

ISFJ

PREMIUM PROFILE



16Personalities

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 – and 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 – 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 ISFJ?

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ISFJs belong to the **Sentinel** type group, along with ESTJs, ISTJs and ESFJs. They have an **I**ntroverted, **O**bservant, **F**eeling and **J**udging personality:

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

Observant – ISFJs rely on their senses, are absorbed in practical matters and focus on what has happened as opposed to what might happen.

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

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

All Sentinels prefer facts to ideas 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 20th 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.

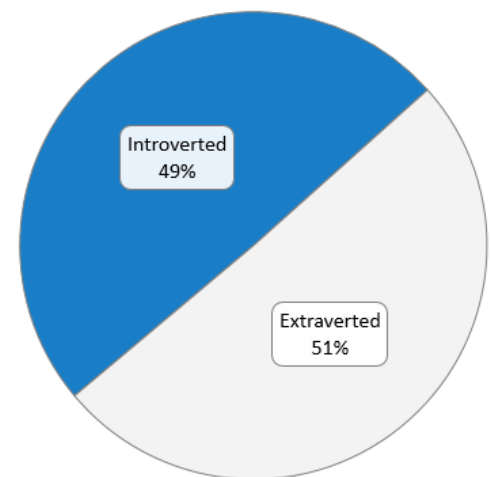
With our model, we've combined the best of both worlds. We use the acronym format introduced by Myers-Briggs due to its simplicity and convenience – however, we have redefined several Jungian traits and introduced an additional one, simplifying our model and bringing it closer to the latest developments, 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.

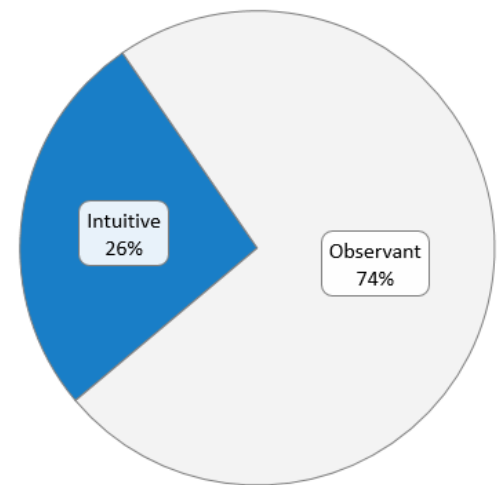


ISFJs are Introverted – this is why they are usually self-sufficient, have little desire to make lots and lots of friends, prefer working with ideas rather than people, and don't put a lot of emphasis on social skills.

Again, these are just tendencies and likely consequences, not black-and-white, unchangeable traits. For instance, ISFJs 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 ISFJs’ 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.

ISFJs are Observant individuals – this is why they are so good at remembering various details, noticing discrepancies and keeping their feet on the ground. People with this personality type spend far more time observing concrete things around them than engaging in various internal discussions. ISFJs are not that concerned about what *might* happen or *why* it has happened – they focus on what *is* happening. ISFJs keep improving these skills throughout their lives, which makes them diligent and keen-eyed observers.

This is also one of the reasons why ISFJs rarely have difficulties finding a partner – as the majority of the population belong to one of the Observant types, many traits shared by people with this personality type, such as reliability, meticulousness and desire for security, are often seen as very attractive.

Of course, every stick has two ends. Introspection comes at a cost – by directing all their mental resources outwards, ISFJs inevitably have to discard the information that is being provided by their intuition. They are likely to have difficulties dealing with abstract, theoretical matters, or jumping from one idea to another – even finding it difficult to keep up with their classmates or colleagues when it comes to brainstorming the possibilities (but not assessing the facts).

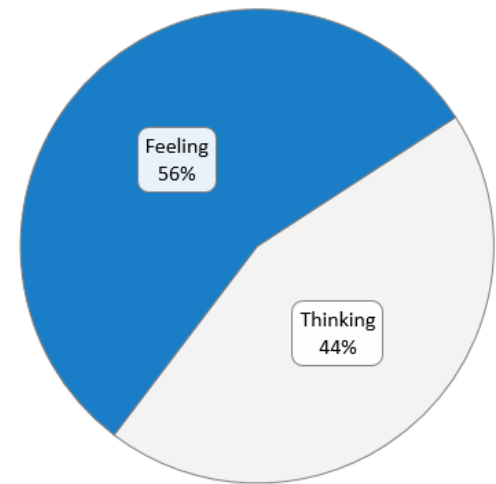
Nature: Thinking vs. Feeling

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.



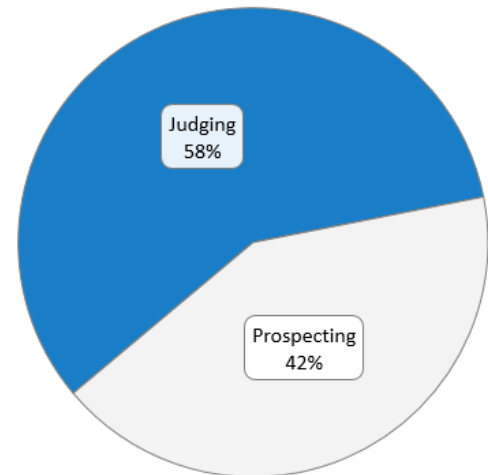
ISFJs have the Feeling trait – they trust and prioritize feelings, relying on moral and ethical arguments, and doing everything they can to stay true to their deeply held principles. People with this personality type are warm and sensitive, always able to find something positive regardless of the circumstances. The Observant and Feeling traits form the core of the ISFJ personality, making them very cooperative and kind individuals. This trait also makes it easier for the ISFJ to engage with other people, enabling them to empathize and connect with others on the emotional level.

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.



ISFJs are Judging individuals – they are decisive, choose security over freedom to improvise, and usually find it difficult to cope with uncertainty. This is what makes them excellent administrators, both able and willing to dedicate time for managing complex operations. That being said, people with this personality type are more interested in how things works in practice instead of spending time developing grand plans like Analysts do. ISFJs are logisticians rather than strategists.

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 [_SJ_] 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.

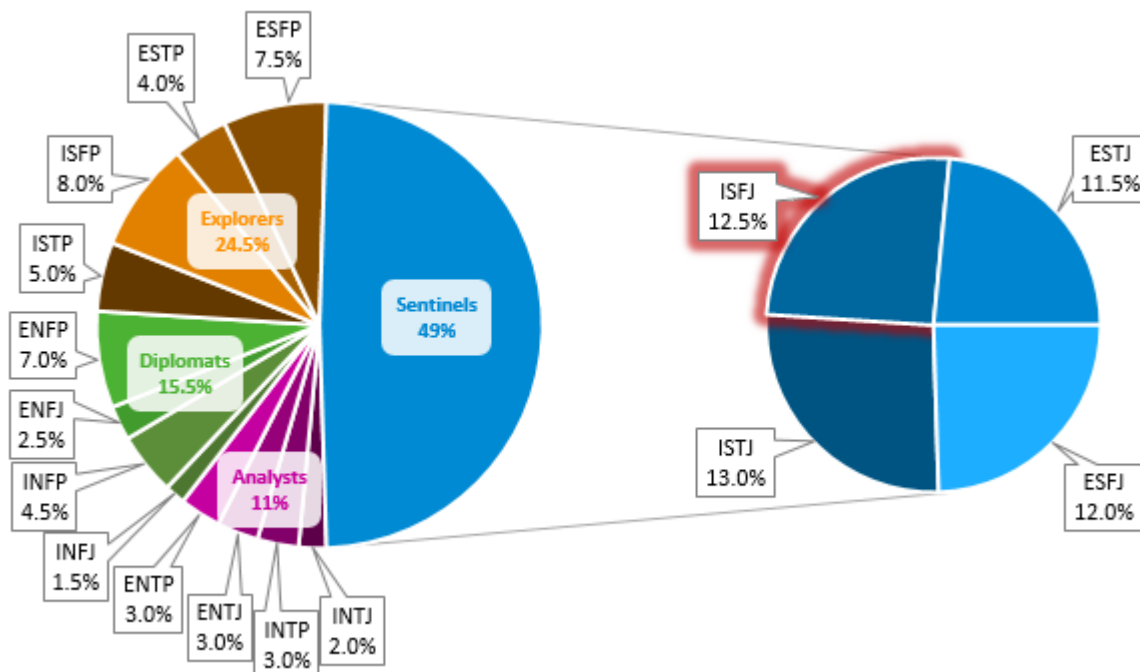
SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT (EXTRAVERTED AND TURBULENT [E___ (T)] TYPES)

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 ISFJ personality type is the second most popular of all types. About 12.5% of Americans are believed to be ISFJs – averaging 7% among men and 18-19% among women. These percentages seem to vary across regions – for instance, countries in Asia tend to have higher percentages of Introverted and Thinking types, with locations like Hong Kong or Singapore also leaning towards a higher number of Intuitive individuals.



The ISFJ personality type is perhaps the most altruistic and supportive of all types. ISFJs rarely sit idle – there is always a worthy cause awaiting their attention. Most personalities are quite willing to reciprocate when it comes to good deeds; however, ISFJs take that to a higher level, often going above and beyond what is actually expected of them. People belonging to this type thrive in areas that are both traditional and involve a lot of activities where their input could make a huge positive difference. Many ISFJs seek careers in the academic sector, medicine, social work or counselling; their personality traits also shine in administrative or clerical roles, or even in somewhat unexpected fields such as interior design.

One of the hurdles that ISFJ personalities are likely to encounter in the professional environment is that it is quite difficult for an ISFJ to “advertise” their achievements. People with this personality type are

prone to understating them, which leads to lack of recognition, missed promotions and various misunderstandings. ISFJs should not shy away from revealing how much they have done – not only this would prevent stressful situations, but the ISFJ would become more confident in their abilities and personality traits. It is not sufficient to simply know that you have done a great job – ISFJs also need to feel appreciated in order to remain enthusiastic. The fact that this personality type tends to be less visible than others does not help in such situations either.

ISFJs should also pay more attention to their workload and not hesitate to voice their concerns if it becomes unbearable. ISFJs tend to overload themselves with work, but their kindness is abused just as often as it is respected. As a cynic would say, everyone is secretly an egoist – and the ISFJ personality is the perfect target for those who do not hesitate to use other people for their own gain. ISFJs are extraordinarily loyal, committed and patient – they should make sure that these traits do not expose them to exploitation. ISFJs are also respected for their exceptional loyalty to their duty – their accuracy, patience and ability to concentrate make them ideal employees in many professions. Not surprisingly, people with this personality type gravitate towards traditional, hierarchical institutions – public service, law, medicine etc.

ISFJ personalities spend an enormous amount of time and energy performing every task they see as important, especially if it contributes to the achievement of a specific goal. However, such a commitment also has a negative side – an ISFJ will refuse to budge and spend at least some of their time doing things that they do not see as meaningful or practical. ISFJ personalities prefer doing things alone, but they can also work as part of a team if necessary.

People with the ISFJ personality type often have very good memory and exceptional imagination. These traits can manifest themselves in a variety of ways. For instance, an ISFJ can easily notice discrepancies in someone's story when the person repeats it again after a long period of time; ISFJs also find it very easy to choose the right gifts for persons they know well; finally, they rarely have difficulties making and maintaining very strong personal and professional connections with a small number of people simply because they remember so many details about their lives and habits – a very unusual trait for someone who is Introverted.

We would like to expand on the last point a bit – even though most ISFJ personalities rarely have any difficulties fitting in and making new friends in the professional environment, they are unlikely to use those connections to advance to managerial roles. ISFJs function best when they work in a close-knit team, when there is no tension between the management and the employees. Some ISFJs even go as far as seeing all their colleagues as semi-personal friends and behaving accordingly. For instance, if an old colleague moves to another department, the ISFJ will definitely consider following their example.

People with this type are known for their meticulousness, patience, reliability and analytical skills. This is quite an unusual combination given that ISFJs have the Feeling trait, but this is exactly what makes ISFJs so effective. They are unlikely to offer or embrace completely new and radical ideas, or lead a team towards some big goal, but their determination and passion more than make up for it. ISFJs tend to be very traditional and can be expected to defend existing norms and procedures – however, they are not blinded by this and are generally open to change, provided that the new approach does not contradict their inner values and principles.

That being said, ISFJ personalities should be aware of their tendency to overdo things, especially in the family environment. As ISFJs always try hard to exceed others' expectations (especially when they are not sure what those expectations might be), their attention can be somewhat overbearing. Many personality types, especially more independent ones, are likely to get annoyed by this after a while. Furthermore, some personalities are naturally less sensitive compared to ISFJs – their reaction to that care and attention may differ from what the ISFJ would expect. This should not be taken personally – every type is unique and what is pleasant for an ISFJ may not feel natural for someone else.

Despite their effectiveness in the workplace, ISFJs will always put their family first. They will embrace the idea that family members are the most important people in their environment and act accordingly, paying a lot of attention to their needs and desires, surprising them with gifts and offering emotional or practical support when it is needed. ISFJs also tend to respect traditions and do their best to adhere to them. In some cases, this trait can be so strong that the ISFJ will not break the tradition even when the consequences for breaking it would be relatively painless in comparison to what would happen if that tradition was respected.

Some famous ISFJs:

- St. Teresa of Avila
- Queen Elizabeth II
- Robert E. Lee
- Queen Mary I (“Bloody Mary”)
- Samwise Gamgee from the Lord of the Rings
- Bianca from Taming of the Shrew
- Dr Watson, the partner of Sherlock Holmes

Strengths and Weaknesses

ISFJ personalities are one of the most reliable, stable and loyal types, always doing their best to shield their loved ones from the dangers of life. People with this personality type are quiet and unassuming, but their dedication should not be underestimated. The ISFJs' willingness to spend an enormous amount of time and effort making sure that everything is in order and everyone is safe makes them very reliable, responsible and loyal employees, friends and partners.



However, this comes at a price – ISFJs are often seen as too gentle, and they may also frequently feel misunderstood and overworked. For all their kindness, people with this personality type are likely to run into problems when it comes to dealing with situations that require a strictly rational and pragmatic approach, or when the surrounding environment is unstable and unpredictable. This section will discuss these issues and pinpoint their source, hopefully helping you to address the traits you are unhappy with. After all, one man's weakness is another man's strength – you will need to decide if and how you wish to pursue personal growth and development.

Strengths

- **Very supportive.** ISFJs are always willing to help other people, sharing their knowledge and experience with their colleagues, classmates or friends. People with this personality type strive for win-win situations, choosing empathy over judgment wherever possible.
- **Enthusiastic.** ISFJ personalities want to make a difference and are willing to spend a lot of time and effort fighting for or contributing to a worthy cause. It does not really matter if that is a simple task or a global initiative, the ISFJ will jump right in if the idea is aligned with their goals.

- **Loyal and hard-working.** ISFJs are very loyal and often get emotionally attached to a specific idea or a company, putting their duties above everything else. They will work very hard and do everything they can to meet their obligations, always keeping the end goal in sight.
- **Good at creating and enforcing order.** ISFJs loathe chaos and always seek to come up with some kind of structure or a set of rules, regardless of what they do. They also do not shy away from enforcing the existing regulations (although this is likely to make them uncomfortable) and have zero tolerance for rule breakers.
- **Imaginative and observant.** People with the ISFJ personality type have their feet firmly planted on the ground, but they are also very imaginative, especially if something fascinates and inspires them. Furthermore, ISFJs also tend to be very observant individuals, able to pick up the smallest cues, especially when it comes to someone else's emotional state.
- **Reliable and patient.** ISFJs are meticulous and careful individuals, always making sure that their work is completed to the highest standard and sometimes even going beyond what is required. A promise means everything to an ISFJ – they would rather work overtime and lose sleep than fail to deliver the result that someone else is expecting.
- **Good practical skills.** ISFJ personalities have no difficulties handling practical tasks. Their sense of beauty and harmony is unmatched, and they do not shy away from mundane, routine tasks – not surprisingly, ISFJs are great family people, always able and willing to take care of their loved ones.

Weaknesses

- **Humble and shy.** ISFJs are often reluctant to say what they truly think or present their achievements, especially in a competitive environment. This can hinder their career progress and cause frustration and disappointment.
- **Overload themselves.** ISFJs' perfectionism, combined with their strong sense of duty, often pushes them to take on too much work – and as already discussed above, ISFJs always want to make sure that everything is completed perfectly. Not surprisingly, this can cause a lot of stress and anxiety for an ISFJ, especially if other people abuse their good nature.

- **Take many things too personally.** ISFJs are very sensitive to conflict and criticism, taking critical comments very personally. They may also have difficulties separating their professional and personal lives, allowing their worries about work affect everything else.
- **Reluctant to change.** ISFJ personalities value traditions very highly and may be unwilling to try out new things or change their habits, even when that would make sense from the rational perspective. ISFJs cannot stand chaos and may feel lost and vulnerable in an unfamiliar, unstructured environment.
- **Too altruistic.** ISFJs tend to be very good-natured, warm individuals and they are likely to find it difficult to refuse requests for help. Unfortunately, this often results in the ISFJ getting overloaded with other people's work or problems.
- **Repress their feelings.** People with this personality type are private and even somewhat shy – not surprisingly, they tend to repress their feelings instead of expressing them in a healthy way. This in turn increases their stress levels and can cause a lot of frustration further down the road.
- **Stubborn.** ISFJs often find it difficult to accept a different opinion, especially if it challenges their habits or principles.
- **Judgmental.** From the ISFJ's perspective, traditions and morality are sacred and must always be respected. If someone is unwilling to accept that, the ISFJ may find it difficult to respect the individual, especially if they refuse to acknowledge that their opinion is wrong.
- **Always by the book.** People with the ISFJ personality type like having a clear set of rules and guidelines – however, as already mentioned above, this often results in them being reluctant to bend those rules or try something new.

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 overwhelm you, they can also be a source of great difficulty. Think of it like an engine overheating. This is usually caused because something in our psychological make-up needs support, and 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 it up too high trying to compensate.

The first section in each part represents the tendencies in their healthy form. When people use these motivators in a balanced way, they can help them be productive and happy. This represents the ideal expression of the motivator.

The second represents 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 ISFJs and other Sentinels. People generally exist at different degrees 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 in terms of tendencies and regard it more as a cautionary tale.

Self-improvement is about stepping outside one's comfort zone to expand your life for the better. The third section suggests a simple way to get along more effectively in the world through some simple rebalancing exercise.

Self-Esteem

ISFJs measure self-esteem by their reliability. They take their duties seriously. If you want a job done well, find yourself an ISFJ. They measure their self-worth by the efficient and thorough execution of tasks. If they say they're going to do something, they are going to go all out and do their best. Failing to do so can be a painful blow to their sense of self.

ISFJs base their worth on practical results. Because of this, they don't care so much about innovation or artistic expression. When there are such "bohemian" wild cards in play, you can't predict the results and that's what reliability is all about. For ISFJs sense of self-worth, visionary efforts are subordinate to the practical, the tried and the true, and kept promises.

A by-product of this motivator is loyalty. Loyalty is, by definition, an expression of reliability. You won't find anyone there for you more reliably than ISFJs. It's important to their sense of self that when they commit to something or someone, they invest themselves fully. They will stand as a reliable life-partner, friend, or employee.

When the quest for self-esteem goes out of balance: Reliable? What can go wrong? Can you be too reliable? Even the most positive motivators can go wrong if they become "overheated".

The French have a phrase "mise en place" which means "putting in place". When French chefs apply this idea, they have all the ingredients prepared, arranged and within reach. That way, when the cooking begins, everything is under control. There are no surprises to interrupt them as they prepare the dish. ISFJs like it when their world reflects a "mise en place" philosophy, and it serves them well. Unfortunately, the world is not like that. When ISFJs try to make the world in their image and attempt to guarantee reliable outcomes, it may drive them to act stubbornly and be rigid. They may go overboard as they try to force everything to be as they believe it "should" be.

Reliability depends on no surprises or no chaos. Unfortunately, much of what humans regard as growth occurs in the presence of risk, experimentation and embracing the unknown. Maturing and evolving can be a messy business whether it's a person or an organization that's growing. ISFJs don't typically like it

when things are messy. Their need for predictable outcomes can seriously hamper their development. It might also put them out of sync with a changing world.

Another substantial problem may occur when ISFJs try to cater to their sense of self-worth is overburdening themselves. If ISFJs insist on living their lives as “the most reliable person in the room”, they can become overloaded with responsibility. This can take a serious emotional or physical toll in time. It’s impossible for anyone to handle everything or and keep it all under control, even ISFJs. Because of this penchant for controlling the outcome, they often have trouble relaxing, and we know that stress is a killer.

Self-esteem rebalanced: ISFJs need to practice letting go on many levels and with many concerns. It’s more about attitude than it is about action.

One of the most effective ways to let go is to consider “what if” scenarios. What if you don’t strictly enforce this rule? What is the worst thing that can happen? Five years from now, how much will this matter? What if I said “no” rather than take on one more responsibility? What would the results of that be? Would it really not get done? What if I did deviate from the way I typically do things? What if I did it differently this time? What would be the worst thing that could happen if I put this off for a few days?

There is little danger for ISFJs if they should choose to lighten up just a bit. Entertaining the above scenarios will most likely not be the cause of them slacking off in any serious way. It’s just not in the ISFJ nature. However, challenging inflexible thoughts could be a useful tool. The exercise might allow ISFJs to refocus and gain a more reasonable definition of what it means to be reliable should things become overwhelming.

Self-Respect

ISFJs respect themselves when they feel like they’re doing something good. Their need to respect themselves will drive them to contribute in positive ways. They like themselves most when they take care of others. This might involve helping or taking care of someone directly. Or it might be a more indirect expression of caring for people, like running an office or organization efficiently or keeping a household running smoothly. ISFJs respect themselves when they make people’s lives’ easier. It’s

wonderful to have ISFJs in your life. They'll have your back and try to take care of you even when you don't ask for it.

When the quest for self-respect goes out of balance: When ISFJs overcompensate and become too busy doing good for others, they are in danger of their own needs not being met. Achieving sainthood may have its attractions, but living a balanced and full life is usually not one of them. If trying to meet everyone else's needs becomes overheated, ISFJs may lose sight of their own. This might work fine for a time. However, it's possible that they will look back from the future with regret because they didn't show as much concern for their own well-being as they did for others. Self-neglect can be responsible for mental or physical health difficulties. ISFJs would do well to be vigilant about taking care of themselves.

Self-respect rebalanced: If the altruistic tendencies of ISFJs become overheated, it may be time to evoke the "Flight Attendant Rule". If you listen to the preflight instructions, you'll notice the flight attendant offering a special instruction to passengers with children. If the oxygen mask falls from the ceiling, they tell the adult he should don his own mask first before helping the child. The obvious reason is if the adult passes out, he is of little use to anyone. The adult taking care of himself first is important to the child's well-being.

ISFJs would do well to consider the Flight Attendant Rule, especially if they feel their lives are out of balance. If they don't take care of themselves – if they burn out because they are taking care of others while neglecting themselves - they can become useless and unable to be very helpful in time. Like the adult with the oxygen mask, ISFJs may want to focus on taking care of themselves first. That way they can stay mentally and physically healthy enough to continue the good work which, in turn, maintains their self-respect.

Self-Confidence

ISFJs gain self-confidence through a sense of respectability. ISFJs may never show off or ask for recognition, but they do like others to pay positive attention to their contributions. If someone recognizes their work, they feel proud and grateful. The presence of such appreciation creates the energy that pulls them confidently forward.

When you offer praise to ISFJs for the diligent and good work they do, they may respond to you humbly and even dismissively. However, you can bet the recognition is energizing them.

When the quest for self-confidence goes out of balance: The problem with any validation that comes from others is that it's not always readily available. And if you ask for it, how sincere is that? If your self-confidence depends on a sense of others appreciating what you do, then what happens when there is no discernible trace of it?

For ISFJs, they may begin to doubt themselves and lose the energy that motivates them. If ISFJs start to sense a lack of appreciation, they may suddenly come across as needy in their attempt to compensate. It may not be overt. They may even try to gain recognition through various passive-aggressive means. Such action could throw off any goodwill they've earned through their good works. Think of Marie Barone, the mother character in "Everybody Loves Raymond". When she feels she's not getting enough attention for her cooking, housekeeping and other formidable caretaking skills, she makes pointed comments hoping the Barone family will notice her "sacrifices". She uses guilt. She sometimes puts others down in order to provide a contrast that creates a comparison that puts her in a more favorable light. These passive-aggressive tactics are all designed to help her receive more appreciation. Instead, as these tactics always will, they end up creating resentment.

Self-confidence rebalanced: Should things get out-of-balance and they begin to feel underappreciated, ISFJs might do well to act counter-intuitively. It may be helpful for them to take some time to be alone and away from others who they look to for an expression of gratitude. This is a real step outside of their comfort zone, since so much about their identity depends on doing for others. Such an exercise may feel impractical to them. But since stepping out of there comfort zone is where growth happens, it could produce extremely practical results.

Then, by themselves, they might take a simple self-inventory of all the good that they do. Taking a break to refocus on what is truly important may mute any need they have to obtain the praise of others. Psychology tells us that well-developed internal motivation is more reliable and more powerful than that which is external. A time away could provide an opportunity to restore a sense of motivation from within and may have a re-energizing effect.

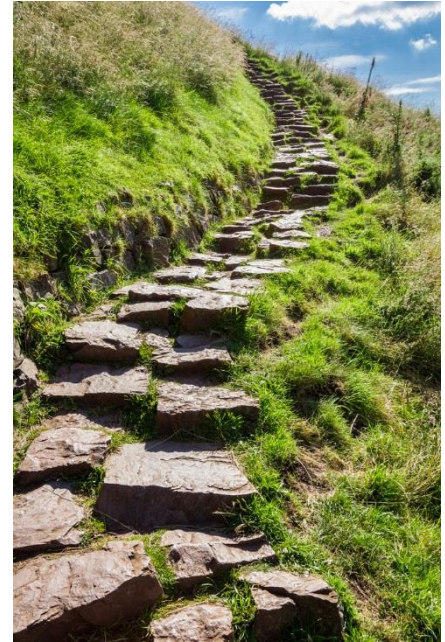
As a bonus, the time alone to take an inventory may also help ISFJs realize others probably appreciate them, even when it doesn't appear to be. People forget to say, "Thank you" when they become used to something being done for them. In considering all ISFJs do, the inventories may help them have a sense that they must be appreciated.

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 Are the Things That Cause Most Problems for ISFJs?

ISFJs are known for their desire to help other people. The dedication and effort they can put into that is simply unbelievable – no other personality type is as willing to sacrifice their own pleasure as ISFJs are. On the other hand, such a trait inevitably puts a lot of weight on the ISFJ's shoulders, often leaving them with thankless, mundane jobs or tasks that other people are unwilling to do. This then leads to overworking and underappreciation, making the ISFJ feel as if their contributions are being ignored and their good will abused. It is very important that people with this personality type learn to say “No” and recognize when others try to take advantage of them – otherwise it is very likely that the ISFJ will start bottling up their frustration, which may, in turn, lead to powerful outbursts or health problems.



ISFJ personalities respect rules and traditions, doing their best to support and promote them. They are not afraid of routines and see them as inherently good and safe rather than restrictive and boring, as many other types do. Not surprisingly, ISFJs feel uncomfortable when it comes to dealing with situations where the tried and tested rules do not work, or where they need to step outside their comfort zone. This is the reason why ISFJs often tend to be less flexible compared to other personality types – this is their safeguard mechanism. Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible to grow without any growing pains and this applies to personal development as well. In order to develop as individuals, ISFJs must lower their shields from time to time, letting fresh and untested information through, and trying out new things where the opportunity arises. They need to go beyond their comfort zone, beyond what they already know – people with this personality type are probably the ones most likely to get stuck in a rut and the sooner they recognize this danger, the better. This does not necessarily mean that an ISFJ must force

himself or herself to act irrationally or completely spontaneously – however, they should do their best to keep an open mind when it comes to new things or ideas.

ISFJs are prone to seeing their responsibilities as sacred and untouchable – once an ISFJ has been assigned a task, they will do everything they can to meet another person's expectations (and even more importantly, live up to their own ideal). Such an approach is not a problem per se – however, it can cause significant health, relationship and professional problems for an ISFJ if they are not careful. ISFJs need to know that they have done the job well and will get hurt if their efforts go unrecognized. People with this personality type may also get stressed or embarrassed if they see one of their colleagues or relatives failing to fulfill their own duties. As already mentioned before, ISFJs should try to be more assertive and vocal instead of ignoring their own needs and allowing negative emotions to build up. ISFJs also tend to worry too much, either about people close to them, or about the world as a whole – it is very important that they find a place and time to lighten up and forget about those worries, at least temporarily.

ISFJ personalities may also have difficulties dealing with situations that require the use of theoretical knowledge or extensive rational reasoning. As their strength lies in quiet dedication and focus on traditions, values and morals, as well as few but strong interpersonal connections, ISFJs are likely to feel uncomfortable when it comes to making purely logic-based decisions. This is completely natural as their Thinking trait is used to staying in the background, letting their Feeling trait take the driving wheel – however, it is important that the weaker traits are utilized as well. All traits are like muscles – using the weaker ones may be difficult and feel uncomfortable at first, but you will get stronger and more well-rounded as a result. If the situation calls for it, try to analyze things impersonally, no matter how unpleasant they may be and regardless of your convictions, values and loyalties – sometimes it is more important to make the right decision than to be nice to everyone.

It is very important for an ISFJ to accept the idea that their knowledge can and will be enhanced as a result of consciously seeking opportunities to connect with and listen to other people, even to those who focus more on logic and facts than cooperation and sensitivity. The one thing that all ISFJs are afraid of is that something can destabilize the set of rules, procedures and traditions that they have surrounded themselves with. Of course, there needs to be an emotional distance between the ISFJ and the

environment – however, the ISFJ is not at risk just because they spend some time listening to someone that lived in a different age, pursues a different dream or sticks to an entirely different set of principles. Desire for stability and predictability must not become a limiting factor and overshadow the curiosity – in the words of Socrates, “I know one thing, that I know nothing”.

The unquenchable desire to do their best on every occasion inevitably lead to another typical ISFJ weakness – relentless perfectionism. This can be a great trait, but it often becomes disastrous in personal relationships or even the professional environment, if the ISFJ is unable or unwilling to control their mind. Neither the ISFJ, nor their partners or colleagues will ever be perfect, and it is crucial that the ISFJ recognizes this and does not get lost in never-ending thoughts about how this and that could be improved, or where they have possibly failed in their duties. No matter how difficult this may seem, ISFJs need to learn how to live in the present when it comes to such situations, letting their mind rest and enjoying the experience rather than seeing their duties as the most important thing in the world.

Another area that we should cover here is ISFJs’ social skills. As already mentioned at the beginning of this article, people belonging to this type are Introverted and draw energy from within, feeling most comfortable alone or in low-pressure social situations. ISFJs can cope with small talk, if it revolves about various details of daily life – but prolonged social contact is likely to exhaust them. Furthermore, people with this personality type 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 often leads to awkwardness in social situations, especially if the other person is not willing to take the lead. In turn, the ISFJ may often experience anxiety well in advance of the social event, knowing that it is likely to be a challenge.

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 ISFJ Traits?

The most impressive trait of all ISFJs is that they are very determined and willing to do whatever is necessary to achieve their goals. They will work hard and not shy away from routine tasks. ISFJs’

integrity and respect for rules also have no limits – this personality type is definitely one of the pillars of our society. Consequently, ISFJs are usually seen as highly trustworthy and responsible people, who can get the job done. This is highly likely to help them achieve success in careers that are generally seen as traditional and hierarchical – public service, medicine, education etc. ISFJs thrive in the environment that is built on rules and structures. This is their element. That being said, an ISFJ should also try to challenge themselves and seek personal growth and development wherever possible – it is way too easy to get used to simply being another cog in the machine. ISFJs can be much more than this, but they must put in the effort to become more balanced.

Despite the fact that they are Introverted, ISFJs can be remarkably social. There are several reasons behind this, the most important one being their respect for established social structures and traditions. If an ISFJ believes that they are expected to engage in social interaction with others, they will have little to no difficulties doing that. It is entirely possible that their close friends will firmly believe that the ISFJ is an extrovert – their capacity for small talk and discussions about daily life is very impressive if the ISFJ feels safe and comfortable. ISFJs should not shy away from using this support network in times of need, e.g. when they feel lost or stressed out – voicing your concerns and frustrations is a great way to defuse the growing inner tension. Being responsible and dependable does not mean that you have to walk alone.

In order to succeed and use their gifts in the best way, ISFJs need to focus on their strongest suit – logistical skills, as opposed to diplomatic, tactical or strategic skills. This is the area ISFJs feel most at home in – and unlike many other types, they are likely to see logistical and administrative tasks as fun and enjoyable. People with this personality type dislike change and prefer evolution rather than revolution, paying more attention and respect to traditions rather than perpetual changes. The stability of society rests upon the shoulders of ISFJs and this is the strength they should focus on – making sure that everything and everyone does what they are supposed to do. The ISFJs' reliability and logistical intellect are invaluable in many situations and they should not be reluctant to pat themselves on the back for a job well done – people with this personality type may not be as visible as others, but their contribution is vital to the success of many projects.

ISFJ personalities should also recognize their need to belong. It could be anything – a community club, an organization with a strong corporate culture, their own family, or a circle of friends. The only thing that matters is that the ISFJ feels safe and secure, and sees himself or herself as a loyal, valuable member of their chosen group. Sense of community is very important for ISFJs, no matter how big that community is – this is one of their anchors in life, even though finding the right group can be a challenge. After all, ISFJs are the ultimate protectors, kind and dedicated – but they need to know who or what they are supposed to protect. People with this personality type will always seek this sense of belonging, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously – recognizing this inborn need can make their life much easier.

ISFJs are likely to have good social connections, despite the issues discussed in the previous section – this trait is rare among Introverted types. There are several reasons behind this, the most important one being their respect for established social structures and traditions. If an ISFJ believes that they are expected to engage in social interaction with others, they will feel far more comfortable doing that. This can make everything much easier for an ISFJ – not many other types have such a potent combination of kindness, determination and observation skills. However, it is crucial that ISFJs get more in touch with their rational side – people with this personality type are naturally sensitive and tend to get stressed or disturbed quite easily. Sensitivity is not always a bad thing, but ISFJs should bear in mind that becoming less vulnerable to criticism would definitely help them relax and enjoy their life much more – it is much easier to remain calm in difficult situations if your rational side has been trained to take over in those cases.

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, bad memories etc. 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;
- 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.

ISFJs are not an exception to this rule. Your “evil twin” would be an unhealthy version of the ENTP personality – it may push you towards things like being very cynical, arguing about everything, blindly exploring random ideas, choosing a completely unstructured lifestyle, befriending random strangers etc. 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 ISFJs’ personal growth is emotional stability. This is determined by the last trait that we discussed in the “ISFJ 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 ISFJ, 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 ISFJs tend to be rather firm when it comes to principles and traditions that are important to them, but Assertive ISFJs 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 ISFJs are likely to have a lower drive and potentially productivity, due to lower sensitivity to negative outcomes. People with this variant of the ISFJ personality also tend to be more forceful and self-confident, which can isolate them from other people – it is important to remember that ISFJs 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 ISFJ, you would still be rather confident in your principles, knowing that you are hardworking, responsible and trustworthy – 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 ISFJs 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 ISFJ, 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 it to your emotions – they are an inseparable part of our lives and Assertive ISFJs should not try to present themselves as shining beacons of duty and devotion, 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

ISFJ personalities are dedicated and loyal partners, devoting an enormous amount of effort to ensure stability and mutual satisfaction in a relationship. They also tend to be very responsible and relatively conservative while dating. Once an ISFJ commits to a relationship, they will stick to their promise until the very end – people with this personality type gladly accept their duty to play a specific role in the relationship.



ISFJs are very committed to keeping their long-term relationships at the highest possible level. People with this personality type usually have very strong feelings, but they tend to hide them from the outside world, unless there is a very good reason to open up – this is why these feelings may not always be obvious to other people. Anyone dating an ISFJ should keep this mind – it is more than likely that their shell is hiding some very strong feelings.

People with this personality type are unlikely to experiment with things that are completely out of the norm – they will respect traditional gender roles and social rituals. On the other hand, ISFJs pay a lot of attention to fulfilling their duties, which naturally include being a good partner and making their significant other happy. For instance, if the ISFJ's partner is more spontaneous, the ISFJ will try hard to keep up, although it is likely that they will eventually try to convince their partner to settle down and behave more responsibly. ISFJ personalities are hard workers, and this covers their relationships as well – they will do their best to fulfill their duties and keep the relationship functional and stable. ISFJs can easily take care of daily tasks and they also tend to pay a lot of attention to their weaknesses as a partner (e.g. when it comes to emotional support, something that ISFJs often find challenging), as soon as they realize that their partner needs this.

That being said, ISFJs sometimes tend to believe that they are always right, especially when it comes to matters related to morality or security. People with this type should remember that “winning” the debate

might often cause them to lose much more outside of it, especially when it comes to a romantic relationship and even more so when that relationship is still in the dating phase. Some ISFJs also make the mistake of trying to get their partner to comply with the traditions and rules that are dear to the ISFJ's heart. While such endeavors do succeed sometimes, more often than not they do not achieve anything, causing frustration and tension instead. We are who we are, and trying to get another person to adapt their personality type to suit your preferences is a fruitless exercise.

The intensity of feelings means that romantic relationships are a very high priority for ISFJs, and they may sometimes even place them on the same shelf as religious feelings. Consequently, ISFJ personalities take dating very seriously as well. ISFJs seek long-term relationships and it is safe to say that they are very likely to remain faithful to their partners until the last day of their life.

Looking from the sexual perspective, ISFJs see intimacy as a very important aspect of every romantic relationship. They tend to be very good at expressing their feelings through physical actions, paying a lot of attention to satisfying their partner's needs. ISFJs are also likely to see sexual acts as a duty rather than a source of pleasure – but they will truly enjoy them. People with this personality type rarely verbalize their feelings of love and affection, so intimacy is a great way for them to express these emotions.

An ISFJ can spend an enormous amount of time and energy making sure that their partner is happy – there is nothing more pleasant to an ISFJ than being appreciated by their other half. The same thing can be said about their dating or romantic relationships in general – the best gift that someone can give to an ISFJ is lots of love and appreciation.

An ISFJ is also likely to be very altruistic and perceptive of other people's needs. However, people with this personality type should ensure that such a trait of theirs does not lead to abuse, especially while dating – it is important for ISFJs to pay some attention to their own dreams and desires as well instead of spending all of their energy on fulfilling others' needs. Anyone dating an ISFJ should keep this in mind as well.

ISFJs are likely to find it difficult to deal with criticism or tense situations. People with this personality type are known for their tendency to accumulate their anger and then unleash it in an all-out verbal attack, saying words that they are very likely to regret later.

ISFJs, generally speaking, are very family-oriented individuals, paying a lot of attention to their partner and other family members. They are perfectly suited to take care of everyday needs and take pleasure in caring for other people. Anyone dating an ISFJ should remember that the best ISFJ traits always come out later in the relationship – and this is one of the examples. An ISFJ is likely to invest a lot of time and effort in the romantic relationship, and is likely to be a trustworthy, loyal and loving partner.

Preferred partners: ESFP and ESTP types as their Extraversion and Prospecting traits counterbalance ISFJs' Introversion and Judging traits.

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. 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 would 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.

On the other hand, this is what brings us to the next part, where we are going to talk about 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. 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 the feelings of resentment inside, allowing them to build up, instead of talking about them. 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. The Introvert 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 the Introvert out from their shell, playing the role of the socializer in the relationship, encouraging their partner to establish new social links and taking care of any social obligations that the 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 the partners is not very mature, they may have difficulties understanding the other person's perspective. In such circumstances, the extravert may get frustrated by the fact that their Introverted partner is more reserved and private, or has poor social skills. And vice versa, the Introvert may get annoyed by the extravert's chattiness or need to socialize.

It is crucial that both individuals make conscious efforts to understand each other – in all likelihood, they will both think that their way of life is perfectly normal and it is the other person who is strange. For instance, 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 Introvert and an Extravert form a relationship, they give each other an excellent opportunity to do just so.

Tips for your partner:

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 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.
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 is 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 Introvert simply needs some time alone to recharge.

Tips for you:

1. **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 – 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 keep everything to yourself.
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.

An Intuitive (N) 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 the 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 energy styles is quite easy to define. The Intuitive partner will focus on abstract things – ideas, introspection, possibilities, dreams, connections between events etc. 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, daily matters etc. Observant individuals 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 the society and this often leads to Intuitives' traits being dismissed as impractical or unrealistic – the Observant partner should avoid labelling 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 your partner:

1. **Be patient.** Your Observant partner is likely to have difficulties understanding some of your ideas.
2. **Improve your observation skills.** Your imagination is a great asset, 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 you:

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.
3. **Be imaginative.** Observant individuals 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.

An Observant (S) Partner

As Observant individuals, you are both likely to prefer relying on your senses over introspection – that is, you will spend more time keeping your feet on the ground as opposed to exploring the world of ideas. A relationship between two Observant types is usually very straightforward, practical and fun – both partners are usually able to handle practical tasks very well, focusing exclusively on real and tangible things. The combination of pragmatism, down-to-earth attitude and “let’s just do it” approach is likely to be a great driving force in your relationship.

Observant types form the majority of the population (75-85%) and many traditions and social norms revolve around your traits as well. Consequently, you are unlikely to have difficulties understanding each other or finding things to do. All Observant individuals enjoy things that they can see, touch and feel - therefore, activities that excite you will probably be attractive to your partner as well and you will not need to worry about being misunderstood. 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. Your pragmatism and observation skills will be very useful in everyday life, but you may have difficulties when it comes to imagination and reflection. This does not mean that Observant types are unimaginative – quite the contrary, they are often brilliant artists. However, that tendency to rely on the real world and ignore all things abstract can often lead to too much of routine or overstimulation of senses (e.g. by only focusing on material things). There will be times when it will be necessary to brainstorm about the future or reflect on things, disagreements or events – you are both likely to have difficulties in this area and addressing this should be one of your priorities.

Another problem that you are likely to face is your relative inflexibility. Observant types tend to be quite protective of their habits and may feel uncomfortable in situations that require innovative thinking and

quick, imaginative solutions. It is important to take time to forget the habits and let yourselves dream and fantasize every once in a while - keep your feet on the ground, but your eyes on the stars.

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Improve your introspection skills.** You are both likely to be practical and realistic, but it is also often necessary to spend some time reflecting on things. Forget the practical world and embrace your imagination from time to time.
2. **Be imaginative.** Observant individuals often focus too much on routines or physical things. Do not be afraid of exploring ideas without knowing whether they are actually practical or implementable.
3. **Remember to think about the future.** You are both 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.
4. **Do things that engage your senses.** You both will find it easier to deal with practical things than ideas, so look for activities that require good use of all five senses (e.g. sports, hiking, dancing etc.). This is especially important in the dating phase.
1. **Be careful with criticism.** As Observant individuals, you will both have your feet firmly on the ground, but that also means that you are likely to have disagreements over how to deal with practical things, each having your own opinion. Stay calm and compromise.

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 or emotions, always take 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 ISFJ and someone who belongs to a Thinking type can be extremely rewarding as both individuals will be able to 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 in warmth and harmony into the relationship.

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, they are 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.

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.
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.

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 you will not compromise these values if you stick to the facts when making certain decisions. 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.
4. **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. For instance, Judgers are likely to defend their opinions quite fiercely, unwilling to give up and accept a different point of view. 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 about 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 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 conscious efforts 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 conscious efforts to do your fair share of household duties.

Assertive or Turbulent?

The format of this subsection will differ from that of the others, simply because we see the final trait as a variant of the personality rather than an integral part of the actual personality type. However, the importance of this trait should not be understated – 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 in the proverbial middle of the scale. Their calm temper allows them to sort out any disagreements without much stress as opposed to being rattled even by the most insignificant of 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, with their self-confidence overshadowing 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”, e.g. feeling at the top of the world in the morning and being overrun by negative thoughts in the 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 career or pleasantly surprise their other half, simply because they really care about whether they are being good enough.

At first sight, it may seem that the Assertive trait is 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 always be a good thing. 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 in 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 a mistake.

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 combinations.

If both partners are 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 and not be perturbed by occasional issues in your relationship – by doing this, you can miss crucial signs that something is going in the wrong direction or that you may potentially face bigger issues further 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.

If one partner is Assertive and another is Turbulent

As with all other traits, if partners are on opposite sides of the scale, there is a lot of potential for both mutual personal growth and 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 another person's attitude.

The Assertive individual should recognize that their 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, the Turbulent individual should understand that their partner's calmness and relaxed attitude do not mean that they are unsupportive or not that interested in working on the relationship. Being less likely to feel nervous in challenging situations, Assertive individuals may seem somewhat detached or disinterested, especially from the perspective of someone who is Turbulent – however, it is precisely that emotional stability that should be utilized where 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 enough, this level-headedness can also be invaluable in emotionally charged or unpredictable situations.

With this in mind, both partners should work on covering each other's weaknesses with their respective strengths instead of focusing on their differences and trying to "fix" them. 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 goals into the couple's life, with their hard work and success-driven attitude pushing both partners to grow and develop instead of being 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.

If both partners are 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 – and it is in those moments that both partners have to remember to take a couple of deep breaths and refocus their thoughts and emotions. Otherwise there is a risk that they will end up fuelling each other's anxiety, with minor frustrations boiling over and becoming a full-blown crisis. Turbulent individuals are vulnerable to stress and they 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 the couple's favor, if both partners are able to recognize and address its accompanying weaknesses. Being reflective and self-conscious, they will likely find time to think about both the present and the future, readjusting the course as they go instead of blindly trusting themselves. While this may lead to plenty of soul-searching conversations around the dinner table, focusing on all the stressors in their life, the perfectionism and sensitivity shared by Turbulent partners will also encourage them to address those issues and try to find good solutions instead of

writing them off as irrelevant and going on with their lives. Nearly any weakness can be turned into a strength, and this is one of such examples.

Friendships

Given how generous ISFJs are with their warm praise and support, it's not surprising that others enjoy their company. The challenge is to be considered a friend back – people with the ISFJ personality type are shy and a little protective of themselves, but they also need to be able to connect on a deeper emotional level. It makes sense then that most of ISFJs' friends are made not by random encounters on a wild night out, but through comfortable and consistent contact, as in class or in the workplace where they have the time to get to know each other little by little.



A lot of what establishes and deepens ISFJs' friendships is the mutual support, advice and reassurance that the friends give each other. ISFJs need a lot of positive feedback. Admitting this need certainly shows vulnerability, but if that vulnerability is well handled, it creates the deep bonds that ISFJ personalities look for. If badly handled or not reciprocated, it's hard to see the burgeoning friendship surviving without quite a bit of extra effort.

As their friendships develop, ISFJs' sense of loyalty may push them to lean ever more on themselves to meet their friends' needs, to the point of neglecting their own. They show this in a few ways, from going clearly out of their ways to stick to even trivial commitments, to simply not wanting to disagree or say no for fear of causing turbulence. More cynical people would call this naïve, and may even take advantage of ISFJs' altruism – but these are hardly the type of people who could be called “friends”, and they have no business being discussed here.

The real friends, that close inner circle who have stuck together through thick and thin over years, are the ones ISFJs truly cherish for their quality of character and quality of discussion. Strangely for an Observant (S) type, ISFJs almost always have an Intuitive (N) friend among them, despite the communication barriers. It's really not that odd though – these close friends are who ISFJs discuss deeper, more important matters with, and the quality of thought that Intuitives bring with them gives ISFJs' an impression of depth, mystery and wisdom.

People with the ISFJ personality type aren't outwardly picky about which personality types they make friends with, at least not initially. Because they strongly prefer to avoid conflict and miscommunication though, most of their friends end up being fairly similar types – fellow Introverted and Extraverted Feeling Sentinels (ISFJ and ESFJ). Thinking (T) types are often too critical, and Prospecting (P) types too unreliable to really be able to provide, and receive, the kind of support and affinity ISFJs look for.

Of course, this isn't to say that they can't build friendships with those different types. It's a big world out there, and if there's one thing ISFJs appreciate, it's the pleasant surprise of finding someone who feels as strongly as they do about the value of an honest relationship. They may be more sensitive than most, and may have built some shields to protect themselves because of hard experience, but they also can't help but be drawn to those who may share their gentle souls. Let's discuss further how each type group fits in, the challenges they may face, and the understanding they gain by finding each other's strengths.

Analyst Friends

Friendships with Analysts don't enjoy that same natural alignment that those with Sentinels do. In fact, the highly forceful, critical nature of ENTJs and ENTPs can be extremely off-putting. These types have been known to say that a debate isn't over until someone cries – that someone is likely to be ISFJs themselves. But this is nothing to be ashamed of. While ISFJs' sensitivity is something to be aware of, these Extraverts' openly callous nature is something we actively challenge them to work on in nearly every aspect of their lives. We all have room to grow.

Not all Analysts demand such thick skin, though. ISFJs are actually quite drawn to the non-judgmental and open curiosity of INTPs. It may not always be easy to follow their musings, but it's at least quite a bit of fun. In return, these Analysts have a rare opportunity to get in touch with their feelings and emotions. When ISFJs ask how they're really doing, they have a chance to get things off their chest they wouldn't normally put into words. They'd never admit it, but they very much value having someone around that they can say these things to, who won't just turn around and tell all to the next person in line.

A functioning friendship with any Analyst is certainly rewarding. Analysts are best with systems and things. Spending time with ISFJs can help remind them that those things and ideas all affect people. For their part, Analysts often appreciate those little reminders, usually seeing any additional information as inherently valuable. Going a little further, ISFJs' consideration and underlying strength of moral character isn't something they see often, and they come to respect it.

There are challenges, of course – ISFJs can see Analysts as out of touch, unreliable, or crushingly critical. Analysts wonder how anyone could stay so attentive and supportive without going crazy. The mutual recognition and enjoyment is worth pursuing, though. It can be very rewarding if they appreciate each other's differences and play off each other's strengths. ISFJs keep Analysts aware of the need to be caring, and are rewarded with a healthy stream of ideas so they always have something to do together.

Ultimately the growth of the friendship is made or broken by one of Analysts' greatest flaws: their inattentive attitude towards actively maintaining their friendships. Intuitive types in general are well known for being able to go months or years without contact, then picking up as though no time had passed at all. This is downright bizarre to ISFJs, who all but define the quality of these relationships by their consistency and attentiveness. As a result, it takes time and effort for these types to develop a good rapport – these are friendships built over years, as coworkers or through mutual friends.

Diplomat Friends

ISFJ-Diplomat friendships are some of the most enjoyable. ISFJs usually end up with at least one Intuitive type among their friends, and it makes sense that it would be a Feeling type. They both avoid conflict and value cooperation, and they share a genuine desire to be helpful and supportive. Not lonely that, but the deeper values that Diplomats live by – fairness, kindness, and generosity – resonate with ISFJs' own sentimental values, a very pleasant discovery.

Diplomats can be a little too whimsical, but ISFJs appreciate the nuance and beauty of their expressions and ideas. The way these things seem to bubble up from nowhere only intrigues ISFJs further, as their own similar expressions of support and kindness are based on clear and careful consideration. These friends can be quite the team if they earn each other's full trust.

On a more practical level, Diplomats get ISFJs out the door and trying new things. They have a way of making a little adventure and unpredictability actually sound fun to ISFJs, who are usually quite cautious. ISFJs know that their Diplomat friends are unlikely to get pushy or judgmental, which makes it a lot easier to put themselves out there and have a good time. On top of that, ISFJs never need to worry about running out of things to talk about – Diplomats love to get other people’s perspectives, and they’ll always have a conversation-starter lying in wait.

Friendships between ISFJs and Diplomats are pretty unique, because they’re one of the few where the opposites on the Observant/Intuitive trait actually get along exceptionally well. ISFJs may sometimes be too sensitive, but Diplomats’ unbridled idealism, respect, and understanding, and the fact that ISFJs gladly reciprocate, go a long, long way towards building lasting and important friendships.

Sentinel Friends

Other Sentinels are a good fit for ISFJs, who share their appreciation for dependability and support. The friendship is defined by day-to-day activities, rather than ambition or purely theoretical curiosity. ISFJs enjoy that these friendships are uncomplicated, attentive relationships. They know too well the flake, the user, and the fair-weather friend. Having someone around who has stood by them through thick and thin for years, and will continue to do so, is no small consideration.

Small groups are usually best for ISFJs. Too many people, and they feel overwhelmed, like they have to cut someone off if they ever want to get a word in. They’ll happily sit down to chat over coffee one-on-one, but no matter how long they’ve been friends, there is a little nagging worry that they’ll run out of things to say. It’s often much more enjoyable to go out and do something together, go to the zoo or just for a walk, where the activity gives them opportunities to frame new lines of discussion if they need to.

Regardless of how many people there are, these discussions are likely to revolve around what people at work and home have been saying and doing, and how that’s played out. They aren’t big on esoteric topics focusing on grand plans and analyses. In fact, ISFJs often consider it an opportunity missed when impersonal topics like global politics dominate a discussion, instead of using that time to really catch up and share. Having Sentinel friends lets them pursue those conversations with a little extra confidence.

Their need to keep things personal and unwaveringly supportive can create waves in their own right though, if mutual friends have a falling-out. ISFJs have a compelling need to create peace among their friends, and define their self-esteem in large part by their loyalty. Being pulled in two opposing directions by people they care about equally can be an agonizing situation, made all the more hurtful if they find that one friend has been trying to use their trust and support to get back at the other.

There's hardly a good way out of these situations once they've begun, and that's part of why ISFJs prefer to keep their real feelings to the very few whom they truly, deeply trust. It prevents unnecessary conflict over ideological differences that have little bearing on the day-to-day, protecting everyone. It also lets them nurture something truly special with the people who mean the most to them.

When emotionally-charged situations occur, not just between friends but with things like breakups and deaths in the family, ISFJs enjoy having a friend who is able to stand by their side with genuine and loyal support. ISFJs may not be comfortable with overly-public pity, hugs, and attention, but they enjoy having a friend they can trust, who they can tell all to and to know without a doubt that they'll still have a friend afterwards.

Explorer Friends

The ISFJ – Explorer friendship is a mixed bag. Explorers are defined by the moment and its pleasures. They are known for unpredictability and, to sensitive and cautious ISFJs, are recklessly cavalier. But one idea that is most important for ISFJs' to understand is that not everyone has the degree of dependability that they do, and that that's actually okay. Explorers' ability to lose themselves in the moment and simply have fun and be excited about something can really be quite refreshing. It's a big, beautiful world out there, to be engaged and explored with childlike curiosity.

Likewise, as fun as the moment is, it certainly does Explorers some good to remember that actions have consequences. A grand adventure is swell, but Explorers need to remember that their friends depend on them to come back. This is the real beauty of the ISFJ-Explorer friendship. Explorers follow the excitement, and often forget to wrap things up gracefully – out of sight, out of mind. They need persistent and accountable ISFJs in their lives; and ISFJs can learn to be more flexible and free.

Things work better with the Introverts though. The Extraverts can be a little much for ISFJs. ESTPs and ESFPs really grab ahold of life and run with it. They have a far, far greater appetite for personal and social risk than ISFJs are up for, and little patience for waiting for more cautious individuals to catch up. They could both benefit a lot from some mutual understanding, but these Explorers are just too over-the-top to sit still long enough get to know ISFJs properly and to provide the necessary dependability.

Like with their Sentinel friends, ISFJs appreciate the practical side of Explorers, especially those who enjoy more low-key projects and activities. Friendships with beauty-oriented and sensitive ISFPs can be especially enjoyable, if they can give each other the right amount of space – ISFPs tend to be a fair bit more okay with time apart than ISFJs. But more expressive Explorers are likely to be too far removed and easily put off for ISFJs to even have a chance to try.

Parenthood

ISFJs' warmth and care make parenting something that often comes naturally to them. Many people with this personality type feel like parenting is the task they were born for. ISFJs take a great deal of pleasure in the sense of personal importance and responsibility they feel in ensuring that their children grow up to be healthy, confident and successful. At the same time, they are humble, and don't take their natural skill for granted.



From the start, ISFJs' altruism is apparent in their parenting approach. They ensure a safe, stable environment filled with love, care and support. ISFJs' patience comes in very handy as their children learn to become more independent, testing any limit they can find. ISFJs are often taken by surprise in this transition though, from the utter dependence of infants, to the insatiable exploration of toddlers and young children, to the rejection of authority of adolescents.

As very traditional personality types, ISFJs accept traditional roles, with a clearly defined parent-child relationship. They view their responsibility, and often rightly so, as the imparting of their own wisdom and values, ensuring that their children understand the importance of dedication and responsibility. Rejecting these norms seems deeply out of place to them.

What many ISFJ parents may not realize is that more independent children can reject the "overbearing" love and support that make them such wonderful parents, in favor of their own choices. All the while, ISFJ parents must ensure that more dependent children, who are willing to lean on all of this care and support rather than rebel against it, do not take these admirable qualities for granted themselves, neglecting their own independence entirely.

ISFJs are uncomfortable in either case, when their children don't behave as they should. More insightful, that is to say manipulative, children can sometimes see and exploit this with tantrums and mind games. It takes great strength for anyone, but Feeling types like ISFJs especially, to put their foot down and teach

clear and reasonable boundaries and values, while at the same time affording their children the freedom to grow and develop on their own.

Parenting is not easy for any personality type – not if they're doing it right – but ISFJs do have the advantage of not just being caring, but being thoughtful and responsible in how they administer that care. Often seen as ideal parents, people with the ISFJ personality type are able to be there for their children, but to also know that there's more to people than meets the eye, and to respect those differences – if not always to understand them.

Of course parenting isn't so simple that it can be summed up in a few paragraphs. Children are separate, growing, and whole individuals, with their own wants and needs. As mentioned, different types have very different expectations. Their own personality types guide what kinds of information and interactions are most valuable to them, and each person demands a unique approach.

ISFJs, by the time they become parents, have had years to sort out what works for them. They prize reliability and care above just about all else. They value thoughtfulness and reciprocity in others. They believe that the right approach is the safest one, and have trouble turning off the need to protect their children – even when their children are full-grown adults.

If they by chance end up raising a child who shares the Sentinel type group, ISFJs have a head start in sharing these values with their children. But what happens when their children are from other, less compatible type groups? What happens if their children don't enjoy reading or baking – or if they actually want to argue? What happens if their children are forceful and calculating, behaving in ways that seem heartless (but are in fact perfectly natural)?

ISFJs' strengths lie in pleasing the people they love, not risk-taking and debate. They focus on being helpful, and just don't understand "excessive" ambition or a need for adrenaline. We hope that with this guide, ISFJs can strengthen those less-developed sides of theirs. We hope that they can gain confidence as they learn to adapt to children who openly question others' motivations, even their parents', or who crave the unknown and the freedom to figure out their own way. We also hope to help ISFJ parents to develop more meaningful relationships with those children who do share their own traits and qualities.

Analyst Children

Analysts are the most difficult type group for ISFJs to adjust to. They oppose on the Intuitive/Observant and the Thinking/Feeling traits – ENTPs even oppose on all four! Analyst children expect themselves and others to be rational, independent people. They are often intellectually combative, refusing to take things at face value, and this skepticism can catch ISFJs quite off-guard. ISFJs are eager enough to support their children, through their roles as parents, but they have different ideas about this means.

ISFJs teach their children the basics of trust, caution and cooperation, but even this help can feel cloying. Analysts determine their own values and make their own choices, and ISFJs' emotionally involved style can feel controlling and even absurd to over-rational Analysts. To them, the safety of home and the warmth of family and friends are secondary to ambition and intellectual stimulation. Grades, jobs and houses aren't ends in themselves – they are happy byproducts of their need for intellectual challenges. It's why they argue, and why they push limits. Anything less is just damaging to their self-esteem.

Analysts mostly create their own stimulation, with reading, puzzles and strategic games. ISFJ parents happily support such things, though they're likely to encourage slightly more social activities. As Analysts grow and activities become more complex, ISFJs try to provide more guidance, support, and protection. Their Analyst children, meanwhile, crave more independence, especially intellectually. For ISFJs, the right activities are the ones that ruffle the fewest feathers. ENTP and ENTJ children's assertiveness can be positively nerve-wracking for such low-key parents. They'll also find themselves wrangling with their INTJ and INTP children constantly over what is acceptable leisure and what isn't.

But there is a middle ground, and ISFJs have the patience to find it. Analysts may not respect authority for its own sake, but they do respect effective people. ISFJs' support, attention to detail and down-to-earth practicality are admirable. ISFJs are better at making natural human connections than Analysts can ever be. They can use that to help their children find opportunities to meet those intellectual needs, like chess clubs and debate, which Analysts might not even think of. Even ISFJs' skill with gift-giving can make a well-timed book a powerful gesture. Analysts run away with their imaginations, and a single article can literally change their lives, and they remember who got them started.

Little is likely to come easily in this parent-child relationship, but the two have a lot to teach each other. ISFJs place a great deal of importance on simply being there for the people they care about, which is exactly the balance Analysts need to their ambitions. Working as equals with their children can take some getting used to for ISFJs, but if they can adjust to it, they grow to respect Analysts' creativity and adaptability, making both the better for the experience.

Diplomat Children

ISFJ parents and Diplomat children make a fairly low-stress match. They both value harmony and support, especially emotionally. While ISFJs tend to approach such things from the perspective of a warm and comfortable home, Diplomats reach for something more spiritual, metaphorical, and in their way, ambitious. But either way, they prefer dealing with people and sensitivity, making compromise, when needed at all, easy to come by.

ISFJs marvel at their Diplomat children's creativity and imagination, but are also concerned by their unrealistic idealism. ISFJs worry about their children feeling let down. They handle their sensitivity differently than Diplomats do, often hiding their feelings to protect them. Diplomats are much more expressive. ENFPs and ENFJs really put themselves out there, trying to draw in people who feel the same way. The heartfelt poetry of INFJs and INFPs especially can be misinterpreted as a cry for help. But really, such exposures are just what Diplomats need to stay balanced and healthy.

Whatever their missed connections, these types can rely on that mutual sensitivity to see them through. They both value honesty, integrity, and fairness. Diplomats expect deep and far-reaching emotional exchanges, and their ISFJ parents are able to be a part of those moments. These types are likely to share a great deal of trust in each other. Moreover, ISFJ parents won't forget to tell their children they love them, and Diplomat children are unlikely to ever feel awkward reciprocating the feeling.

By meeting each other's emotional needs, they help each other to be better-rounded people in other ways. Diplomats instinctively value what they know is important to those they care about, which helps to smooth over those times when their need for understanding butts against ISFJs' need for stability and

zero conflict. Diplomats' gentleness can even help ISFJs to grow more comfortable with their own expressiveness, which is even more meaningful for being shared with the family they care so much for.

As for fun, ISFJs and Diplomats have quite a bit of overlap. Diplomats enjoy the wonder of living things, people and ideas, while ISFJs appreciate clean, approachable activities. The library, zoos, museums and historical landmarks all allow ISFJ parents to appreciate history and tradition, maybe with the same things they did with their own parents, while their Diplomat children dream about how these stories, creatures, artifacts and landmarks have shaped the world today, and how they may shape tomorrow.

Encouraging INFPs and INFJs to write about these experiences, and ENFPs and ENFJs to talk about them, can help to extend and cement the positive experiences these parents and children share in these activities. Even when one thing or another falls flat, ISFJs' patience and Diplomats' forgiving nature can always be depended on to let them try again.

Sentinel Children

The benefits of having Sentinel children are pretty easy to see. Because they share the Observant trait, they see the world much the same way, as things that simply are, without the baggage of inferences and assumptions. ESFJs and fellow ISFJs also share the Feeling trait, making decisions based on principles and morals. Even ISTJs and ESTJs, if coming to more "functional" conclusions, at least come to conclusions that can be followed in clear steps. This makes communication between ISFJ parents and their Sentinel children very straightforward.

It also means that they enjoy many of the same activities, such as reading and gardening. ISFJs' actions are thoughtful and cautious, not over-rational or aggressive – it can be quite a relief to know that their children, especially fellow ISFJs, would rather plan a trip to the park to swing on a swing set than to tinker with electronics or play full-contact sports. ESTJ and ESFJ children challenge their parents' need for a more personal social life, but at least with activities that both can happily engage.

However, the drawbacks are the same as in any relationship with poor diversity. Without differing perspectives, neither side is encouraged to develop their weaknesses to become better-rounded individuals. ISFJs encourage learning, but they focus on the things they value: traditional household

skills and details about people. Intellectual flexibility, ambition, and the simple act of spontaneous fun all suffer. Remembering your children's friends' birthdays is easy enough. Explaining exactly how compound interest can affect your retirement plans is another matter entirely.

Social and financial lessons aside, flexibility is probably the most vital consideration for ISFJ parents. Sentinel children struggle to manage unpredictable environments and conflicting information, and ISFJs have poorly developed methods for encouraging such adaptations. But such situations, like deciding to move to a new school, are a fact of life. Sentinels all crave structure and predictability, which ISFJs are happy to give, but that's just not always possible.

With too much structure, Sentinel children can grow up without learning to direct themselves at all, making it even more challenging to deal with the unforeseeable. Or they can end up striving to maintain existing situations so stubbornly that they ignore chances to move forward. When this happens, they can lead a sterile life, missing out on adventures like world travel or more fulfilling careers. They can even miss out on the things that make life itself beautiful: the disruption of falling head-over-heels in love, or trying something because they're passionate about it, not because it's what they "should" do.

It sometimes makes sense to do what's expected over what might be fun, or to put other's needs over your own, even if it means containing your passions. But when these behaviors become habits, they can create unhappiness and dissatisfaction that can prevent the experiences and relationships that are most rewarding. It's important for ISFJ parents to realize the importance of their own need for self-direction, and to ensure that their children, no matter how content they appear to be, realize theirs.

Explorer Children

If there's one thing ISFJs enjoy, it's a little peace and quiet. They may have a tough time with Explorers, whose every activity is sporadic and highly dependent on the "fun factor". Rather than cautiously setting themselves to one thing at a time, Explorers dive straight in, striving for mastery and personal skill by starting at the hardest part and working their way backwards, with tools and activities for ISTPs and ESTPs and beauty and people for ISFPs and ESFPs, even at a young age.

It's easy for ISFJs to organize things and playdates for their children, and they love supporting them as they discover everything such activities have to offer. With some practice, ISFJs can even frame chores and other daily necessities, a common flashpoint, as games, helping Explorers to associate such things with fun, their key motivator. It doesn't take long to get a feel for what Explorers consider fun either – they are just so expressive. When something strikes a chord, they can hardly be pulled away.

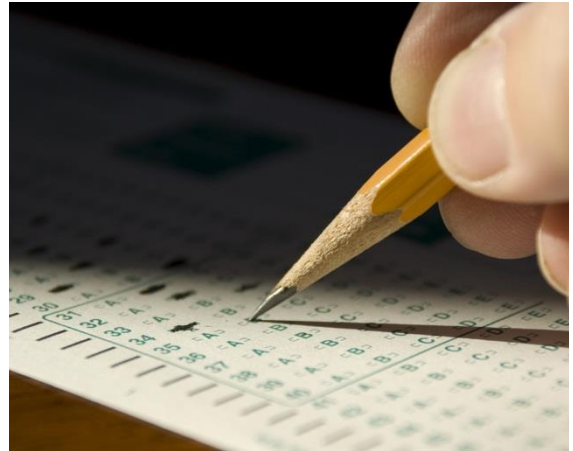
But Explorers' exuberance can easily tax ISFJs' patience – they are so spontaneous and their interests so fleeting that even having to wait from one day to the next can ruin them. This “I want it now” attitude can be frustrating for parents who place so much importance on consistency, whose self-esteem even depends on making the people they love happy. Explorers' demands can raise tensions in the household, and ISFJs are sensitive to such emotional stress. They can dig in their heels and be forceful when they need to be, and the Introverts don't really make waves, but ESFPs and ESTPs can fight back pretty hard.

As they get older, Explorers seek even more independence. They don't want their parents to keep offering up things to do, something ISFJs can struggle with. Explorers are creative, energetic people, and it can take everything ISFJs have just to keep their energy pointed in a useful direction, or at least in a direction that spares the walls another crayon mural.

Explorers' tendency to act without thinking about risk or consequences is by far the biggest frustration for their ISFJ parents. This undeterred and often impulsive self-indulgence makes creating a stable family especially difficult, something ISFJs see as extremely important. Yet, Explorers hardly want for passion, the key ingredient in the most fulfilling successes. ISFJs' warm support and practical caution, if sometimes strained, is exactly what Explorers need to have just enough temperance to stay out of trouble, and to otherwise leave their mark in their own unique way.

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 not only could set one on 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.



How ISFJs Learn

Pragmatism, duty, and tradition: These are three words that are foundational to the how ISFJs learn. They are most comfortable in a traditional classroom with traditional teaching methods. ISFJs have little interest in the abstract or the theoretical. They are much more interested in the practical. They prefer that everything be a “how-to” experience on some level in the classroom. They will tolerate the theoretical only under the condition the lesson ties the idea to something practical. If a debate or lecture does not land on something useful, they are likely to see the whole experience as “going around in circles”. They are more at home with proven and conventional ideas linked to a concrete purpose.

Sentinels, careful in their attention to detail, don't mind routine and repetitive tasks as long as there is clear reason for it. (Sometimes that reason can be as simple as preserving a tradition.) ISFJs usually welcome hands-on training, and they appreciate models they can copy and opportunities to receive coaching. They work hard and strive to be good students. ISFJs appreciate feedback and they can see it as an essential part of learning rather than a judgment.

ISFJs are creatures of habit in both their actions and their thoughts. Once they believe something, it can be hard to get them to accept alternate ideas. This tendency can create difficulty in some courses that rely on imagination and creativity or during general class discussions. ISFJs need to be careful to not discount

new information in their tendency to lean toward traditional and perhaps outdated ideas. Courses that ask for creative and abstract thought can be challenging for ISFJs for that reason. They prefer thoughts that connect the past with the present – not new ideas “out of nowhere”.

Instructors can tap into ISFJs’ strengths by providing them with a sense they are doing something, not merely thinking about something. Providing ISFJs with cultural or historic context can also help them feel they are on solid footing. It will be distracting and uncomfortable for ISFJs if the teacher allows things to be “too relaxed” in the classroom. While it may be healthy for ISFJs to step outside of their comfort zones and relax in the classroom a bit, this need for structure might be something instructors might want to understand to create a better learning environment for all of their students.

Finally, ISFJs really dislike people putting them on the spot. They need to be sure of themselves and like to be confident in their answer before they commit to it. ISFJs always appreciate a reasonable amount of time to check their footing before they respond.

ISFJs in High School

In the classroom: ISFJs start high school from a great place just because of the way they approach the world. They’re hardworking and dedicated to doing well. As far as earning good grades, this comes naturally to ISFJs and they may see it as a duty they need to perform.

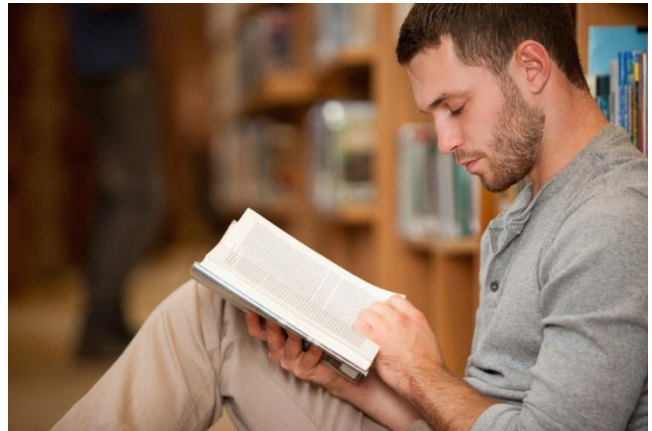
ISFJs will do well in courses that promote administrative skills such as business, accounting or even math. Sentinels are great generalists in that they will do whatever is needed to promote the general good. They will approach any subject they take as a resource. While they may like or not like a course, they don’t need the course to be interesting or exciting in order to apply themselves like Analysts and Diplomats tend to. The course is there, it needs to be done, it’s there for a reason, and ISFJs will simply do it regardless of their subjective feelings.

One of the challenges ISFJs face in the high school classroom is that there is certain rigidity to them. As mentioned above they may have trouble with abstract or novel ideas. They stick firmly to rules and they always have a strong sense of duty. They also may have trouble in relationship to their fellow students in classroom. There may be mutual disdain if they are put in a group with students who want to cut

corners or who don't attend conscientiously to the details of something. ISFJs may want to play strictly by the rules while their peers don't. This can cause friction and stress all around. On other hand, teachers will probably value the care and attention that they put into their work. Being the hard-working students they tend to be, they may be very hard on those who are slower or don't carry their own weight.

ISFJs will most likely work from the first day of high school to the day they graduate. They will always work hard and always diligently try to meet all the requirements put in front of them. Other students may slack off when the work becomes too predictable and easy or when they get toward the end of high school. ISFJs will not. They will continue to work to their highest level until they leave.

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 high school 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.



ISFJs are rarely popular in high school. They may have a group of close friends who they are very loyal to and to whom they feel attached. However, their Introversion may make them a bit reclusive and, therefore, a bit of an outsider. Although basically warm people, it does take them awhile to warm up to people who they do not know well. This will generally be alright as social status is not a primary concern of ISFJs. However, should it go too far, there may be some bullying and this can be difficult for these students.

Then there's the talkative Introvert "paradox". ISFJs can be quite talkative sometimes giving the impression that they are a lot more Extraverted than they are. Since ISFJs do need time alone, this contradiction between what ISFJs appear to be and what they are can be confusing to others. High school

friends, mistaking ISFJs as Extraverts, may not understand when they withdraw to restore their energy. The friends may, at times, take it as a rejection.

Like true Sentinels, ISFJs will make it a point to care for their fellow students. It won't be about sweeping compassion as much as it will be about making sure their practical needs are met. This friendly helpfulness can go a long way to creating serious bonds of friendship in high school and will give ISFJs a sense belonging even if they are never one of the "cool kids", and this will be satisfying enough for them.

Extra-curricular activities often pigeon-hole the modern teen into stereotypical niches. Cheerleaders are seen as the popular kids and Latin Club is for the nerds... and so on. ISFJs will gravitate to the clubs they are supposed to belong to. By that, it could be for academic improvement, service to others, or a career path clubs of some kind. Being practical, they will join clubs that will pad their resumes or their college applications. They may join the drama club or something of that nature, if it's presented as a community builder that upholds a fine long tradition or a similar rationale.

ISFJs, who do not enjoy the limelight, will be less likely than others to become leaders of any extracurricular organizations. However, with their attention to detail and protocol, they would probably do quite well if they did. They may take a more auxiliary position like secretary of treasury if they do become leaders. They will certainly bring an efficiency and organization to such a club that will surpass anything their peers can do.

Work or College?

While there are many more reasons involved in deciding whether to go college than personality types, they can have 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 the 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 the two most famous examples. There's a niche for everyone and college is just one possible path to finding it. So, what might the ISFJ consider when thinking about college?

Two questions that ISFJs should ask when deciding whether to hit the books or enter the workforce:

- *Will a degree be necessary in the work you want to aim for?* Once deciding a profession, it sometimes matter whether one has a degree. The helping professions, many of which require certification, tend to draw ISFJs. Teachers, social workers, nurses, physicians, and other certified positions need a degree. If certification is not necessary for the path ISFJs choose or they, like many 18 year olds, have not yet decided, deferring higher education may be an appropriate decision. It pains ISFJs to be somewhere they shouldn't be doing something they consider irrelevant. If there isn't a sense of purpose or meaning in college, it's likely just to be a bad experience.
- *Will you be able to gain something intangible and yet valuable from going to college?* For many there is more to a higher education than just getting a job. It's a life passage and opportunity to grow and take steps toward becoming an independent young adult. ISFJs may find this a less compelling reason to attend college. The "growth argument" for attending school may sound a little frivolous to them. If they are not going for a certification or need any particular training, they may consider going straight to work more reasonable. However, even as practical as young ISFJs are, they may still have a yearning to better discover who they are and may still find a university setting good for that purpose.

When ISFJs go to College

Sentinels may have mixed feelings when entering college. There is an opportunity to gain some real skills and develop professional credentials. However, university life can be a more relaxed environment than high school. This can be disconcerting to a student with as many fixed habits and beliefs as ISFJs have.

College is a time for ISFJs to begin to consider and exploit their strengths and talents in a real way. ISFJs may find this a time where they can develop competence. They need to be careful to choose their major. If the courses are too abstract or theoretical, they will find no satisfaction. A major heavy in labs and practicums will suit ISFJs well.

ISFJs' course choices will likely be similar to the subjects they connected with in high school. They will do well in any detail-oriented work that needs careful administration: bookkeeping, business administration, health care, education, law, social work and religious studies. For the ISFJ the subject isn't nearly as important as its application and purpose. It's unlikely they will be attracted to less

traditional courses (“women’s studies” for example). They will instead seek more bedrock courses – perhaps something their parents might have taken a generation earlier.

The question for ISFJ is not whether they can do something. They have the work ethic to do well in any niche they choose. But will they feel satisfied? Will they be fulfilled? Some feel that college and university is only about getting the tools you need to make a good living. ISFJs may fit into this category. However, they will always have one eye on the concept of contributing and taking care of others. Making a good living would more likely be about taking care of a family over the gratuitous accumulating of wealth for ISFJs. Keeping books and keeping a business running smoothly may make ISFJs good MBA candidates.

Will ISFJ look for a “party school” to strengthen their university experiences? Like most young people, the ISFJ will delight in the autonomy that going away to college offers. For most students, this is the first significant taste of life apart from their families and their families’ rules (again, perhaps a mixed bag for ISFJs). Some even choose their universities based on their distance from the family home. It’s no different for the ISFJs who are as interested in coming into their own. However, they are generally too serious and too rules-bound to see the wild “party life” as something that fits who they are.

However, they may take an excursion into the party life if they feel they need a break from stress. ISFJs, especially Turbulent ones, tend to be perfectionists with very specific standards and that may cause 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 although probably not very common among ISFJs. More likely than not, such adventures will be short-lived phases for the ISFJ – it’s unlikely they will spend their four years in constant party-mode.

Career and Professional Development

The list of typical ISFJ careers is probably the longest among all personality types – and for a very good reason. ISFJs tend to be very altruistic and well-rounded individuals, which usually makes them excellent employees. We will discuss some of their best careers below – please feel free to leave a comment if you have any ideas or suggestions.

To begin with, ISFJs tend to be very adept at gathering and remembering various facts, especially about other people. This can be a great social skill in most career paths, especially where teamwork and



cooperation are necessary. An ISFJ will always remember the name of their boss' daughter or birthdays of most of their colleagues. Furthermore, ISFJs are very in-tune with other people's emotions. Consequently, when it comes to choosing the best careers for an ISFJ, it can be said that they tend to be excellent counsellors, administrative assistants or managers.

People with this personality type put facts and duties above everything else. Consequently, best ISFJ careers reward meticulousness and dedication. ISFJs believe that everyone should do their best to complete the task to the highest possible standard and loathe individuals who use social activities and networking rather than merit to get ahead on the career ladder. There is no easier way to lose the respect of an ISFJ than to show that you believe that fun and games at the workplace are more important than actual work, no matter how hard it is. ISFJs have very high standards, especially when it comes to their own work, and are likely to put an extraordinary amount of effort to get the job done – even when they know that their colleagues or managers are unlikely to notice or recognize their efforts.

Like other Introverted types, ISFJs tend to be relatively quiet and introspective. They are highly unlikely to choose or enjoy customer-facing or teamwork-oriented careers – these are definitely not the best choices for ISFJs. As already mentioned, ISFJs are brilliant administrators, safekeepers and logisticians,

but they do best alone or in small teams. People with this personality type will gladly accept someone else's authority and leadership, as long as that individual does not break any rules or procedures.

ISFJ careers tend to progress quite smoothly as ISFJs are willing to put a lot of effort into making sure that the job gets done. They are very practical – however, this comes at a cost, as ISFJs dislike theories, concepts or abstract ideas. For this reason, ISFJs should avoid highly theoretical careers (e.g. academic research) and focus on “practical” ones – people with this personality type are at their best when it comes to implementing ideas and making things work. Some of the most typical ISFJ career paths utilize these traits – for instance, many ISFJs are found among interior designers, bookkeepers, economists or office managers.

ISFJs are excellent logisticians, whose dependability and patience make them irreplaceable in situations where other types are either unable or unwilling to take on difficult responsibilities. These skills can be tremendously valuable in the right career path – people with this personality type are great at jobs that require good administrative skills, thoroughness and ability to notice even the tiniest details. For instance, you could find many ISFJs among auditors, data analysts, medics or accountants. These are often their best career choices.

ISFJs are very service-oriented, warm and traditional. They respect traditional values and security – this is usually reflected in ISFJ careers as well. It is not uncommon to see ISFJs involved in volunteering activities, community work or childhood development initiatives. They also tend to be excellent nurses and social or religious workers – these career paths may also interest some ISFJs.

In general, two simple things tend to be very clearly expressed in most of the careers that ISFJs decide to take. First, they need to utilize their people-sensing skills as this is one of their most important and unique strengths. Second, ISFJs need to have an opportunity to “create order from chaos” as they usually possess truly extraordinary talents in this area. If these two conditions are met, that particular career path is probably a very good choice for an ISFJ.

Unfortunately, despite being smart and highly dedicated, ISFJs are likely to face many difficulties in their careers if they choose the wrong path. People with this personality type demand much of themselves

and their quiet nature does not help either – consequently, they usually have difficulties coping with situations where their skills and efforts are not fully utilized or recognized. However, ultimately it all boils down to picking a career that is a good match for your traits and skills.

So, how do you choose the right path?

Getting on the Career Ladder

The best thing about being an ISFJ is that people with this personality type tend to be methodical, dedicated and well-rounded. Like other Sentinels, ISFJs are unstoppable when they find a niche that gives them an opportunity to contribute to the good of the organization or the society as a whole, while also being stable and secure – but getting such an opportunity can be a challenge.

Whatever their hobbies or aspirations, ISFJs do best when they embrace administration, factual analysis, or development and enforcement of rules and guidelines. It does not really matter whether a particular ISFJ wants or is able to get into commercial, legal or administrative fields which tend to be their top choices – sometimes their chosen profession has no direct links with these areas. What matters is the ISFJ's ability to analyze the available facts and use them in a way that not only answers the underlying questions, but also ensures or even enhances the stability of the entire system, whatever it may be.

ISFJs should embrace these strengths in the job-hunting stage as well. The bad news is that although ISFJs are likely to have several strong personal connections, they are unlikely to do well when it comes to networking and socializing – the primary means of getting a job for many other personality types. ISFJs can become better at this as time goes by, e.g. by only targeting like-minded individuals and taking time to improve their social skills – however, this is not by any means mandatory and many people with this personality type will do just fine without an extensive social network.

The good news is that Sentinels exude stability and responsibility, and this is especially true with ISFJs. People with this personality type should find it easy to show their prospective employer that they are trustworthy – they are usually able to communicate that fairly well. However, they may encounter difficulties when it comes to actually providing examples of previous work or describing their successes. ISFJs do not feel comfortable boasting about themselves, but that is often an unavoidable part of any

interview. People with this personality type may find it easier to highlight their successes if they stick to factual data, describing what they had achieved in the previous role. Furthermore, such an approach will often be seen as more convincing than a never-ending stream of self-centered compliments. If you are a recent graduate, highlighting your academic achievements (which are likely to be quite impressive) may also be a good idea – and in any case, the ISFJ may feel more comfortable discussing something they have achieved as opposed to something they would imagine themselves doing.

Of course, you need to be able to present your skills in the right way in order to distinguish yourself among other candidates. As an ISFJ, you probably know many things and find many topics interesting, maybe even seeing them as hobbies. Utilize this – 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 – you can participate in competitions or volunteer projects, build an online presence (e.g. a small blog), write a couple of articles and try to get them published in the print media etc. It does not really matter what you do, as long as it is something you can put on your CV – not only this will make you a more attractive and versatile candidate, but will also give you a lot of breathing space in the interview. Answering a question like “describe the situation where you used your problem-solving skills” is much, much easier when you have got 5+ projects listed on your CV. Be imaginative – your skills are not worth much if you are the only person who knows about them.

You may also need to brush up your presentation skills. If you have an interview coming up, great – but do not make a mistake of thinking that your technical knowledge and enthusiasm will put you above everybody else. No matter how cliché that 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 knowledge, but also be prepared to get many template questions, especially in 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. ISFJs tend to be very good, versatile candidates, but they usually find it difficult to get that message across and may consequently lose out to less qualified but better prepared candidates. Do not underestimate yourself.

Thanks to their meticulousness and hard work, ISFJs rarely have major difficulties when it comes to landing their first job, or keeping it afterwards. However, it is also important to always keep everything in perspective. People with this personality type often say that they studied extremely hard in school, with their eyes fixed on getting a position in a specific field – but then regretted missing a chance to develop personal relationships that could have helped them a lot during their school years. ISFJs are hardworking and strong-willed individuals, but their perfectionistic tendencies may lead to a lot of stress – and having a social support network, no matter how small, would be of great help in such situations.

You should also never forget to listen to yourself, especially when deciding what would be a good career choice. ISFJs are comparatively good at self-reflection, but this trait is often clouded by other factors, such as outside influences and financial rewards. In the end, you are the only one who knows what is going to make you truly happy. This does not mean that you should have unrealistic expectations at the start of your career – entry-level jobs are rarely interesting or satisfying – but it is your responsibility to find the right career path. Do not choose a profession just because it is popular or pays well – it may not be a good match for your individual set of skills or principles. In order to feel happy in the professional environment, ISFJs need to know that their contributions are respected and valued – this is unlikely to be the case if you are constantly struggling in an incompatible field.

Professional Development

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

ISFJs are often called protectors for a reason – they are excellent safekeepers and administrators, making sure that everyone and everything is taken care of. People with this personality type tend to be less interested in building extensive systems or planning for contingency scenarios, leaving that for more technical-oriented Analysts. However, they live and breathe rules and structures – everything must be in order, budgets must be balanced, everyone must be safe and sound. This is what drives and motivates ISFJs and this is what they should be focusing on – positioning themselves in a way that allows them to focus their efforts on helping other people, analyzing data, managing resources or making sure that the rules of the organization are adhered to. Your mind is both your greatest gift and your greatest course –

if the environment is right, you will quickly be noticed and appreciated; if it is not, you will get frustrated by subpar performance of your colleagues and all the inefficiencies that you would like to fix. ISFJs are hardworking, patient individuals, so they are likely to do relatively well in many fields, but none will satisfy them as much as a logistical role would do. Try to consciously push yourself toward roles of this nature, wherever possible.

Another thing that is definitely worth mentioning here is the ISFJs' dependability and strong work ethic. You are likely to be a dedicated, meticulous individual, with one of your core strengths being your ability to find the best way to help and protect other people, processes and organizations. This approach is going to be very different from what Intuitive types (Analysts or Diplomats) do – they focus on theories and methods, filling them in with facts as and when necessary. In other words, people with those types pay more attention to abstract statements than concrete facts. ISFJs, on the other hand, focus on the facts themselves, seeing them as something that guarantees reliability and impartiality. For this reason, you should try to steer your career towards roles that reward meticulousness, cooperation and keen eye for detail, and most importantly, focus on concrete, factual data rather than abstract matters such as ideas, brainstorming, diplomacy or planning.

That being said, this does not mean that you should rely too much solely on what you know at the moment and refrain from developing your skills or expanding your knowledge. ISFJs are good at absorbing new knowledge – therefore, try to use every opportunity you get to learn and experiment with something new, if possible. For instance, many organizations offer various training programs or subscriptions to professional magazines – there is always something else that you can learn. Use that mind of yours the best you can – even if a particular piece of information does not offer any immediate benefits, it is very likely it will prove useful at some point. You never know when someone will come in and ask if there is a person in the office who has an idea how a certain computer program works or how they should approach a specific project. Life is full of opportunities and ISFJs have a major advantage over other personality types when it comes to retaining and categorizing knowledge in their memory. Remember that regardless of what you are doing, you are constantly gaining experience and perspective – and that knowledge is not going to disappear. You may find it quite difficult to force yourself to learn something new, depending on the topic – but try to get out of your comfort zone as otherwise you may

be outmaneuvered by other people. Consistency and stability are important, but they should not prevent you from trying out new things.

Tangentially, it is worth mentioning that this applies to educational qualifications as well. Regardless of whether you are employed or not at a given time, you may want to consider exploring fields and subjects loosely connected to your main specialization. There are plenty of areas that reward ISFJs' logistical thinking and ability to administer systems, whatever they may be – keeping your eyes open can sometimes yield great results. Few ISFJs can say that they are always satisfied with their roles, so if you are not among the lucky few, trying out a new subject can easily open new horizons and boost your self-confidence as well. You do not necessarily have to get formal qualifications – nowadays, studying independently is easier than ever. New knowledge is always valuable, so why not keep your mind occupied with meaningful studies as opposed to something that has no lasting value.

If you have an opportunity, you should also try finding a hobby or a volunteering opportunity that you could potentially turn into a source of income later on, if you choose to – this approach is quite common among ISFJs, especially those in stable and 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. It could be anything – a website about your favorite hobby, a local neighborhood initiative, a home improvement project etc. The main principle is that you should try to do what you truly enjoy, while retaining the safety net of the regular employment – and who knows, maybe your idea will keep you going through difficult times or grow into a proper business. If you are also in a position where you can divert some financial resources to your hobby, then all the better. ISFJs tend to be excellent logisticians, so you should not have any difficulties managing your resources and this parallel “career”.

But let us go back to the world of offices and cubicles for a moment. Another big problem for most ISFJs is going to be personal relationships – people with this personality type tend to have few good friends instead of developing an extensive network of professional connections, seeing their work and duties as

far more important. Such an attitude is not really surprising – after all, this is their *modus operandi* in many other areas of their life. However, difficulties in developing casual relationships at work can stifle professional development and result in missed opportunities, both personal and professional. It is important to keep your mind open and not cringe at the thought of getting to know your colleagues better – or at least not actively avoid them.

We are stressing this not only because having connections *will* help you advance your career, regardless of how competent you are – but also because you may find that you are actually a very good leader. ISFJs tend to have strong willpower, which, combined with their meticulousness and sense of duty, makes them excellent managers – and most people instinctively want to follow the lead of someone who is confident in their opinions. Consequently, you do not need to compromise your integrity in order to be able to influence others. All you need to do is make an effort to establish a connection and some level of mutual trust. If you are in a role that is a good match for your personality traits (e.g. requires cooperation, patience and logistical thinking), you will probably notice at some point that most of your non-ISFJ colleagues will respect and value your efforts. ISFJs tend to be seen as kind, dedicated protectors – this is a compliment, but try not to scare people off by being overprotective or overzealous. This is a mistake most often made by younger ISFJs.

In all likelihood, you will only be satisfied with your career path if you feel confident that it makes you a respectable and productive member of the society. ISFJs want to be seen as dependable and trustworthy, working hard to achieve that status, as well as security and stability. Consequently, if your work is not being appreciated and respected, you will likely feel restless. Unlike some other personality types, ISFJs always push themselves hard in the professional environment, even if their efforts are underappreciated – but that cannot last forever, with the ISFJ being secretly stressed and frustrated. Ultimately, everything depends on how flexible your chosen organization is – there are few career paths that are really unsuitable for ISFJs, but there are plenty of roles where your primary skills will be underutilized. So explore, learn and try to find a way to use your logistical thinking 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 rational arguments point to the fact that a particular role is unsuitable for you. ISFJs aspire to be influential, dependable managers, seeking to administer and direct resources in the way that ensures the

survival and prosperity of their organization. Technical wizardry, sensuality or empathy are not their domains.

There are some other things worth mentioning in this section. The first is that ISFJs 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. ISFJs have an excellent set of leadership skills lurking beneath the surface, but being in the “emergency mode” can exhaust them very quickly. Unlike Explorers, Sentinels in general are more suited to be logisticians and administrators than frontline executors.

Second, it is important not to underestimate the importance of what is generally called “people skills”. We have touched this topic before, but it bears repeating – social intelligence is just as important, if not more so, than everything else. Many ISFJs dismiss this idea, seeing little value in things like small talk and socializing – but also missing the bigger picture. It is not a surprise that being as dutiful and responsible as they are, ISFJs are often disappointed by the recklessness or head-in-the-clouds attitude of some people they come in contact with – however, this does not mean that there is no point in learning more about what drives and motivates other members of the society. You do not necessarily have to enjoy that or seek deeper meaning in such exercises, but having these skills can give you a tremendous advantage both at work and elsewhere. Sometimes defusing a difficult stakeholder can get you much further than finding that annoying little mistake in the accounting journal.

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 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.

Sentinels – Sentinels

COMMON GROUND

Obviously, two Sentinels will find themselves “speaking the same language”. They’re about getting the job done and that will be the main thrust of their conversations. That doesn’t mean that people belonging to this type group won’t engage in casual conversation, but their motivation in that will likely be to create harmony in the workplace. They are often sincerely warm and personable. However, when it’s time to go to work, that becomes the clear focus. There can be a no-nonsense quality to their conversations.

Sentinels are pragmatists and are not much for the abstract and the theoretical. Discussion among them would most likely include discussions about facts and procedures. They like tradition and linking the things of the past with the things of the future. Sentinels would not spend much time talking about concepts or visions like the Analysts or the Diplomats. They are more likely to reflect on the here and now and getting things done. This doesn’t mean they don’t plan or talk about the future. Just that they will more likely discuss the more tangible aspects of it.

Sentinels are nurturers in the sense that they want to take care of other people. They try to make their lives easier through attention to detail, following policy and completed action. Sentinels will want to make sure that they consider every possibility toward that end. They will spend most of their time going over logistics and organization together to make sure that everything runs smoothly.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

The problems two Sentinels may have when talking to one another will most likely 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.

In this rapidly changing world of commerce, there is a constant need to switch perspectives from a macro view to a micro view and back. Many feel thorough mission statements combined with long-term imaginative planning is essential for an organization to survive. The Biblical book of Proverbs says, “Without a vision, the people perish.” So it goes with modern businesses as well.

However, room full of Sentinels would be more likely to focus on the “nuts and bolts” plans of an organization but would not be comfortable dealing with the big picture. The Sentinels are wonderful at handling the micro view. When you need things achieved, these are the reliable and loyal people you want. However, for the macro view, the more visionary Analyst or Diplomat has much to offer a brainstorming session and efforts should be made to include them in such exercises.

Similar to that, a discussion of innovation and change, if extensive enough, may be unsettling for Sentinels. They connect with the traditional ways of doing things. Sentinels bear their name for a reason. In that important role, they take care of others and they take care of a fixed way of doing things. They serve as the anchors needed in a stable society. However, having said that, the world is a rapidly changing place and often organizations need to innovate to compete. “Thinking out of the box” is an overused cliché that shows through its overuse how important thinking in new ways has become.

For Sentinels, a challenge to the confines of the proverbial box may feel almost like an affront. They have probably spent a lot of time protecting the status quo and may get uncomfortable when it’s threatened. Sentinels should be aware of these traits and invite other personality types to the table when the topic becomes about developing new products or systems.

Control may be issue when two Sentinels try to communicate. While they try to get along well with others, they are willing to sacrifice harmony if they feel it is in the way of their goals. They may decide there is a “right way” to do something and defend that way vigorously. Their internal read on the situation will be that they are working for the “greater good” within whatever context they are acting. Two Sentinels with a sense of conviction and different ideas on how to bring about results may clash.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING

- Enjoy the comradery of someone who sees things the way that you do. Alliances of like-minded people often make life easier. There’s much less of need to expend energy making the case for something.
- Be sure to recognize the efforts of your fellow Sentinels. Recognition provides them with energy to move forward. However, their work is not always recognized as it is frequently done behind the scenes. But who understands better than Sentinels what other Sentinels do and want?

- Beware of control issues. Understand that your ultimate goals are probably the same and there is more than one way to do almost anything.

Sentinels – Analysts

COMMON GROUND

While they can be complementary (see below), Sentinels and Analysts have few things in common. If there's anything at all, perhaps it's their shared need for efficiency. Analysts work with systems trying to get them to run smoothly. Sentinels do the same with more practical matters.

HOW THEY COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER

Sentinels bring order to an organization and see to perform practical tasks. Analysts gain knowledge and assemble the building blocks a system in their minds and on paper. Each plays a different role when they have a job that suits them in an organization. Analysts are visionaries while Sentinels efficiently attend to business in the here and now. Analysts often ask "what if" and "why" while Sentinels are more likely to ask "how" and expect a tangible answer.

So how do these two different types work with each other and communicate successfully? Analysts sincerely need someone to carry out their vision. They are masters at manipulating ideas but need someone else around to turn their ideas into something practical. Sentinels are great at getting things done. In many ways, that's a perfect match. A good fictional model might be the visionary CEO with the practical administrative assistant. Think Tony Stark (Robert Downey, Jr.) and Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow) as comic book caricatures of this in the Iron Man movies. While he busies himself designing his technologies, she keeps Stark Industries running. (From such examples, one might easily think the Sentinel is always subordinate to the visionary Analyst. However, if you consider an Analyst in a research position with a Sentinel boss, you have the opposite power relationship. Yet they complement each other's roles just the same.)

By clearly understanding and accepting one another's role and communicating from their positions of strength, each type can become invaluable to the other. Analysts and Sentinels can create a mutually useful and productive partnership in the workplace.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

There's an old saying: "Nobody likes change except a wet baby." Whole industries have grown up around "change management". But it's not true that "nobody likes change." Intuitive types like Analysts and Diplomats love change. They always look for ideas that improve things. On some level, these types crave it as it represents growth and possibilities to them.

On the other hand, Sentinels focus more on doing the right thing according to proven standards and traditions. With Sentinels, making the status quo work is a priority. Analysts have little regard for the status quo, especially if it gets in the way of improving a system. Sentinels may insist on doing it the "right" way according to how it's always been done. Meanwhile, Analysts may insist on doing it a "better" way regardless of how it's always been done.

The universal conflict between those trying to preserve a system and those trying to change it is perhaps as old as man himself. It is an area that can be difficult in the workplace. This can play out as passive-aggressive resistance or discounting the importance of one another's contributions to an organization. These two diverse approaches may need careful communication, reassurances and much understanding.

Analysts' social style can lack warmth and consideration for the emotional needs of others. Sentinels are nurturers and preservers who can be warm with their co-workers. While, they can be rigidly efficient to the point of being controlling sometimes, they keep the welfare of others in mind and they can be extremely loyal. Sentinels would do well not to take an Analyst's criticisms too personally whether it's directed at themselves or others. Analyst would do well to understand that Sentinels may react badly to harsh comments and off-the-cuff negative comments. Since they are so invested in things running well, Sentinels sometimes take criticism of an organization or others on as their own.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING

Advice for Sentinels concerning Analysts:

- Understand that Analyst co-workers benefit from your attention to detail even if they don't always recognize or seem to appreciate it.
- Try not to take any criticism or harsh comments from an Analyst to heart.

- Don't load Analysts down with too many details that aren't necessary. They may show little interest, and they may not even respond to such information.

Advice for Analysts concerning Sentinels:

- Make an effort to show appreciation for what Sentinels do. They will not necessarily seek gratitude from others for what they do, but they become energized when they get it.
- Talk to Sentinels about any changes to a system. Understand that their first impulse is to preserve the status quo. Change may feel like something is out of control for them.
- Avoid unproductive criticism of others when speaking with Sentinels.
- Talk about practical tasks rather than theories if you want to connect with a Sentinel.

Sentinels – Diplomats

COMMON GROUND

Both Sentinels and Diplomats like to take care of other people and will have much to talk about when it comes to the human side of work. While the 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, the Diplomats might focus on making sure that everyone receives fair treatment and they genuinely benefit from professional development. Both find energy and self-respect in doing good for others, and there is plenty of common ground on which to bond in that area.

HOW THEY COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER

As hinted at in the preceding paragraphs, Sentinels and Diplomats will most likely 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. Details do not always concern them, and 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 Sentinels concerning Diplomats:

- When talking about procedures with a Diplomat, couch the discussion about 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 that may feel arbitrary to them.
- Diplomats will not 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. 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.

Advice for Diplomats concerning Sentinels:

- Be careful not to judge Sentinels as too unimaginative, work-a-day or rigid. Try to remember the efficiency and stability they offer is a necessary part of any organization and don’t be quick to write them off. 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 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.

Sentinels – Explorers

COMMON GROUND

It's easy to get the impression that Sentinels and Explorers are polar opposites. While they often approach things differently, they both gather their information from the world around them rather than form an internal source like the Analysts or the Diplomats. However, that's where most of their likenesses end. While Explorers are more in touch with things directly and immediately, Sentinels usually filter their experiences through what they remember and how things have always been. Explorers relish the new and exciting while Sentinels favor the traditional and stable. Despite these differences, they both speak in terms of what is practical and tangible.

HOW THEY COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER

Explorers and Sentinels most often complement each other when things go wrong. Sometimes even the tried-and-true ways of doing things fails us. This can be disconcerting to Sentinels, but a compelling problem to solve for Explorers. In this ever-changing world, there are often times when the old methods no longer work. There may be no other choice other than to develop a new way of doing things and there's nobody better equipped to help a Sentinel should this happen than Explorers.

On the other hand, sometimes an Explorers' impulsive drive to find solutions can get off-track. Sometimes, the best answer when a situation goes bad is to retreat to a known starting place. "Known places" are where Sentinels like to spend their time. Some have commented that sometimes, as Explorers get older, they seek out Sentinel marriage partners to help them settle down. While this makes sense, it also makes sense that it could apply to professional situations. There are times when boldly "winging" it can lead to effective solutions. However, there are also times when such approaches create more problems than they solve. Sometimes a Sentinel can help an Explorer "come home", figuratively speaking. Sentinels usually know how to repair a situation or they know someone who does. This can be of great help to the Explorer who has wandered too far in the wrong direction.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

There are clearly things about Explorers that drive Sentinels crazy and the other way around. However, the Explorer has the advantage in this as they usually go with flow and don't allow others to bother them much. For the Sentinels, however, their problems with Explorers can be disturbing for them.

While Explorers have no problem cutting corners when necessary, Sentinels usually dedicate their lives to making sure those corners remain intact just the way they've always been. Sentinels like things to be orderly and predictable. Explorers can have a freer attitude and loves things that are new and interesting. Metaphorically, Sentinels will have a favorite restaurant they go to most of the time, and Explorers will want to sample all the latest restaurants that open in town. At work, Explorers can come across as reckless and undisciplined to Sentinels. To Explorers, Sentinels might appear boring and uninspired by their environment. While the opinions of each type are usually more reactionary stereotypes than real, they can get in the way of trust and open communication.

While keeping the status quo strong and in place seems essential to Sentinels, Explorers will have no problem doing whatever they need to done to solve a problem regardless of "how it's always been done". Sentinels see the tried-and-true means as the way to a guaranteed end. Only the end concerns Explorers and they may use any means necessary to get there. For them, it doesn't have to follow traditional protocol.

It's easy to see how Sentinels can view Explorers as being at cross-purposes with them. Sentinels may devote an undue amount of time trying to get Explorers to walk in a straight line according to the rules. Meanwhile, Explorers may ignore the Sentinels as they do whatever they feel they must do, going in a straight line or serpentine, to master a situation. The possibilities for conflicts are endless.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING

Advice for Sentinels concerning Explorers:

- Smile and enjoy an "it takes all types to run a world" attitude. Explorers can be a strong asset in the workplace. While everyone needs to follow the rules, you playing the role of "rules police"

may be more trouble than it's worth if the Explorer is contributing in positive ways. Try to keep it all in balance.

- Actively show appreciation for the good things Explorers do. Do this as much for you as for the Explorers. It may go a long way toward seeing them in a different light.
- In a discussion with an Explorer, avoid any form of the argument "because it's always been that way". If you follow that line of reasoning, they will probably no longer be paying attention to the point you're trying to make.

Advice for Explorers concerning Sentinels:

- As Santayana wrote: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Don't be too quick to dismiss the Sentinels' attachment to the past, the settled protocol. There can be much to learn there. Don't be afraid to ask why you need to do something a certain way. Doing so may avoid problems.
- Recognize the necessary work Sentinels do and show appreciation for it. This will help build a work relationship with Sentinels who are energized by recognition.

Career Progression

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

Answers to these questions depend heavily on the field that the ISFJ 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 and science/technology companies are naturally better at this, so if you are able to get a job there, it is likely that you will be able to secure promotions without being burdened with supervisory tasks.

However, it is also often possible to progress in a field where achievements are measured by the number of people reporting to you. ISFJs, like other Sentinels, are very good when it comes to administering

resources and making sure that systems work as they are supposed to, and it is nearly inevitable that someone with this personality type will come up with ideas and suggestions aimed at improving the efficiency of the business model. Furthermore, their natural curiosity (some might call it nosiness) leads to ISFJs having fingers in many pies and indirectly influencing activities not related to their specific role.

This is one way of being recognized and promoted – as the ISFJ gets a better understanding of how the company operates, they can grow their responsibilities without overburdening themselves. This would increase their job security and future prospects as well. However, getting appropriate financial rewards can be a challenge in such situations – many managers are understandably reluctant to grant (or try to justify) a raise without any additional managerial responsibilities, not even talking about situations where raising the ISFJ's salary would mean that it would reach or surpass the salary of the manager themselves.

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. ISFJs excel in roles where they are given a clear set of rules and are able to work more or less independently. Ironically, getting promoted can often hinder rather than ease such efforts – sometimes, you may be better off staying in the same role for longer, using the time to learn something new and then looking for a better paid job at a different company. In most cases, traditional promotion paths suit ISFJs very well, but corporate jockeying may exhaust them very quickly.

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 ISFJ can offer, or simply because of the lack of room for growth. Here are some ideas of what ISFJs 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 the age of possibilities and selling your time to a corporation is not the only way to generate income. ISFJs are hardworking, diligent individuals, and their impressive ability to remember copious amounts of facts

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 worrying 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 ability to plan your time, see tangible results of your work and, obviously, be your own boss. ISFJs value respect, control and self-reliance, and being self-employed would give them an excellent opportunity to enjoy these things.

Furthermore, self-employment solves one of the major hurdles that ISFJs 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 irrational orders or dealing with people who are more interested in play than work. Self-employment offers many major benefits to ISFJs, 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 ISFJs' meticulousness and hard work start to shine. Anyone could come up with a random idea and try turning that into a business (and failing 99% of the time due to poor planning) – but it takes a lot of hard work to do proper research, develop a solid business plan and ensure that your business does not crumble after the first month. Think of an interesting way to fulfill an existing need (or create one) and do it better than your competitors – which will not be that difficult, given the ISFJs' genuine desire to help others and their amazing ability to plough through mundane work with a smile on their face. ISFJs can be excellent entrepreneurs, having both the knowledge 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 ISFJs 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 ISFJ personality traits with added explanations of why they are. 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.

Business (Logistics and Administration)

Having something or someone you need at the right place and at the right time is the heart and soul of logistics and management. There is perhaps no better personality type than a Sentinel for carrying out this important work. ISFJs are sticklers for details and getting it right and will be more likely than others to catch a discrepancy. Beyond a doubt, somebody who crosses all the "Ts" and dots all the "Is" is of great value in an office. Any analysis an ISFJ makes will be fact-based and according to the rules so accuracy is assured.

While warm individuals who will most likely remember birthdays, ISFJs are happiest when working alone and will probably do just fine in a cubicle with a pile of spreadsheets or a computer. They are less likely to do well if they have to face customers or interact as a team member. But there are plenty of solitary jobs in the business world and some of them can be done no other way. Jobs that utilize these qualities might include:

- Clerical work
- Shipping
- Inventory management
- Accountant / auditor
- Banking

- Asset management
- Data analysis
- Actuary
- Computer tech or application specialist

Healthcare

At the core of most Sentinels is the need to take care of others in tangible and practical ways. ISFJs are no different. This makes them excellent candidates for healthcare work. Clearly their traits equip them to care for patients especially when you consider their attention to detail and their ability to organize and to meet goals.

ISFJ health workers typically will not tolerate negligence or mistakes and this is invaluable in a medical setting. People with this personality type will be warm, but they will be all business. When possible, ISFJs will probably work better alone than as part of a larger treatment team. Jobs that may fit them well include:

- Family physician
- Nurse
- Dentist
- Medical secretary
- Physical therapist
- Dietitian
- Speech pathologist

Education

In elementary education and in courses that involve teaching practical skills, ISFJs make excellent teachers. “No child left behind” which was the motto of an education movement is a marching order for the Sentinel teacher. ISFJs own the internal motivation necessary to help children progress as they should both individually and as a group. They genuinely will care whether their students learn or not.

ISFJs function best with younger children who need instruction involving rudimentary skill building. They may do well teaching older students as long as the courses involve building a skill such as home economics, second languages or automobile mechanics. This is also perhaps the best type for collecting and organizing raw data for research projects at universities. Education jobs for the ISFJ might include:

- Elementary school teacher
- Auto mechanic or shop teacher
- Home economics teacher
- Coach (any sport or skilled-based activity)
- Language teacher for non-native speakers
- School principal (if the job's not too political)
- Academic researcher (particularly collecting and organizing data)
- Early childhood educator

What Would Make a Job Unsuitable for an ISFJ?

In modern society, we not only spend a great deal of time at work, but we also tend to allow our work to give us meaning. We need to be careful not to get stuck in a situation that doesn't suit us unless we risk all manner of difficulties. Here are some characteristics of the type of jobs that may not be suitable for ISFJs.

Loose Structure

ISFJs need a strong sense of structure to feel at ease in their positions. They respect the authority of the boss, the reliability of their colleagues or subordinates, and the sovereignty of time-honored rules. A clear hierarchy and chain of command at a job provide ISFJs with a sense that there is a solid foundation holding everything up.

ISFJs don't like improvised action or taking unproven paths. They need a sense that they have a firm foothold in a company, but they will not have that sense if the ground is continuously shifting. If the company culture is too forgiving of mistakes, which sometimes are the results of useful risks, ISFJs

(especially Turbulent ones with their perfectionistic tendencies) may feel out of place. ISFJ workers demand a tight ship.

Lack of Recognition

ISFJs enjoy others recognizing the work they do. They may not be obvious about it, but others noticing their efforts energizes them. Sentinels, more than the other types, need some positive acknowledgment for their undertakings. It could be a monetary reward or simply applause, but they need a signal that they are appreciated.

A lack of recognition could have the opposite effect on ISFJs and create a sense of malaise. However, people with this personality type are unlikely to overtly advertise their accomplishments and may instead employ passive-aggressive behaviors. It may pay off for ISFJs to check to see if there is an “Employee of the Month” display in the reception area when they go for a job interview. Does the culture of the business recognize hard work? ISFJs thrive when it does.

Work That Is Too Dependent on “Face Time”

ISFJs tend to do much better as solitary workers. They may do adequately as part of a loose team, but in all likelihood, they will be much more comfortable and perhaps even more productive when working on their own. Too much of other people may prove exhausting for ISFJs who work full-time. Jobs that require a lot of interaction with customers can also be very demanding for ISFJs.

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?

ISFJ Colleagues

- Prefer working in a close-knit team
- Very supportive and altruistic

- Naturally good at networking, but unlikely to use these skills to advance their career
- Strongly dislike conflicts at work
- Tend to see colleagues as personal friends
- Always happy to help, but may often overload themselves
- Very trustworthy, but reluctant to open up
- Want to do everything “by the book”
- Value peace and security in the workplace
- Dislike brainstorming and theorizing, but enjoy putting ideas into practice
- May find it quite difficult to acknowledge the validity of ideas that contradict their opinion, unless they have a lot of respect for that person
- Have perfectionist tendencies and very rarely give up
- See little point in networking, socializing or small talk at work

ISFJ Managers

- Very good at implementing ideas
- Know how to listen to their subordinates
- Traditional, may be slow to accept changes
- Prefer horizontal hierarchies, may not actually enjoy managing others
- Do their best to create a warm, conflict-free work environment
- Dislike authoritarianism and try to forge personal relationships with their subordinates
- Strongly opposed to breaking rules
- Love responsibility and power resulting from it
- Very intolerant of their subordinates’ failures to meet their obligations at work

ISFJ Subordinates

- Meticulous and very reliable
- Very loyal, likely to try to follow their manager if they leave for another role
- May understate their input and be less “visible” than their colleagues
- Patient and committed

- May be unwilling to advertise their achievements
- Need to know that their input is valued
- May also be quite inflexible
- Very punctual
- Respect authority and prefer traditional hierarchies at work
- Need to have a clear set of instructions and well-defined responsibilities
- Sensitive to criticism if the matter is related to their duties in the workplace
- May be very reluctant to give up responsibilities even if it becomes apparent that another person is better suited for that task or if the workload becomes unmanageable

What Do Other ISFJs Say?

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

“I am a managing attorney/legal aid attorney – and it is a dream job. I love helping make the world a better place. I worked hard in various attorney positions – always helping a group – to get to where I am now. Mistakes I have made? I would never get married, and would instead adopt a child earlier and spend more of my life helping others and saving animals.”

“I am a licensed early care and education provider working out of my home. This is my ideal job. I love children... Working with them and teaching them. In 10 years I see myself as an advocate for children or as a mentor/coach for newly formed child care businesses.”

“I am a shop worker doing process work ensuring stock is ordered on time, dealing with any problems that may arise with stock issues. I took a career break from being an administrator in the car industry to have children and needed to go back to work but it had to be a job without too much responsibility and therefore took on night shifts, I have now changed to day work in the same company as my children have grown up. The best things about this job are sorting out problems, dealing with the stock issues that arise, not being tied down to one particular area in the store. The worst thing is having a job to do but not being able to do it because I have to deal with the customers at the same time, which I love to do but am constantly worried that I won't get the job done that I have to do.”

"I chose to be a registered nurse in my 20's. I have worked in a variety of settings but always with Pediatric patients. Currently I work as a case manager for medically complex children in the community which uses all of the things I have done in the past to help technology dependent kids to live at home rather than in institutions. Yes, I would not have chosen this out of a list of dream jobs but now that I have been doing it for almost 4 years I can say that it is my dream job. I get to work with children and their parents to make their day to day lives better and on a personal note the hours are flexible around my life which is hard to find in the nursing setting. I do not work in an office but out of my home and I'm out seeing kids in the community about 2 days a week. I dread office work so this has been a great way to do what most people do in an office but not be stuck in those hours and in that building."

"I work in the Medical Technology field (chemistry analysis, hematology, immunology, etc.). As most ISFJ personalities are, we like to feel "useful". I feel – no, I KNOW that I make a big difference in the quality of people's lives by what I do at work (70% of your doctor's diagnosis is based on the laboratory's results). I wanted a career where I'd have some stability (always be able to find a job). I've seen too many people with amazing degrees out of work – didn't want that! One thing that inspired me (and many others, surprisingly) back in the 70's when I started, was a TV show called Quincy, M.E. about a medical examiner and those who assisted him!"

"I recently graduated from college. I have a BA in psychology and behavioral science. I loved learning about people but then discovered that dealing with some of those issues can be very difficult. I am now working in social services. I do supervised visits and family support for people involved in CPS (Child Protective Services) cases. It's definitely not my dream job. I love helping people. I also feel obligated to because in my mind there is no other option. The problem is that I tend to worry about issues at work, even after I get home and it is interfering with my home life. The hours are also horrible. I'm in the process of looking for a new job but do not want to work in social services any longer. I have no idea what I want to do but need to make a career switch very soon. I want to find something that I am passionate about, but who doesn't?"

"I fell into (so to speak) a Community Development role but am feeling burnt out now and the part I dislike about my job is the face to face stuff. I have just finished an 18 month secondment in procurement and contracts and really enjoyed that but am really struggling to be back in my substantive role of community development work. If find I've gone from a really challenging role to

administration. I work for the local government. I feel at the moment I'm at a turning point with my career due to my work situation and have no idea what my 'dream job' would be. I think I got where I am through hard work, good work ethic, strong values but at the same time I'm easy going and like to learn and achieve. My biggest mistake is that I have taken things personally over the years and found that this has affected my confidence. If I could go back I would start studying straight away in the area I'm working in to have some training behind me, I would take more opportunities for personal development and I would be more aware of the fact that people are not always as they seem."

As you can see, ISFJs can be found in a variety of jobs, ranging from legal work to nursing. It is not the role itself that matters, but the ISFJ's ability to combine their administrative skills with the desire to care for and help other people. There are fields that are more ISFJ-friendly than others (e.g. administration, medicine or community work), but people with this personality type can carve out their niche anywhere, if circumstances are right and they are willing to put in the effort.

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