche for everyone and college is just one possible path to finding it. So, what might INFJs consider when thinking about college?

There are two questions INFJs should ask when deciding whether to hit the books or enter the workforce:

- *Will a degree be necessary in the work I want to aim for?* When deciding on a profession, it sometimes matters whether one has a degree. The "helping" professions which tend to draw INFJs, such as teaching, psychotherapy, and social work, often require certification. If certification is not necessary or, like many who are leaving high school, they simply haven't decided yet, deferring higher education may be an appropriate decision. It pains INFJs to be somewhere they shouldn't be, doing something they consider irrelevant. If there isn't a sense of purpose or meaning in college, or they're doing it to meet someone else's expectations, it's likely to just be a bad experience.

*Will I be able to gain something intangible, yet valuable from going to college?* For many there is more to a higher education than just getting a good job. It's a life passage and an opportunity to grow and take steps toward becoming an independent young adult. For INFJs, who are naturally growth-oriented, college can be an exciting place to blossom. There's no better place than college to explore ideals and play with the theoretical. Depending on the courses chosen, there is wide opportunity to look at the big ideas in life that INFJs are so fond of. Of course, these things can be explored outside of a university setting while working, but the guidance,

structure and time available at college can be most beneficial for young INFJs who are discovering their place in the world. A liberal arts education is seemingly made for INFJs.

## When INFJs Go to College

INFJs who choose to go to a college or university feel right at home. College can cater to INFJs' creative tendencies, and no matter what high school experiences they had, they have a real opportunity to shine in this more mature environment. Unlike the typical high school, the right colleges can give INFJs an opening to free their powerful imaginations.

College is a time for INFJs to begin to consider and utilize their strengths and talents in a real way. One of these strengths is their formidable skill with words – they may find college is the place where they begin to grow into brilliant orators or writers. Some even develop a slight but natural poetic style when they speak or write. INFJs can both charm and persuade with their words and can often recruit others to their various visions with this gift.

However, they aren't comfortable using this gift if they don't feel that what they are communicating is anything less than genuine. INFJs might run into conflicts between their need to create harmony and their need for authenticity if their professor or their classmates insist they accept something or write something they don't believe is true. Often their strong intuition shows them things that aren't easy to explain, and it can be annoying for INFJs when others take so long to get what is so obvious to them.

This tension between impatience with less visionary students – or professors – and the need for harmony can create great discomfort for INFJs and become a major frustration. Feeding back information on an exam just because it's what the professor said can be troublesome for INFJs if they don't agree with the position. Most INFJs would rather take a stand with their beliefs than be a shill for the sake of an A – but they will take that stand in the most respectful way possible.

INFJs' course choices are often similar to what they connected with in high school, continuing with subjects like humanities and social sciences. The arts may also be a direction that INFJs consider, but only if they focus on these courses as a means of communicating a greater message. The philosophy behind the art is often more important than the mastery of the craft itself. With some added attention, the



technique can become part of the message for INFJ artists, integrating their methods with their messages, much as Andy Warhol was able to master. Science and technology are much less attractive to INFJs, although should they find a reason to follow these disciplines, perhaps by connecting them to more human considerations, as a medical researcher may do, their strength of will and their perfectionism pull them through.

The question for INFJ is not whether they can do something – they have the fundamental intelligence and dedication to do well in any niche they choose. However, they'll be more committed to a course of study if it leaves them feeling fulfilled and authentic. Nothing is as painful or distasteful to INFJs as the sense that they are doing the wrong thing for the wrong reason.

Some feel that higher education is only about getting the tools needed to make a good living. Most INFJs reject this as the primary reason to get a degree. A few INFJs can be found in MBA programs, but they are likely there to figure out how to make the economy more equitable for all, rather than for their own financial success. Becoming wealthy captains of industry holds no interest for them.

For INFJs, college is about exploring ways to gain more insights and to help others become better people. Of course, healthy INFJs understand one must make a living to survive. In consideration of their financial needs, they try to find ways to combine making a living with doing that which benefits society and supports their own internal growth, and this is reflected in their choice of courses. Their graduate work is often an extension of this, focusing on education or counseling.

Like most young people, INFJs delight in the autonomy that going away to college offers. For most students, this is the first significant taste of life away from their families and their families' rules. Some even choose their universities based on their distance from the family home. It's no different for INFJs, who are just as interested in coming into their own. If their intuitive nature has been the subject of criticism at home or in high school, leaving may even relieve some of the anxiety caused by that. However, they are generally too serious to see the "party life" as something that fits who they are, and certainly too much so to base their decision of which school to attend based on some ranking of the nation's best "party schools". It's hard to have discussions about important life issues when you can't hear over the music.

However, they may make an excursion into the party life if they feel they need a break from the usual stressors. INFJs, especially Turbulent ones, tend to be perfectionists, and that causes them to be hard on themselves. If they start creating too much pressure in their lives, they may react by going in the opposite direction of their normally hardworking selves.

Parties, alcohol, drugs and casual sex are not out of the question with such a reaction. INFJs may even try to legitimize a “walk on the wild side” by painting it as a healthy expression of bohemian freedom. However, trying to make it appear as though they are making a philosophical statement won’t last long. More often than not INFJs, in their constant search for their true selves, will begin to see through their own charade. This leads them to look for avenues for dealing with their stressors that are more in line with their inherent traits. More likely than not, such adventures will be short-lived phases for INFJs – it’s unlikely they will have the endurance to spend three or four years like this.

One area of difficulty for INFJs in college is the necessity of taking those courses nobody really wants to – the foundational prerequisites. Into every college career a little mundane must fall. Required courses can be too rudimentary for INFJs, and they might find them exceedingly dull – or worse, irrelevant. However, learning to cope with this may also be good disciplinary practice for them, and other Diplomats as well – it won’t be the last time they run into necessary tasks that feel meaningless and boring. While they would rather spend their time in their ivory towers, in the real productive world the mundane constantly invades our lives. College can help those INFJs willing to work for it to gain a degree of tolerance for such things, and can prepare them to approach the adult world in a more realistic manner.

## *Career and Professional Development*

When talking about typical INFJ careers, many things come to mind. This section will cover the traits that make people with this personality type successful in the workplace – hopefully this will give you a better idea as to where your ideal career path could be.

INFJs are likely to find that most corporate career paths are not designed for them, but for those focused on status and material gain. This doesn't mean that people with the INFJ personality type struggle to see viable options though. In fact, they are



likely to face the opposite problem – many INFJs struggle to begin a career early on because they see ten wildly different paths forward, each with its own intrinsic rewards, alluring but also heartbreaking, because each means abandoning so much else.

First and foremost, INFJs need to find meaning in their work, to know that they are helping and connecting with people – an INFJ Ferrari salesperson is a non-sequitur. This desire to help and connect makes careers in healthcare, especially the more holistic varieties, very rewarding for INFJs – roles as counselors, psychologists, doctors, life coaches and spiritual guides are all attractive options.

INFJs' needs don't end at meaning though – any productive work can be rationalized to be meaningful, as any productive work helps someone, somewhere. INFJs crave creativity too, the ability to use their insight to connect events and situations, effecting real change in others' lives personally. For INFJs, money and Employee of the Month simply won't cut it compared to living their values and principles.

These needs are hard to meet in a corporate structure, where INFJs will be forced to manage someone else's policies alongside their own. For this reason, people with the INFJ personality type are more likely to, despite their aversion to controlling others, establish their independence by either finding a leadership

position, or simply starting their own practice. As independents, sole proprietors in the parlance of business, INFJs are free to follow their hearts, applying their personal touch, creativity and altruism to everything they do.

This is the most rewarding option for INFJs, as they will step out of the overly humble supporting and noncompetitive roles they are often drawn to, and into positions where they can grow and make a difference. INFJs often pursue expressive careers such as writing, elegant communicators that they are, and author many popular blogs, stories and screenplays. Music, photography, design and art are viable options too, and they all can focus on deeper themes of personal growth, morality and spirituality.

Where INFJs fall flat is in work focusing on impersonal concerns, mundanity, and high-profile conflict. Accounting and auditing, data analysis and routine work will leave people with the INFJ personality type fidgety and unfulfilled, and they will simply wilt under the scrutiny, criticism and pressure of courtroom prosecution and defense, corporate politics and cold-call sales. INFJs are clever, and can function in any of these fields, but to be truly happy, they need to be able to exercise their insightfulness and independence, learn and grow alongside the people they are helping, and contribute to the well-being of humanity on a personal level.

The INFJs' desire to do something meaningful can also be a very powerful driving force behind their professional development. Many other types feel satisfied if they have achieved a certain goal in their careers, often of a materialistic or egoistic nature – a certain salary band, an impressive title, or number of subordinates. This is not good enough for INFJs. Even if they try to convince themselves that this is what they are supposed to aim for, deep down they will always know that they can do better. This makes it difficult for INFJs to get stuck in a rut – and that is great news for everyone. People with this personality type have the capacity to achieve amazing things, and they need to put their idealism to work as opposed to being stuck in a role that does not suit them.

INFJs should also be aware of their tendency to pick career goals that are way too humble. People with this personality type tend to do very well in supporting roles, but they should seek something more – INFJs tend to avoid career paths requiring a great degree of independence, but this is often the only way to further professional goals. The best INFJ careers combine the need for insightfulness with a relatively

high degree of independence – this forces the INFJ to improve themselves and consequently increase their contribution to the well-being of humanity. Ultimately, this makes them much happier as well.

Unfortunately, despite being strong-willed and extraordinarily insightful, INFJs are likely to face many difficulties in their careers if they choose the wrong path. People with this personality type are very rare and their quiet nature does not help either – consequently, they usually have difficulties finding inspiring role models or getting good advice when it comes to career planning. Jobs that are perfectly suitable for 80%+ of the population would likely frustrate and exhaust most INFJs very quickly.

## Getting on the Career Ladder

The best thing about being an INFJ is that they tend to have excellent people skills. These skills are not going to be as clearly visible as those of more gregarious, expressive personality types – rather, INFJs exert their influence behind the scenes, often building strong, vast yet invisible networks of people. INFJ personalities tend to have a strong desire (and ability) to relate to and understand others, often getting a reputation as clairvoyants and mystics. Like other Diplomats, INFJs are unstoppable when they get a chance to combine their insightfulness with their quest for harmony – but getting such an opportunity can be a challenge.

Whatever their hobbies or aspirations, INFJs do best when they embrace humanities rather than technology and science. It does not really matter whether a particular INFJ wants or is able to get into a field that revolves around communicating with other people – sometimes their chosen profession has nothing to do with this. What matters is the INFJ's ability to find hidden meanings, to see connections between seemingly unrelated things and use that knowledge to help other people grow and develop. Even more importantly, this is how INFJs seek their true self and establish their own identity.

INFJs should embrace these strengths in the job-hunting stage as well. The good news is that they are likely to be quite well rounded, able to both rely on their network of friends and acquaintances, and be quite convincing in an interview. INFJs are at their strongest when they are doing something that requires good diplomatic skills – furthermore, their passion and dedication are usually clearly visible, provided that they are trying to get a job in a field they are truly passionate about. People with this personality

type get even more diplomatic and persuasive as time goes by, so they should not really have any difficulties when it comes to building connections and influencing people.

The main problem that INFJs are likely to encounter is that, in all likelihood, their first few roles will involve a fair amount of mundane, uninspiring work. People with this personality type are deeply interested in ideas, cues and meanings, and self-realization is very important for them – unfortunately, it is unlikely that INFJs will get a chance to explore such concepts at the beginning of their careers. It is important to recognize that all good things come to those who wait, and not get too stressed if your career path does not offer much in terms of self-realization at first.

Thanks to their innate ability to connect with and influence people, INFJs usually have a good idea of how to approach a prospective employer in the right way – and this is what they should focus on. Mapping out the potential channels, crafting the introductory e-mail and presenting the arguments – these things come naturally to INFJs, and they should not hesitate to focus on such strengths. INFJs can be very convincing when they want to be – furthermore, not many people have the willpower or imagination necessary to come up with a highly targeted approach. One good e-mail sent to the right person is often much better than 100+ random applications.

Of course, you need to be able to present your skills in the right way in order to distinguish yourself among other candidates. INFJs shine in areas where they can focus on dealing with people rather than systems, data or tools – their main strengths lie in personnel-related work. It does not necessarily have to be customer- or colleague-facing positions, but the buzzword “excellent people skills” has become such an inseparable part of job requirements that stressing such skills in an interview is a must.

INFJs should also think about what hobbies could be attractive in a specific field and then find a way to turn those ideas into real-life projects. There are plenty of opportunities out there – they can participate in competitions or volunteer projects, build an online presence (e.g. a small blog), or write a couple of articles and try to get them published in the print media. It does not really matter what they do, as long as it is something they can put on the resume – not only this will make the INFJ a more attractive and versatile candidate, but will also give them a lot of breathing space in the interview. Answering a question like “describe a situation where you used your problem-solving skills” is much, much easier

when you have 5+ projects listed on your resume. INFJs should not be afraid to use their imagination to its full extent – after all, your skills are not worth much if you are the only person who knows about them.

People with the INFJ personality type also tend to be amazing writers, so they should definitely try to make the job hunt easier by establishing an online presence – employers are no longer reluctant to “Google” prospective candidates or check out the links included in the resume. You will definitely get some bonus points if your resume states that your hobbies include running a blog about that specific field. Just be careful what you write about!

Finally, INFJs should spend some time improving their presentation skills. If you have an interview coming up, great – but do not make the mistake of thinking that your enthusiasm alone will put you above everybody else. No matter how cliché it sounds, you need to be aware of the most common interview techniques and questions so that you are not caught off-guard by something like “what is your biggest weakness?” – answering “perfectionism” or “I work too hard” is not going to result in bonus points; quite the contrary. Try to highlight your achievements and things you are passionate about, but also be prepared to get many template questions, especially in the early stages. In some cases, the recruiter will not know much about the role and will simply be going through a checklist – expect that and do not let your confidence cloud your judgment when it comes to preparation. INFJs tend to be very good candidates in many fields, but they sometimes find it difficult to get that message across and “sell” themselves in the right way, consequently losing out to less qualified but better prepared candidates.

## Professional Development

Let us take a look at what makes INFJs good at what they are doing, and then move on to discussing what traits are behind most of their problems.

INFJs tend to feel happiest when they are doing something that allows them to combine creativity and empathy. Teaching, psychology and social work are obvious examples, but there are many other areas that INFJs can shine in. Regardless of the circumstances, people with this personality type should always try to move in that direction, even if it takes time – INFJs are unlikely to feel happy in roles that are

strictly impersonal or subject to extensive rules and regulations. It is true that with freedom comes responsibility, but INFJs should not be afraid to explore all of their choices, as opposed to limiting themselves to just one specific role. It is unlikely that someone with this type will have difficulty coping with responsibility – the INFJs’ tactical preference for Judging tends to keep them on track no matter how difficult that is.

If you have an opportunity, you should also try finding a hobby that you could potentially turn into a source of income later on – this approach is quite common among INFJs, especially those in well-paid but not very intellectually challenging positions. The actual earnings do not really matter that much in the beginning – what matters is the chance to do something that truly excites and inspires you, without the constraints of the employer-employee relationship. If you create value – and it is hard not to, if you are truly enjoying what you are doing – other people will quickly notice it and reward you accordingly. This would also tick another very important box in the INFJ’s happiness checklist – the desire for authenticity and recognition. It could be anything – a website about your favorite charity, a local neighborhood initiative, or a small consulting company. Some INFJs want to change the world in some way, others focus on local or personal matters. The main principle is that you should try to do what you truly enjoy, while retaining the safety net of regular employment – and who knows, maybe your idea will be the next “big thing”. If you are also in a position where you can divert some financial resources to your hobby, then all the better. INFJs tend to be good planners, so you should not have any difficulties managing this parallel “career”.

It is also important to remember that your mind and imagination can be both a gift and a curse at the same time. INFJs sometimes tend to overthink things and get bogged down on trying to determine which path is best for them. Try to find time to think and reflect, but do not obsess over details – ironically, INFJs are usually at their best when they are truly relaxed and confident in their skills. If there is one thing you take away from this section, let it be this – it does not really matter which path you are going to take, if there is something about it that you know will keep you going. That path will always be the right one. As an INFJ, you are highly likely to be more imaginative and resourceful than the majority of the population – you will be fine. Even if you do not know something, your intuition will allow you to improvise and your empathy will attract people able to help you. Think about who you truly are and



what you want to achieve in life – and be confident that your skills and knowledge will take you far. Consider self-employment as an example – there are many failed businessmen, but try asking any one of them if they have ever regretted trying. You will be surprised.

In all likelihood, you will only be satisfied with your career path if you feel confident that it gives you enough intellectual stimulation. INFJs like to set goals for themselves and their thirst for authenticity, regardless of the circumstances, is unquenchable. Consequently, following a career path that does not really excite you is likely to make you restless and frustrated. Unlike some other personality types, INFJs need far more than just money, stability or fancy titles. Ultimately, everything depends on how flexible your chosen organization is – there are few career paths that are unsuitable for INFJs, but there are plenty of roles that will underutilize your primary skills. So explore, learn and try to find a way to use your skills in that specific field – and do not ever think that the gnawing feeling that you are in the wrong place will pass, if all arguments point to the fact that a particular role is unsuitable for you. INFJs aspire to be sages – wise, empathic and philosophical individuals, able to understand the struggle of other people and show them the right path. Stability, sensuality or technical prowess are not their domains.

There are some other things worth mentioning in this section. The first is that INFJs do not fare well in situations where they need to do unfamiliar work under time pressures. People with this personality type are decisive and able to keep a cool head in critical situations, but they feel far more comfortable when they have enough time to assess the situation and make an informed decision. INFJs have an excellent set of leadership skills lurking beneath the surface, but being in “emergency mode” can exhaust them very quickly. Unlike Explorers, Diplomats in general are more suited to be negotiators or planners than frontline executors – stressful environments are not for them.

Second, it is crucial that INFJs dare to follow their instincts and choose paths they believe are right for them, as opposed to listening to other people and doing what they think is best for the INFJ. Things that are suitable for 98%+ of the population may well make you unhappy simply because you are not like that 98%. You belong to a very rare personality type, perhaps the rarest of all types – embrace your dreams and follow your own path instead of trying to live up to someone else’s expectations. This is wise advice for everyone, but especially so for INFJs – while people with different personality types may be

motivated by money and how they are perceived by others, INFJs need to focus on personal fulfilment and the knowledge that they are doing something good and worthwhile. Trust your gut, not advice from mass media or someone who does not really know what you truly care about.

We have included some comments from other INFJs at the end of this document – and it would be fair to say that some of their career choices would really surprise and bewilder people belonging to other personality types. Many respondents have also stated that following other people’s examples was the biggest mistake they have ever made, and if there is one thing that they would change if they were able to go back, it would be being bolder and spending more time figuring out what makes them happy as opposed to pleasing those who think they know better.

Finally, do not be afraid to experiment and try different career paths. For instance, INFJs are likely to have excellent writing skills, so why not try your hand as a freelance journalist or start your own website? Do not allow yourself to settle, to get comfortable doing something that does not really satisfy you. INFJs tend to have many talents, but they often shy away from actually attempting to turn them into viable career paths – remember that even if something does not work out the way you expect, it will still boost your self-confidence and give you invaluable experience. Eventually, you will find what you seek – but do not expect to get there on your first try. At the very least, you will find yourself a hobby.

## Communication between Types

It’s useful to have something in common when you begin to talk with someone. It can make the rest of the conversation much more productive if you start with a resounding “yes” rather than a stubborn “no”. This section will cover four possible pairings of type groups, including brief overviews of potential synergies and obstacles, as well as some tips that may help you navigate these tricky waters.

### *Diplomat – Diplomat Communication*

#### *COMMON GROUND*

Two Diplomats will have the advantage of speaking the same language. Diplomats are visionaries who focus on growth and humanity. When they sit down to talk to each other, their discussions sometimes wander into areas that may not seem practical if other types are listening in. While facts are of course

essential, they play a secondary and supporting role to the grander ideas so important to Diplomats. They can focus on details, but only when it helps them make a point about a larger principle or ideal.

Diplomats find ready conversation partners in other Diplomats, who enjoy discussing these more abstract matters. Others may talk about the nuts and bolts of an organization, but Diplomats talk to one another about creating harmony and growth within the company. While they appear overly idealistic to other types, Diplomats agree among themselves that there is always a better way and a better world possible. Their values are important to them, and they don't just leave them at home.

Conversations between two Diplomats leans towards the lofty, as small talk interests neither of them. In fact, they may find one another a relief from the tedium they experience at the water cooler with some other personality types. Any time they respond to small talk, it is more a courtesy than a preference. Among themselves, Diplomats discuss work as something purposeful and relevant. Metaphors and symbolic language serve as shorthand for Diplomats, and they appreciate other Diplomats' understanding of their power and ability to use them as well.

Two Diplomats quickly target any injustice or unfairness in a business, and may form strong alliances around such matters. They are cause-driven, and understand each other when such problems arise. Diplomats agree that a cold and calculating business that is willing to sacrifice or mistreat people to meet its goals needs fixing.

#### *POTENTIAL PROBLEMS*

The problems two Diplomats may have when talking to one another have nothing to do with understanding. However, they may have trouble if they become stuck in their own style of thinking without the benefit of insight from those who think differently. In business and in life, it's good to have varied personality types around to provide balance.

For example, too many Diplomats brainstorming in one room may produce too many guiding principles and too few tactics. They do well when it comes to mission statements or cobbling together other visionary materials, but carrying out the vision may not be their strong point. While many consider inspirational goals an important launching pad toward the future, without a concrete "how-to" strategy,

these become meaningless. However, since the Diplomat group contains many of the rarest personality types, there are usually some Sentinels and Explorers around to counterbalance their idealism. If there aren't, inviting the more practical types to join in the discussion is something worth considering.

All this idealistic discussion can lead to gridlock, like when Diplomats are forced to make hard decisions about whether or not to let an employee go, even when every rational argument justifies it. In such circumstances, Diplomats have to be careful not let inertia set in when the job calls action. Sometimes endless discussions about such matters can do more harm than good, and sometimes a company evolves beyond its need for an individual or a group. These may be difficult points for Diplomats to reach a consensus on among themselves. They may need to talk to those from other personality groups to help bring a dose of reality to the situation.

#### *TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING*

- Tap into their imagination and creativity and bounce your thoughts off of them. In this sense, you're in the same playground. Why not take advantage of it? They will most likely "get" you when others might not.
- Give other Diplomats space to process material on their own. Don't be quick to insist on a conclusion to material the other Diplomat has not had time to mull over.
- The Introverted types within the Diplomat group may need some encouragement to share ideas even with other Diplomats. Encourage them to do so while not demanding it.
- Express appreciation. Diplomats like to know they have been helpful and other Diplomats know this perhaps better than anybody. Encouragers need encouragement just like anyone else.

#### *Diplomat – Analyst Communication*

##### *COMMON GROUND*

Neither Analysts nor Diplomats like many details, both preferring to deal with the "big picture" instead. Both can absorb knowledge almost subconsciously like sponges and then incorporate it into a larger constellation of intuitive understanding. They are both imaginative and creative as they connect the dots, often in deep ways. This likeness of styles and love for the more abstract should give them plenty of common ground and opportunities to combine their talents.

### *HOW THEY COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER*

Diplomats live in a world of values and empathy. Analysts are more comfortable with systems and puzzles. Diplomats add to the Analysts' offerings by bringing humanity to their systems. An Analyst working even with a human system like, for example, psychoanalysis will likely allow efficiency to trump empathy every time. A Diplomat can typically provide "soul" to any system that Analysts devise or innovate.

On the other hand, an organization which is only about love, peace and harmony can get a little mushy around the edges. Rational analysis of an organization is an important ingredient needed for it to grow and prosper. This is where Analysts contribute.

Diplomats and Analysts both like to work with ideas. Their imaginations manipulate these ideas into models. They differ in that Diplomats create ideal designs for a perfect society (or the perfect workforce) and Analysts create ideal schemes for a perfect system. Simply put, Analysts show interest in things while Diplomats show interest in people. While their targets are different, if they can recognize and accept the other's focus while being able to freely share their own contributions to an organization, they may get along well.

### *POTENTIAL PROBLEMS*

While Diplomats and Analysts can certainly use their different focus in complementary ways, this same focus can create points of contention. An Analyst may be critical of a Diplomat's point of view and consider it too soft while a Diplomat may regard an Analyst's point of view as without concern for higher values.

As an illustration, let's suppose we have a Diplomat and Analyst trying to decide about an action in a wildlife organization. As a solution to overpopulation, an Analyst might consider thinning a wildebeest population through hunting. Overpopulation of any one species wreaks havoc in an ecosystem. A Diplomat, on the other hand, may value all life as sacred and be reluctant to release hunters on the wildebeest, instead proposing trapping and relocation efforts, redistributing the population without harming the wildebeest themselves. The conflict between efficiency and empathy is obvious, but is either

wrong? While you have limited resources to preserve balance in a wildlife community, you don't necessarily want to be inhumane about it.

Diplomats and Analysts working together spend a significant amount of time debating these different approaches in the workplace, though usually in less dramatic ways. An Analyst manager might argue that it would be more efficient to replace the receptionist at the front desk with a touch screen computer. Computers are cheaper than a continuing salaried employee and can do essentially the same job. A Diplomat manager in the same office will wonder about the welfare of the current receptionist and the lack of human warmth involved in greeting a visitor with a machine. One would highlight the time and money saved while the other would bemoan the sterile approach and the disregard for the employee. It may take some negotiating to resolve such a difference. However, it's hard to say that either perspective is invalid.

Analysts can be brusque and impatient with people who don't see things their way. Diplomats can feel frustrated and disappointed for the same reason. The Diplomats' aversion to conflict may cause them to disengage if Analysts come on too strong and if they appear too condescending. However, they might not let it go if they see the Analysts' attitude as an "injustice". If both are aware of these sensitivities, it can go a long way to maintaining harmony in the workplace.

### *TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING*

#### **Advice for Diplomats concerning Analysts:**

- If you want an honest response, ask Analysts questions that begin with "why". Be willing to explore their view of your organization and what they think it will take to make it run well.
- If you find that you are having trouble communicating with Analysts, don't be afraid to ask them why they think that's the case. They most likely won't be offended and will probably take some time to dissect the interpersonal dynamic between the two of you. It may give you clues as to how to approach them in the future.
- As intelligent as Analysts often are, they are also notorious for lacking emotional intelligence. Be aware of this and try not to take any unfriendly responses or comments too seriously or personally.

### Advice for Analysts concerning Diplomats:

- If you want a heartfelt response, ask Diplomats questions that combine with both “who” and “why” inquiries.
- Try to discover what values are important to the Diplomat. When you discover this, you’ll discover what motivates them and that can be helpful in communicating with them.
- Be aware that Diplomats can be acutely sensitive to criticism or harsh words. This can shut them down, at least temporarily.
- Try to compliment or show appreciation, at least occasionally, to Diplomats with whom you work. They respond well to positive regard.

### *Diplomat – Sentinel Communication*

#### *COMMON GROUND*

Both Sentinels and Diplomats like to take care of other people and have much to talk about when it comes to the human side of work. While Diplomats focus more on ideological matters involving compassion, Sentinels’ interests lie more in taking care of others on a more practical level. For example, Sentinels might want to make sure they complete the payroll so everyone receives their pay. Meanwhile, Diplomats might focus on making sure that everyone receives fair treatment and that they genuinely benefit from professional development. Both find energy and self-respect in helping others, and there is plenty of common ground on which to bond in that area.

#### *HOW THEY COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER*

Sentinels and Diplomats complement each other by providing different kinds of support for the organization. For Diplomats, it’s the larger picture and the big ideas that are important. They are interested in growth for themselves and others. Anything that comes across as “picky” may feel unimportant to Diplomats, so they sometimes miss small but essential details. Sentinels do not and organizations need their diligence to run smoothly.

On the other hand, Sentinels can become so involved in making sure they do every little thing correctly that they can “miss the forest for the trees”. They can get so caught up in the details and procedures that

they lose the larger purpose of what they're doing. Partnering with a Diplomat can help them hold onto the greater vision of an organization, especially around issues about human capital.

### *POTENTIAL PROBLEMS*

Conflict arises between Diplomats and Sentinels when there is an opinion that one is too controlling (Sentinels) or the other is too lax (Diplomats). If one arrives 10 minutes early for work and another arrives 10 minutes late, you can almost guess which one is the Sentinel and which is the Diplomat. It won't be because Diplomats thumb their noses at the rules or time clocks. It's just that those 10 minutes are not as important to them on their mental list of priorities. To them, as long as they get their job done, what does it matter? However, that might be hard to explain to a Sentinel supervisor who finds comfort in enforcing the rules. It can become difficult to bridge this gap in attitudes.

Diplomats are often able to understand things intuitively. Their view of the world comes from an almost subconscious linking of information and feelings. They are always imagining something better. Sentinels protect efficiency and order using proven standards and methods. In a way, they try to connect something that has worked in the past with the future hoping that will bring guarantee the same results.

Similarly, Diplomats often accurately size up other employees simply by using their instincts. Sentinels will prefer a proven established employee evaluation check list to do the same thing. While these two styles may not necessarily conflict, they can. Sentinels have to be careful not to judge Diplomats as "flaky", having their "heads in the clouds", or too future-oriented. Diplomats have to be careful not to judge Sentinels as too pedestrian or lacking imagination.

The two personality types can resolve these potential problems by understanding that both world views have something to offer. Practicing patience in the middle of pronounced differences is always good advice and always helps communication.

### *TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING*

#### **Advice for Diplomats concerning Sentinels:**



- Be careful not to judge Sentinels as too unimaginative, work-a-day or rigid. Try to remember that the efficiency and stability they offer is a necessary part of any organization, and to try to communicate in those terms. Share abstract thoughts or imaginative ideas with them sparingly. While they might not have any trouble grasping your vision, they will probably have little interest in it.
- Don't spend too much time talking to Sentinels about feelings. While they can be warm and friendly at work, getting the job done and preserving order is more important to them than how an individual feels. They will most likely view any necessary sacrifice of someone's feelings as something "for the greater good."
- Show appreciation for what Sentinels do. While they may not actively seek recognition, it energizes them when they receive it, and they gain self-confidence from it.

#### **Advice for Sentinels concerning Diplomats:**

- When talking about procedures with a Diplomat, couch the discussion in terms of how these specific standards might affect larger considerations in the workplace. Connect these rules to values and fairness. You have a better chance of connecting with them if you appeal to their sense of morals and empathy rather than a set of rules which may feel arbitrary to them.
- Diplomats don't respond well to "that's the way we've always done it" or "that's what you're supposed to do." Take care not to offer that style of argument. Growth and development motivate Diplomats, and they always assume there is potential for something different and better. A company rule book usually says little about evolving, and so it probably won't carry much weight in a discussion with a Diplomat.
- Diplomats like to encourage others, but also remember that feeling traits are strong for Diplomats and sometimes they need encouragement themselves. Take a moment to recognize their efforts out loud even if you don't always agree with their methods.

## *Diplomat – Explorer Communication*

### *COMMON GROUND*

The common ground between Diplomats and Explorers is somewhat intangible but they do share a similar attitude. They both enjoy a sense of moving forward and finding something better. For the Explorer, it's about finding novel and interesting solutions to practical and specific problems. Explorers can look at a tangled mess of a program and figure out how to make it work – often in unique and interesting ways.

For Diplomats it's more broadly about personal growth, moral development and well-being. They can flip a fixed idea on its head creating a whole new perspective. Despite the different emphasis, both types respect flexibility; rules and traditions do not bind either type too tightly. While the Explorer is much more practical and utilitarian compared to the Diplomats' idealistic pursuit of values, it's not hard to imagine them sharing a common appreciation for innovation and change.

### *HOW THEY COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER*

If an Observant type and an Intuitive type are open to each other's differences, a partnership between the two can offer a lot. Explorers excel at hands-on activity. They relish mastery of objects within their physical environment. Diplomats are great at grasping, creating and transforming ideas, but they are more theoretical and thought-based and not as strong at seeing things through. Details bore them whereas Explorers are fascinated by them. They want to know how they can manipulate each little piece and use it to create something new and better – especially if it meets a need or solves a problem. If you want a "vision", call on a Diplomat. If you want the Diplomat's vision realized in a down-to-earth, innovative way, call on an Explorer.

Let's say, as an illustration, a Diplomat realizes that an organization's problem is that it needs to create a greater sense of community. Communication is poor and the Diplomat senses a lack of connection among their clients and co-workers. An Explorer might answer that realization by creating an email newsletter, a phone chain, a podcast, monthly coffees or any of the multiple practical methods for building a community. They would create a brand around the organization that says, "Community" and, in doing so, also create a team effort between the Diplomat and the Explorer.

### *POTENTIAL PROBLEMS*

While established standards do not bind either the Explorer or Diplomat as tightly as they might a Sentinel, Diplomats do have their own code by which they live. Their values, usually connected to their senses of empathy and compassion, are strong forces in Diplomats' lives. While Explorers are not amoral as a rule, values are not always as prominent in the way Explorers handle business.

For instance, Extraverted Explorers like people and are often friendly, outgoing and fun. However, on occasion, they may see solving a problem as more important than taking care of a colleague or a client. They may take risks, cut corners or cavalierly develop plans that might have a negative impact on others.

Similarly, Introverted Explorers may trust their internal focus on problem-solving a little too much, going and doing something on their own without taking other people's opinions into account. Such occasions might create conflict between an Explorer and a Diplomat, and the only way to stay on top of it is by making sure both sides put in the effort to communicate. There will be a negative response when one does anything that crosses a Diplomat's values.

Diplomats may see Explorers as shallow, while Explorers may regard of Diplomats as impractical dreamers. The answer to this difference is always to express appreciation for what the other brings to the table. While Explorers bring practical solutions the workplace, Diplomats strengthen an organization's overall vision. Explorers live in the here and now while Diplomats live in the infinite time of imagination and thought. It's the classic conflict between long-term and immediate results.

Let's use a hospital metaphor here. Diplomats would be case managers equipped to handle the long-term well-being and treatment of the patients in a holistic way. Meanwhile, Explorers would be down in the emergency room doing triage and reattaching limbs while thinking on their feet. These two views can create difficulties communicating because they actually require pronounced differences of opinions and plans of action. However, if you are running a hospital, you want both types around for their own particular missions.

### *TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING*

#### **Advice for Explorers concerning Diplomats:**

- If you want to find out what motivates Diplomats, find out what their values are. They extend their values and ideals into their work life as much as they can.
- Don't bog them down in too many discussions about details or specific techniques. These things will be of little interest to the Diplomat.
- If you're on a team with a Diplomat, explore your common ground by asking questions that begin with "what if".

#### **Advice for Diplomats concerning Explorers:**

- Avoid lofty intellectual discussions that include theoretical ideas. While Explorers will probably understand what you're trying to say, they most likely just want to hear how it can be done.
- Approach issues with Explorers by discussing problem-solving and doing things.
- If you're on a team with an Explorer, explore the common ground by asking questions that begin with "how".

## Career Progression

You got that job, settled in and have been an exemplary employee ever since. What now? How can INFJs progress in their careers and what difficulties are they likely to have?

Answers to these questions depend heavily on the field that the INFJ is in. People with this personality type tend to do better in non-managerial roles, becoming knowledgeable and respected subject matter experts rather than senior managers with dozens of subordinates. Many companies have recognized that there are two distinct career progression paths and come up with ways to retain and promote personnel who are not really interested in managerial roles. Large corporations are naturally better at this, so if the INFJ is able to get a job there, it is likely that they will be able to secure promotions without being burdened with supervisory tasks. Most importantly, INFJs want to be recognized, to be seen as authentic – titles and monetary rewards do not have the same significance for them.

However, this does not mean that INFJs cannot be excellent managers. INFJs are very good at bringing people together – they instinctively know how to facilitate and motivate, defusing any conflicts in the workplace. People with this personality type care deeply about the feelings of their subordinates and

they usually try to get to know everyone, seeking to understand what drives and inspires them. On the other hand, INFJs are prone to getting emotionally overwhelmed – as they find it difficult to be impersonal and detached, the emotional troubles of their subordinates affect them deeply as well. It is also important to note that despite being excellent mind readers most of the time, INFJs can still slip up and misinterpret the messages someone else is sending – people with this personality type should keep their desire for action in check, especially in uncertain situations.

INFJs focus on human relationships and harmony, and usually strongly dislike an impersonal results-oriented approach. They also share an aversion to conflict, controversy and dispute, believing that there is always a way to keep all parties happy. Nevertheless, people with this personality type are quick to show their displeasure and are likely to adopt a “black and white” approach to things they are really passionate about. If the field they are working in rewards these traits, INFJs should have no difficulties progressing in their career.

It is also important to remember that a better position does not necessarily come with more freedom. If anything, it can mean more red tape and more supervision. INFJs excel in roles where they are able to help other people grow and develop, both within and outside of their organization, and they also want to stay true to their principles and be recognized. Ironically, getting promoted can often hinder rather than ease such efforts – sometimes, you may be better off staying in the same role longer, using the time to learn something new and then looking for a better-paid job at a different company. Traditional promotion paths and corporate jockeying are not made for INFJs.

There may be times when getting a promotion is simply unrealistic, either because of the organizational culture that sees little value in the skills that the INFJ can offer, or simply because of the lack of room for growth. Here are some ideas of what INFJs could do – changing the employer is an obvious option, but is it the only one?

## Alternative Options

However radical this may seem, you do not need to be employed to live comfortably. We live in an age of possibilities and selling your time to a corporation is not the only way to generate income. INFJs are

imaginative, bold individuals, and their ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated things and ideas can be very valuable. So why not try putting some of those ideas into practice and turning them into your own business?

Many people find the notion of self-employment quite scary – however, the times when someone could spend 20+ years working at the same company and not worry about the future are over. Job security and guaranteed prospects are a thing of the past, with the exception of several fields such as military or medicine. Consequently, working for yourself may actually be a more secure and viable option, which also comes with a range of other benefits such as the ability to plan your time, see the tangible results of your work and, obviously, be your own boss. INFJs value freedom, control and independence, and being self-employed would give them an excellent opportunity to enjoy these things.

Furthermore, self-employment solves one of the major hurdles that INFJs are likely to encounter in the corporate environment – forced interaction with other people. As a self-employed individual, you are free to choose which tasks you want to perform and which ones you want to delegate or outsource – no more following orders, doing tedious administrative work or dealing with people who are unable or unwilling to improve. Self-employment offers many major benefits to INFJs, especially in today's global and always-connected environment, and people with this personality type are highly likely to be successful in this area.

However, there is no point in trying to start a business without a good idea. This is where the INFJs' ability to come up with unusual connections starts to shine. Anyone could think of a product that could be shipped from the East and sold in the West – but it takes a very imaginative mind to come up with an idea, product or solution that could grow into an innovative business venture. After all, there is a reason why Google and Facebook were developed by geeks in their basements and dorm rooms rather than engineers working 9-5 at multinational companies. Think of an interesting way to fulfill an existing need (or create one) and do not be afraid to experiment. INFJs can be excellent entrepreneurs, having both the imagination necessary to develop a good business model, and the willpower to keep going in difficult times.

## Suitable Careers

Let's look at some specific jobs that INFJs may find fit them the best. We do not try to offer a full list of professions. That would be impossible and the list would grow daily. We offer a sampling of jobs that are consistent with INFJ personality traits with added explanations of why they fit. Use this to create guidelines when thinking about your own career goals.

For those of you already employed, this may serve as a confirmation or an explanation for why you might be happy or unhappy where you are. We do not presume this to be a firm prescription of what you must do to be successful or happy. Rather, we hope it will provide you with some insight as you make your personal decisions.

Below, each category represents a strength of the INFJ personality type, and a series of careers that capitalize most fully on that strength. Deciding on a career makes a big difference in job satisfaction, so we've separated these career opportunities into broad but uniquely appropriate interests.

### **Counseling, Psychology, and Medicine**

We lump these three categories together because they speak to two of INFJs' main motivators: empathy toward others and a sense of purpose. INFJs gravitate toward that which promotes growth and self-discovery and that is the hallmark of these jobs. They enjoy helping others gain insight into and control over their lives. These jobs have the additional benefit of allowing this Introverted type to work with their clients or patients and then step away to ponder.

Exposed to these professions mainly through television and movies, people are not aware these jobs are about more than the time spent with the patient. There is a great amount of time researching, writing notes and filling in charts which allows these professionals time to reflect in solitude. The balance between the personal touch of the visit and later thinking about the visit alone can be satisfying for INFJs. INFJs may do well in related administrative jobs as long as it's more about a vision and less about the "nuts and bolts". Specific potential jobs include:

- Alcohol and Drug Addiction Counselor
- Marriage Counselor

- Psychiatrist (as long as psychotherapy is involved and not just pharmaceuticals)
- Psychologist
- Social Worker
- Physician
- Nurse Practitioner
- Physician's Assistant
- Career Counselor
- Religious Worker
- Healthcare Administrator (if allowed to pursue a vision)

### Education

The work of teaching and working with students suits INFJs well. With younger students, they are imaginative and connect with them using their intuition and empathy. With older students, they present their subject with passion and creativity, especially if they teach something in the humanities. With adult learners, they are simply inspirational. They are keen on treating their students as individuals with their own specific traits and needs. While the more strongly Introverted INFJs may find the constant contact with students and colleagues throughout the day taxing, they will nevertheless enjoy the sense that they are changing lives for the better.

INFJs may regard standardized tests as interesting tools, but they will more interest in the uniqueness of their students as people. They may do well as administrators, but they usually do not seek leadership roles. Nonetheless, INFJs often find themselves in such roles and do well in them. As with healthcare, they do better as visionary, creative leaders rather than strictly practical ones. Such jobs include:

- Pre-School, Elementary or High School Teacher
- College Lecturer (especially with topics like religion, philosophy or literature)
- Adult Education Teacher
- School Principal (but mostly as a visionary)
- Guidance Counselor



- School Psychologist
- Religious Educator

### **Business**

People with this personality type tend to embrace anything involving personnel management. INFJs are primarily interested in the human side of business. Their reliance on intuition will give them helpful insights in their capacities as human resource workers. Some jobs for an INFJ to consider:

- Human Resources Manager
- Recruiter
- Trainer
- Career Guidance Counselor
- Conflict Mediator

### **Causes**

INFJs thrive on values-based causes and bringing about justice. They are at their best when they feel they are telling some larger truth. As an example, there are many reasons others might pursue a career in law: the excitement and challenge of winning, the thrill of finding solutions, the rush of making a great argument, the drama, the power, the fame and fortune... These attributes of the profession do not seduce INFJs as they might other personality types. INFJs more than likely pursue law to ensure that justice is served and values are upheld. The same thinking can be applied to the following jobs:

- Lawyer
- Diplomat
- Politician
- Journalist
- Writer

## What Makes a Job Unsuitable for INFJs?

In modern society, we not only spend a great deal of time at work, but we also tend to need our work to give us meaning. We must be careful not to get stuck in a situation that doesn't suit us, as it can cause us to risk all manner of difficulties. Following are some characteristics of the types of jobs that may not be suitable for INTJs.

### **Work That Is Cold or Data-Driven**

INFJs need their work to have a personal touch and prefer to focus on the human side of things.

Factory or a data-entry jobs, where they have limited contact with other people, are probably not a good fit. Work revolving around *something* rather than *someone* just leaves INFJs unfulfilled. They need work that has "soul". It's essential that their work feels purposeful and creative, so repetitious tasks are very unlikely to appeal to INFJs.

### **Work with Loose Principles or Unclear Values**

INFJs struggle in any industry that does not have clear social responsibilities, and even more so if they sense the work might be doing harm to others. Businesses revolving around vices, such as nightclubs or casinos, leave INFJs feeling guilty. Seemingly neutral work like investing or money management may feel shady to them if they perceive the business somehow takes advantage of others or is in any way detrimental.

Even in ideal roles like human resources, INFJs feel uncomfortable if the company they work for has earned a bad reputation with its behavior, such as by the pollution of the environment. INFJs need to feel management's values align with their own. They need a company culture that values integrity and reliability before they can settle into a job.

### **Work with no Alone Time**

Like any Introvert, too much time with other people can be exhausting for INFJs. They need an opportunity to go off and work on their own every once in a while. It doesn't mean they don't work well with others or that they don't enjoy it, just that this kind of work depletes their energy if they

don't have reasonable breaks in their routine that include a bit of solitude. Some jobs, like many sales positions, require that employees be "on" and performing with people all the time – such jobs are very difficult for the typical INFJ.

## Workplace Habits

Most of us will spend a huge percentage of our life at work. This is why we believe that discussing how different personality types behave in the workplace is important. What drives them or makes them miserable? How can you create a mutually beneficial and productive relationship with a specific personality type? How should you handle conflicts with them? Different positions create different perspectives, and how you interact with the INFJ personality in the workplace should reflect this – what works best with a subordinate or colleague may backfire in the presence of a supervisor.

INFJs have pretty tall demands when it comes to a satisfying work environment. Not only does this personality type need to be able to express their creativity and insight, INFJs need to know that what they are doing has meaning, helps people, leads to personal growth and, all the while, is in line with their values, principles and beliefs.

Oftentimes the best way for INFJs to achieve this is to not have to answer to others' rules at all – to be their own boss, neither above nor below anyone else, just directly interacting with the people and ideas that are important to them. All that being said, INFJs are a clever and inspired group, and with a few of the right conditions, most any position can be made to work.

### *INFJ Subordinates*

As subordinates, INFJs are likely to chafe under hardline rules, formal hierarchies and routine tasks. People with the INFJ personality type value diplomacy and sensitivity, and the more democratic and personal their manager's style is, and the more they feel their independence and input are valued, the happier they'll be. INFJs act on their convictions, so when they do something, it's something that has meaning to them – if those actions come under criticism, even justified complaints, but especially unwarranted ones, their morale is likely to tank spectacularly.

A manager's values need to be naturally aligned with their INFJ subordinates for both parties to be most effective. Though usually idealistic, if they feel in conflict, INFJs can lose touch with that sense and end up all too bitter. But if it's a balance they can handle, with a little encouragement every now and then, INFJs will be hardworking, trustworthy, and more than capable of handling their responsibilities and professional relationships.

### *INFJ Colleagues*

As colleagues, INFJs are likely to become quite popular, being seen as positive, eloquent and capable friends, identifying others' motives and defusing conflicts and tension before anyone else even senses a disturbance. INFJs are likely to prioritize harmony and cooperation over ruthless efficiency, encouraging a good, hardworking atmosphere and helping others when needed. While this is usually a strength, there is a risk that others will take advantage of INFJs' commitment to their responsibilities by simply shifting their burdens onto their more dedicated INFJ colleagues' desks.

It should also be remembered that at the end of the day, INFJs are still Introverts (I), and their popularity isn't always welcome – they will need to step back and act the lone wolf from time to time, pursuing their own goals in their own ways. An unhealthy version of this tendency may pop up if INFJs sense that their values are being compromised by a more ethically relaxed colleague.

### *INFJ Managers*

As managers, INFJs are often reluctant in exercising their authority, preferring to see their subordinates as equals, coordinating and supervising people, leaving the technical systems and factual details to more capable hands, and working hard to inspire and motivate, not to crack the whip. That's not to say that people with the INFJ personality type have lax standards – far from it – as INFJs' sense of equality means that they expect their subordinates to be as competent, motivated and reliable as the INFJs themselves.

Though sensitive, understanding, principled and just, able to appreciate individual styles and to make accurate judgments about others' motivations, if a subordinate's actions or attitude undermines INFJs' ethics or values, they will find little comfort in these qualities. INFJs have no tolerance for lapses in

reliability or morality. But, so long as no such lapse occurs, INFJs will work tirelessly to ensure that their subordinates feel valued and happy.

## What Do Other INFJs Say?

It is one thing to read the description of your type – it is quite another to get tips and advice from fellow INFJs. This is what other INFJs say about their chosen career paths:

*“Currently switching careers from finance to teaching and writing. I wanted to get out of the cubicle hell the office provided. I worked as a private tutor a few years ago and found it very rewarding. The writing is something I’ve always done but now would like to make a part of my career. Working alone or with small groups suits me best and I do consider teaching adults in small numbers and writing to be the dream job combination.”*

*“I am an elementary school teacher. I teach at a school in my local community. Teaching is something I always wanted to do, although I did not enjoy school until college. I consider it a good fit for me as I get to help kids, be creative, manage time, use my organizational skills, and make good use of empathy, help kids understand right and wrong, use data, be creative, and make a difference.”*

*“Headteacher at a primary school. I love the interaction with children; to nurture and support them and their families.”*

*“I studied Industrial Design and yet through the twists and turns of life, became a language teacher. I love both careers. I have never continued with jobs once I stopped enjoying them.”*

*“Currently, I am an ELD teacher at an Elementary School. I have worked as a librarian, peer counselor. I have a bachelor’s degree in Theology. Eventually, I hope to go into the mission field.”*

*“Doctor. Medical school. It’s a means to an end. By becoming a doctor I can participate in at least helping ease some of the hardships of those that are less fortunate.”*

*“Media Planner in Advertising Agency then Business Coach, now a Home Stager. Home Staging is perfect for the moment. I get to help people sell their homes quickly and for the best price, I use my creativity, houses ‘talk’ to me and tell me what they need. I love the education/blogging/writing aspect of it too. I’ll get bored and progress on at some point as learning is important to me.”*

*“Chiropractor, self-employed (own my own office) – no coworkers. It’s pretty close to my dream job. I have time to myself, I get to constantly solve new problems, and have control of the situation (most of the time).”*

*“I own a talent agency with my husband and we work from home. Yes, this is pretty close to a dream job for me! Because I can work independently and it’s an arts-related which I value highly. I get to use my intuitive instincts a lot and can be creative with marketing while analytical with finances.”*

*“I have done sales, editing & writing, and public relations. My current PR job at an ambulance service is the best so far, as I feel I am contributing to a good cause, can use my language and writing skills, and enjoy communicating with many different people.”*

*“I’m a Housewife, it is my dream job because I want to put all my energy and knowledge and love in to my children and that takes time. However before I had children I never really knew what I wanted to do, I always wanted to help the world in some way but always got too scared of change.”*

*“I am a digital media planner. Sort of. I like the flow of creativity and strategies – the whole concept is really interesting.”*

*“Consumer and Market Research Manager. I love the exploring part of my job, Insightful and understanding. It helps that I am very empathetic. Also translating data into learnings for others, helping them to do a better job, really motivates me.”*

*“I’m an astronomer. I currently work at the National Solar Observatory. My dream job would be to operate a telescope on Mauna Kea. I think it would be splendid to be able to stay up all night with the stars.”*

*“I am a lawyer – this is my dream job because I can help those who are really in need and I can utilize my writing, listening, and negotiation skills.”*

*“I currently work as a medical assistant in pediatrics, I like this job because I am helping others and making a difference yet it is only a job to get me through college. My major is psychology and I hope to get my masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling after this and be a therapist. I love analyzing, reading and helping people. I am fascinated by the human brain, and people’s behavior.”*

*“I currently work at a call center, which I hate. It is not my dream job. My dream job is being a professional writer, because I always wanted an outlet to express my feelings and my mind, and*

*because I wanted to impact people with art the same way artists had impacted me throughout my lifetime. I was also told I had a talent for writing, which made me want to pursue it beyond other arts. I am currently studying to be a journalist."*

*"I am a part-time corporate marketing officer and a primary school relief teacher. My heart lies in teaching, my head sits in corporate marketing. This is a perfect combination at the moment but my dream job would be to be a principal of a school where I can make a difference on a bigger scale."*

*"I am a midwife based in hospital and community. Definitely my dream job. Love caring for the women I look after and the variety of the job."*

*"I work in the corporate communications field, for the government. I would not consider this my dream job. I would prefer something with more freedom and creativity, for example, my previous field of work - writing."*

*"I had two careers. First as a weather forecaster, and later as a medical social worker. Both were dream jobs but for different reasons. As a forecaster, analyzing data and briefing pilots was both interesting and never boring. As a medical social worker, I completed psychosocial assessments and set up patient plans. This career was extremely satisfying because I could be there to support each patient throughout their recovery. At times it was stressful ensuring that the patients' desires (care/treatment/ discharge) were adhered to and in line with their safety and abilities. Nevertheless, each career did focus on safety of one or more individuals."*

*"I am currently retired and attending a university to complete my degree in History and English. My plan is to acquire a Master's degree and possibly teach at the college level."*

*"I own a babysitting business. It is my dream job. I'm able to mentor the young women on my staff (I hate being called "boss" - they work with me, not for me) and feel like our work serves the wonderful purpose of strengthening marriages by allowing parents to have time to themselves, which in turn will strengthen families."*

As you can see, INFJs can be found in a variety of jobs, ranging from teaching to weather forecasting. It is not the role itself that matters, but the INFJ's ability to use their imagination and diplomatic skills. There are fields that are more INFJ-friendly than others (e.g. humanities, arts or personnel), but people

with this personality type can carve out their niche anywhere, if the circumstances are right and they are willing to put in the effort.



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