

INFP

PREMIUM PROFILE



16 Personalities

What Will You Find in This Profile?

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

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

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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

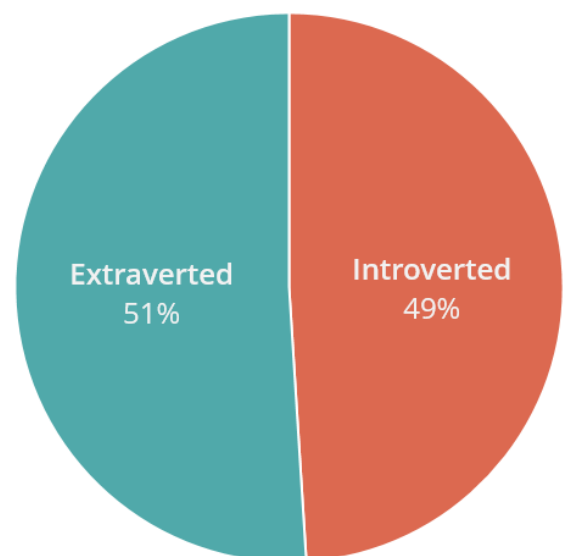
redefined several Jungian traits and introduced an additional one, simplifying our model and bringing it closer to the latest developments, namely the dimensions of personality called the Big Five personality traits. Furthermore, unlike Myers-Briggs or other theories based on the Jungian model, we have 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

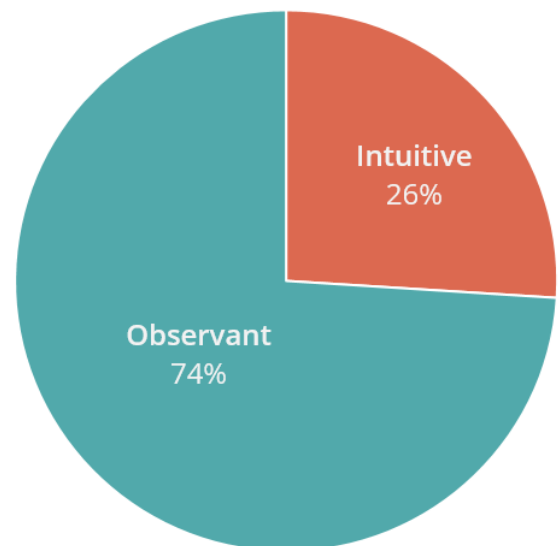


latter (Introverted individuals) prefer to rely on themselves and their own inner world instead of seeking stimulation from the outside. However, being Extraverted does not necessarily imply that the person will be an excellent public speaker; likewise, being Introverted does not mean that the individual 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.

INFPs 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, INFPs 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 INFPs' 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.

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

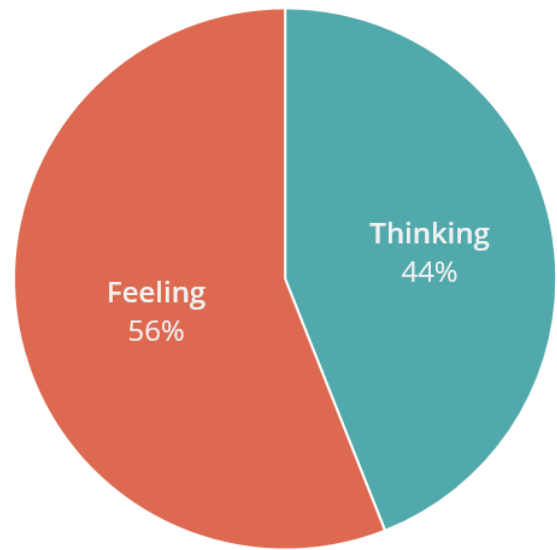
Of course, every stick has two ends. Introspection comes at a cost – by directing all their mental resources inwards, INFPs inevitably have to discard the information that is being provided by their senses. They are likely to have difficulties dealing with concrete, practical matters, or managing large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

Nature: Thinking vs. Feeling

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

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

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



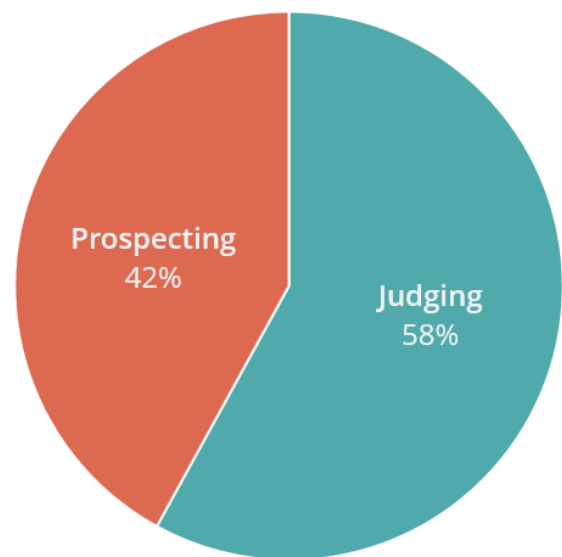
INFPs have the Feeling trait – they trust and prioritize feelings, relying on moral and ethical arguments, and doing everything they can to stay true to their deeply held principles. People with this personality type are kind and sensitive, always able to find something positive regardless of the circumstances.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

making it difficult for them to relate to other people, especially when it comes to accepting what they see as egoism and self-interest.

Tactics: Judging vs. Prospecting

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

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



INFPs are Prospecting individuals – they want to be able to look for alternative options, knowing that there is always a better way. This may lead to unfinished projects or missed deadlines, but INFPs would rather take that risk than lock themselves into a position where the existing commitments would limit their freedom. INFPs also tend to be quite relaxed about their immediate surroundings – they do not obsess over tidiness, often paying far more attention to their latest mental exercise. Finally, people with this personality type are likely to have a relaxed attitude towards their work or studies, refusing to get stressed about deadlines, templates, rules etc.

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.

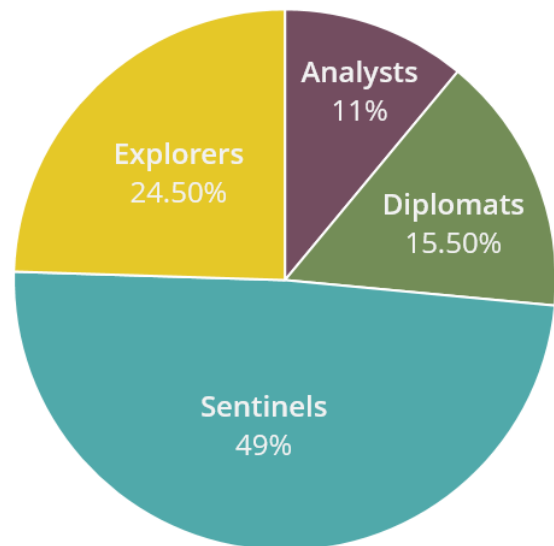
Type Groups

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 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 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 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 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.

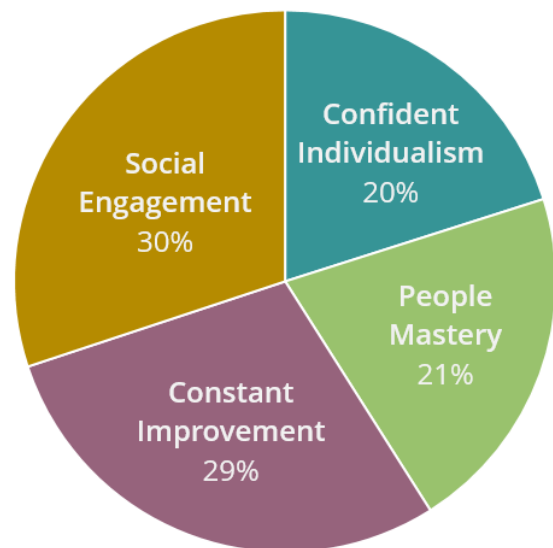
Strategies

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

Confident Individualism (Introverted and Assertive 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 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 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.

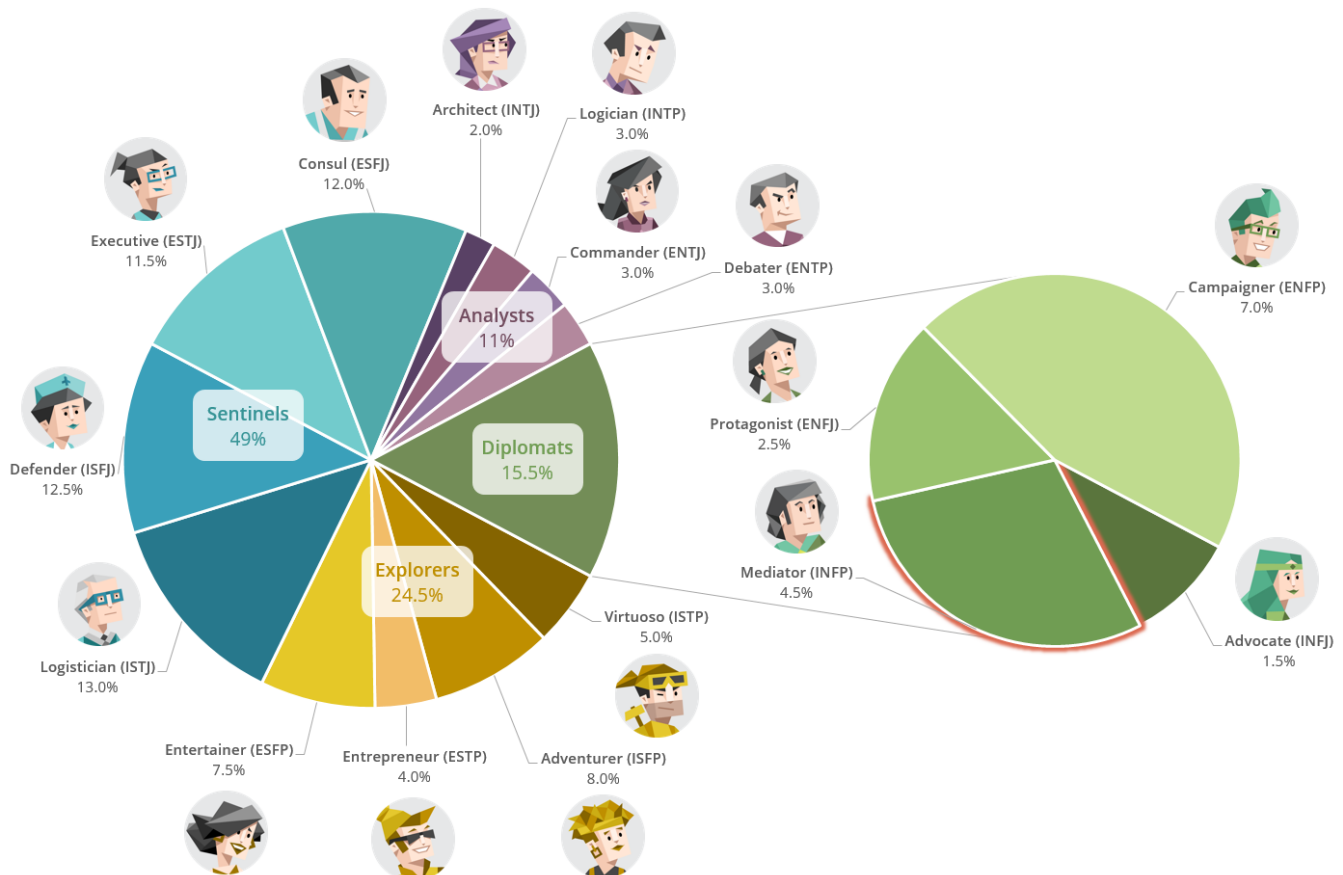
Social Engagement (Extraverted and Turbulent types)

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 INFP personality type is one of the kindest and most interesting types. Less than 5% of Americans are believed to be INFPs – averaging 4% among men and 5-6% 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. Furthermore, INFPs are significantly overrepresented in the virtual world, where they are able to express themselves freely without worrying about peer pressure or social norms.



INFP personalities are usually perceived as calm, reserved or even shy. However, such an exterior can be deceptive – even though INFPs can be somewhat cautious, their inner

flame and passion is not something to be taken lightly. People with this personality type are really affectionate, a trait not often seen in other types. This compassion can be really fervent and long-lasting – but the INFP will use it quite cautiously, directing their energies towards a few selected people or a worthy cause. Idealism is the banner of INFP personalities – and they are proud of it. Unfortunately, it also means that INFPs can often feel misunderstood and isolated, as they are relatively rare.

People with the INFP personality type have a clear sense of honor, which inspires and motivates them. If someone wants to get to know an INFP, it is crucial to know what drives them, to understand their chosen cause. People with this personality type tend to be very kind, loyal and altruistic – they put others first and are always eager to contribute to a worthy cause. From the INFPs' perspective, authenticity and self-realization are far more important than materialistic rewards, and people should not be afraid to commit to something they truly believe in.

INFPs seek harmony in their lives and the surrounding environment, often trying hard to create something positive and feeling dejected because of all the evil in the world. People with this personality type tend to see things and actions from the idealistic perspective, rather than the prism of logic. They respond to beauty, morality, virtue rather than utility, effectiveness or value. INFPs are the ultimate healers – they do everything they can to preserve and protect all the good things in this world.

INFPs are masters of written communication, with a distinctively smooth and warm language. They have an amazing gift of creating and interpreting symbols, and can easily reflect and convey their own personalities using fictional characters. INFPs are also renowned for their rich imagination, which often makes them seem somewhat mythical –

very few other personality types use metaphors and symbols with such finesse. Furthermore, INFPs usually find it easy to learn foreign languages.

INFPs does not worship logic, unlike the Analyst types – from their viewpoint, logic is not always necessary. It is also likely that an INFP will not enjoy hypothetical or never-ending discussions. In addition, the sensitivity of INFPs allows them to connect to others quite easily. Their easy and pleasant communication can even mislead bystanders, who might think that the INFP is actually an extrovert.

INFPs may sometimes retreat into their “hermit” state (this personality type can easily switch between the two states), withdrawing from the world and getting lost in their deep thoughts – their partner may then need to spend quite a lot of effort to energize and “awaken” the INFP. However, this does not happen too often – being extremely creative, innovative and goal-oriented, INFPs are great advocates for causes they truly believe in.

Finally, most INFPs have the ability to notice even the slightest hint of good in other people. In INFP eyes, even the most revolting person will have something worthy of respect or, at the very least, sympathy. INFPs take great care of other people’s feelings and expect others to return the favor. Unsurprisingly, people with this personality type are very sensitive and vulnerable to conflicts – even the most rational INFPs may find it quite difficult to not take criticism personally. This is the INFP’s Achilles’ heel – if someone with an INFP personality cannot escape the conflict, they will do their best to deal with it head on, but this will result in a lot of stress and may also potentially lead to health problems or highly irrational behavior.

Some famous INFPs:

- Homer, poet

- Virgil, poet
- William Shakespeare, poet
- J.R.R. Tolkien, writer
- Björk, singer
- Tom Hiddleston, actor
- Johnny Depp, actor
- Julia Roberts, actress
- Lisa Kudrow, actress
- “Frodo Baggins” from *The Lord of the Rings*
- “Anne of Green Gables”
- “Fox Mulder” from *X-Files*
- “Deanna Troi” from *Star Trek*
- “Wesley Crusher” from *Star Trek*

Strengths and Weaknesses

Few other types are as mysterious as INFPs. Calm on the outside, but brimming with passion on the inside. Seeking harmony, but always fighting evil and injustice. People with this personality type are driven and cautious at the same time, combining these traits with ease. However, the same compassion and sensitivity that makes INFPs truly exceptional



also makes them very vulnerable to many things – it is probably safe to say that maturity and personal growth are the best things that can happen to an INFP.

One of the most important goals for INFPs is to achieve complete harmony between body and mind, as well as between emotions and intellect. People with this personality type are driven by their emotions rather than intellectual curiosity – and harmony cannot be achieved without combining both worlds. Emotions can be a truly tremendous force, but it must be kept in check as otherwise the INFP would feel and be very vulnerable. That being said, an individual who pays some attention to personal development will usually find it surprisingly easy to deal with the weaknesses inherent to the INFP personality type as well as capitalize on its strengths. If the INFP wishes to grow and develop in a meaningful way, they will have to learn how to channel their energy and passion in one specific direction.

Strengths

- **Passionate and energetic.** INFPs tend to be very energetic when it comes to causes they believe in and are willing to fight for. They may be quiet and even shy in public, but their passion should not be underestimated.
- **Altruistic.** It is very rare to see an INFP do something just for their personal benefit. People with this personality type tend to be very warm and altruistic, even though these traits may not be clearly visible.
- **Very creative.** INFP personalities find it easy to interpret signs and hidden meanings – furthermore, their well-developed intuition has no difficulties connecting the dots and coming up with interesting, unusual ideas.
- **Open-minded and flexible.** INFPs dislike being constrained by rules and do not seek to impose them on others. They tend to be fairly liberal, open-minded individuals, as long as their principles and ideas are not being challenged.
- **Idealistic.** INFPs are perhaps the most idealistic of all personality types, believing that people are inherently good and everyone should do their best to fight evil and injustice in the world.
- **Seek and value harmony.** INFPs do not want to dominate and work hard to ensure that everyone's opinion is valued and heard.
- **Can be very dedicated and hard-working.** As mentioned above, INFP personalities are both very passionate and idealistic. Not surprisingly, they can also be unbelievably dedicated to their chosen cause or an organization. It is unlikely that

an INFP will give up simply because everyone else has abandoned the cause or it is getting difficult to keep going.

Weaknesses

- **Too altruistic.** INFPs may be so focused on doing good things and helping other people that they may neglect their own needs. Alternatively, they may fight for their chosen cause ignoring everything else in life.
- **Dislike dealing with data.** INFP personalities are very much in tune with emotions and morality, but they are likely to have difficulties when it comes to dealing with facts and data, e.g. analyzing connections or finding discrepancies.
- **Difficult to get to know.** People with the INFP personality type tend to be private, reserved individuals. They are also likely to be quite self-conscious.
- **Take many things personally.** INFPs cherish their ideals and find it very difficult to accept criticism, taking such comments very personally. They also tend to avoid conflict situations, always looking for a solution that satisfies everybody.
- **May be too idealistic.** INFP personalities are prone to being too dreamy and idealistic, especially when it comes to romantic relationships. They may idealize – or even idolize – their partner, forgetting that no one is perfect.
- **Impractical.** INFPs do not really see practical things as important. They may even forget to eat and drink if they are doing something that excites and motivates them.
- **Always need to have a cause.** INFPs may find it difficult to focus and force themselves to complete tasks which are not linked to one of their goals, e.g. some

routine administrative work that must be carried out. People with this personality type always want to know that they are moving towards a worthy goal, and may feel disappointed and restless if this is not the case.

Motivation and Self-Esteem

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

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

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

We follow with the tendencies to watch out for if the engine begins to overheat. The purpose is not to describe anyone specifically. The descriptions in the second part may sound extreme, and they probably are for most INFPs and other Diplomats. People generally exist with different degrees of expression, somewhere between fully this and fully that. Life has a way of socializing us and balancing us regardless of our foundational

traits. When reading the second part, think of it in terms of tendencies and regard it more as a cautionary tale.

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

Self-Esteem

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

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

In the first case, the world is full of people with needs. INFPs, driven to satisfy their need to gain a stronger sense of their worth, may find themselves signing on to too much. As they go into overdrive to help others, they may end up losing themselves. Achieving

sainthood may have its attractions, but living a balanced and full life is usually not one of them. Burn-out is a real danger for INFPs as they take on other people's problems – sometimes even going so far as to take full ownership of them.

Though INFPs are usually insightful when assessing other people's character, if their self-esteem is weak, they may develop blind spots. An INFP's intense need to connect at these times may allow others to victimize them. And unfortunately, there are plenty of people in the world who are willing to take advantage of that. People who work in prisons are advised to be careful how they demonstrate compassion. It is often seen as a sign of weakness among inmates. Not all of those who take advantage are criminals though. Sometimes bosses, families, or life-partners can begin to see INFPs as someone who cares "too much", or they simply lean on that caring spirit like a crutch, without even realizing it. If they begin to see the INFP as an "easy mark", it becomes something different. When an unbalanced relationship forms, it begins to damage everyone involved.

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

INFPs must learn to apply the same compassion they have for others to the person they see in the mirror. INFPs need to take care of themselves physically, mentally, and spiritually if they hope to continue connecting with others on a satisfying level. At times they need to practice being more objective about the people in their lives and be a bit more rational around those they care about. One way for INFPs to reframe their response to others who

might be taking advantage of them is to remember that allowing such behavior is ultimately neither good for the victim nor the victimizer.

Self-Respect

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

INFPs respect themselves most when they stand against injustice and cruelty. They want to see themselves as a benevolent force in the world. It doesn't necessarily have to involve any big act – just a big idea. It can be about something as simple as dealing with a single child's self-esteem to something as overwhelming as world hunger. The act of doing good might be personal or global – it all depends on the other factors in their lives.

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

To INFPs, such thoughts are not the kind of thoughts a good person has. INFPs may work overtime to provide a counterbalance and to try to make sure the malicious thoughts remain subdued or overshadowed by their deeds. It's a little like everlasting penance. Perfectionism can be a hard task-master, especially for Turbulent INFPs. The battle to

suppress these primal tendencies can sometime occur on a subconscious level. The only sign may be an overworked individual whose life is severely out-of-balance from the pursuit of so many causes.

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

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

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

Self-Confidence

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

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

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

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

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

reassurance of the nature of their genuine selves, they will find the self-confidence they need to move forward in life. INFPs can restore their self-confidence by simply being who they are and doing what they do.

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

Personal Growth

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

What Things Cause the Most Problems for INFPs?

As already mentioned above, the main problem for INFPs is that they are highly emotional individuals, even though they may hide that trait from others (and themselves). This underlying motif affects everything in their lives, beginning with career choices and ending with romantic relationships. INFPs abhor conflict and criticism, and are likely to feel extremely vulnerable in such situations. This is a common trait among Feeling personality types, but INFPs tend to be affected more than others because they also semi-secretly yearn for praise and appreciation. Criticism, no matter how objective, is perceived by INFPs



as a strong statement that they have failed in something – and there are very few things that are more hurtful to them. As INFPs mature, they tend to become able to detach themselves from emotional instincts, at least to some extent, and judge the criticism more objectively – this makes it much easier for them to achieve emotional stability. Every INFP should try to use logic and rationality in situations that do not require an emotional response. This is not an easy thing to do for a personality type that is driven and inspired by emotions – however, this is one of the most important steps that an INFP interested in personal development could take. Simply becoming aware of this issue is already a big

step ahead as this allows the INFP to recognize the warning signs of their emotional distress.

I would also like to push this topic even further by mentioning that it is important for an INFP to avoid rationalizing their emotional behavior. The fact that INFPs are Feelers does not mean that they should not be expected to be capable of making rational, logical decisions. Looking for an easy way out only supports the weakness – force yourself to use your weaker traits instead of saying “Hey, I belong to a Feeling type, not a Thinking type, I am not supposed to react rationally”. Do what is difficult.

INFPs’ idealism is also inseparable from their perception of reality, for better or for worse. People with this personality type tend to be very spiritual, very connected to others. However, their mind is also prone to overprotecting itself by shutting out the incoming information that does not suit the INFP’s principles and values. Such a behavior is completely understandable and natural – however, INFPs are in danger of becoming more and more isolated from objective opinions and different views. An INFP should always try to keep this “filter” in check, making sure that they do not start living in a bubble, withdrawn from everything that can threaten their precious worldview. Not only this would stop the INFP’s personality from growing and developing, it would also make the individual very self-centered and selfish. Such a turn of events is usually truly tragic for an INFP and a waste of their immense talents. It is crucial to recognize this weakness and pay extra attention to the behavior of that natural “filter”.

INFPs can often be too idealistic, especially when it comes to helping others. Other people may easily take advantage of their kindness – INFPs’ poetic justice and idealism do not always survive contact with reality. This can hurt the INFP immensely, also leading to other issues such as nervousness or inability to relax. It is very important for the INFP to

recognize that the world we live in is not ideal and other people may be too preoccupied with other things to pay attention to the INFP's ideas, no matter how kind and noble they might be.

Finally, INFPs tend to have some perfectionistic tendencies, which translate into unreasonable expectations of others, as well as an unrealistic view of the reality itself. Ironically, an INFP often cares so much about a certain cause, that they may find it difficult to accept that neither people nor their ideas can be perfect. This is likely to affect INFP's personal and romantic relationships as well, as their partners may find it quite difficult to match the INFP's idealized view of them. Again, people with this personality type should try to force their emotions to pass the rationality check from time to time. INFPs' empathy and the ability to see something worthy of respect in everyone are truly amazing traits and they should be cherished – however, it is important to know where to stop. In all likelihood, you will not be able to change the entire world – remember that perfect is the enemy of the good and keep that idealism in check. Do not give so much that you forget to care of yourself. Perfectionism also leads to more stress, which is never a good thing, especially for someone who is Introverted– the frustration and disappointment can start building up inside, as a ticking bomb that can cause health issues for the INFP and damage their relationships later on. You can only learn and progress if you make mistakes, so embrace them instead of trying to be perfect.

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

All Diplomats share the combination of Intuitive and Feeling traits, feeling most comfortable in the world of ideas and principles as opposed to facts and strictly down-to-

earth, practical matters. This is why they dislike small talk – it forces Diplomats to discuss topics that they are mostly unfamiliar with. Gossip, sports and various details of daily life (“Guess what I saw at the bus stop this morning...”) rarely interest people belonging to this type group – consequently, finding something to talk about can be a real challenge. While silence works well as a negotiation tactic, it makes most people really uncomfortable in casual conversations. That being said, INFPs are in a rather unique position when it comes to relating to other people. INFPs are Introverted, which means that they are used to being alone and engaging in self-reflection as opposed to relying on external connections – however, they tend to be uniquely placed in terms of being able to empathize with other individuals, often intuitively sensing another person’s preferred style of communication after just a few seconds. INFPs instinctively know how to be tactful and what is considered taboo – consequently, even though they are likely to have difficulties with small talk and socializing, these personality traits make it much easier for INFPs to establish new connections, compared with other Introverted and Intuitive personality types.

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

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

However, it is worth remembering that small talk is just the exterior layer, the tool that is used to ease into more serious topics. Knowing all the tips and strategies in the world will not help if you start feeling fidgety and anxious the moment someone asks you a question. If you are feeling really uncomfortable in social situations, your true self-confidence will show, and this is what you need to work on. It is often said that actual talking is just one part of the conversation, and a small one at that – your body language is far more critical. Just a quick example to illustrate the value of self-confidence: imagine two well-dressed

gentlemen in a high-end restaurant, both having chicken for dinner. One is anxiously trying to cut some meat off the bone using a fork and a knife, doing his best to maintain composure. The other one is completely relaxed and is simply holding the chicken drumstick with one of his hands. The latter will look infinitely better – you may wonder for a moment why he is eating this way in a really nice restaurant, but his calmness and self-confidence will be far more important than his use of utensils. The same applies to social situations – you need to know the basic techniques, but they will not really mean anything if your body language is screaming “I am uncomfortable”. It is very important to work on the presentation of self-confidence as well, especially if you are actively trying to meet new people, e.g. a potential partner. We have already covered this in the previous section – focus on things that make you tick and you should have no problems building your self-confidence.

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

How to Make Good Use of INFP Traits?

Each personality type has two sides and this is especially visible in INFPs. They can be shining examples of empathy, compassion and creativity one day and plunge into the depths of despair in another. Personal growth and development are crucial for INFPs as they have many “all or nothing” traits. We have already discussed the weaknesses; now let’s move on to the most important strengths shared by nearly all INFPs.

To begin with, INFPs tend to be very tolerant, egalitarian and genuinely interested in other people. They can be excellent counselors and advisers, especially for those who struggle in life or simply are not confident enough. INFPs often find it very easy to inspire and

motivate those around them – their determination to fight injustice and unfairness everywhere is simply amazing. And this is exactly what fuels the INFP's engine – instead of losing energy by helping other people, INFPs are actually recharged by this. This is a truly extraordinary trait, especially considering the fact that they are Introverted. A success in this area, especially a bigger one, can keep the INFP brimming with energy for months and months. I cannot stress how important it is for an INFP to recognize and understand this – while most other Introverted types withdraw from the society after being “burned” by something or someone, and then come back, such an approach, no matter how attractive it may be, can easily cripple INFP's self-esteem. INFPs are driven by their chosen cause, by their sense of honor and duty – these traits should be cherished and respected, especially by the INFPs themselves. INFPs need to be needed by others in order to do what they do best, and there is nothing wrong with it.

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

Those INFPs who have taken time to develop their intuition will also be able to assess and judge various situations quickly and accurately. This trait allows them to get quite good at many different things and consequently INFPs rarely have difficulties achieving what is generally seen as success. However, this is unlikely to make an INFP happy unless that success is accompanied by spirituality and authenticity. Even though indulging in consumerism is often the quickest way to short-term satisfaction, this would make the INFP feel empty in the long term – people with this personality type need to know that they have made a difference in the world. INFPs should be aware of this and resist the urge to pursue other people's dreams – a bigger house, a faster car or a shinier title will not make them happier. As a general note, most INFPs should probably stay away from the business world, especially the upper tiers – they are at their best where moral or ethical decisions are involved, but these notions are rarely appreciated in the sector where the bottom line means everything.

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

Finally, INFPs have an amazing gift of writing well, especially when it comes to metaphors and symbolism. Characters created by INFPs are likely to be very deep and "real". INFPs

also tend to have impressive foreign language skills, which can help them a lot in their quests for justice. They can be great poets or convincing journalists, should they choose to brighten people's minds in this way. The rapid expansion of internet has been a truly enormous boon to INFPs, giving them many excellent opportunities to exercise those writing skills and reach the global audience. Internet offers amazing opportunities for INFPs, with its plethora of social networks, blogging platforms, online magazines etc. Unfortunately, many people are still quite unfamiliar with the way internet works and that includes many INFPs as they are not naturally interested in technology and science. People with this personality type should not be afraid to explore these possibilities – an inspirational blog post may be read by millions of people and stay online for many years, this giving the INFP a massive audience. The resulting feedback will keep the INFP going for a long, long time.

We will finish this section by pointing out that one of the most surprising (and inspiring) things about INFPs is that regardless of all their weak points, people with this personality type often say that they would not change one thing about themselves. INFPs know they are not perfect, but they are very good at drawing upon their inner strength and imagination. There are plenty of people who like to say that they would “fix” themselves in so many ways if they had a chance –this is not the case with INFPs. We have recently conducted a survey of 50+ INFPs, asking them what aspect of their personality they would change given a chance – and a strikingly high number of respondents stated that they would not change a thing or that they would simply like to learn how to use their gifts in a more effective way. Not a single INFP stated that they would like to change something radical, in a stark contrast with other personality types.

At first glance, this may seem arrogant –but it is in fact a perfectly sensible approach. INFPs like to explore everything – secrets of human nature, principles and causes, depths of their own mind –and more often than not they are able to find a way to improve things they do not like. Unsurprisingly, most INFPs are well aware of what their weaknesses are and they know how to address them, if necessary. Many even say that there is no such thing as a weakness, and that it is all a matter of perspective. And they are right – some people are better at certain things than others, but that does not mean that everyone should strive to be good at everything. INFPs only need to be careful about their perfectionistic tendencies – even if they know exactly what their weaknesses are, this does not mean that they dedicate all their time and energy to addressing them.

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

Your Dark Side

Each personality type has its dark side – it may emerge under extreme stress or fatigue, especially if the individual is frustrated by their real or perceived weaknesses. In those cases, their “evil twin” may manifest itself as the complete opposite of their personality, throwing the underdeveloped shadow traits into the light. Outwardly, it would seem as if the individual has suddenly decided to adopt a completely different approach to many things, including their career, romantic relationships, habits and so on. Inside, the individual is likely to feel confused and split between two completely different worldviews.

In some circumstances, such a change may not be sudden or short-lived – the individual may choose, either consciously or unconsciously, to behave in this way for a very long time if, for instance, they seek to fight their overly protective parents, restrictive environment, or bad memories. Some examples of such behavior could be:

- an exemplary student leaving their parents’ house and becoming a party animal in college;
- a sociable, friendly and sensitive guy purposefully isolating himself from the outside world and being obsessed by radical ideas after a senseless crime committed against his close friend;
- 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.

INFPs are not an exception to this rule. Your “evil twin” would be an unhealthy version of the ESTJ personality – it may push you towards things like being very inflexible and obsessed about rules or order, caring deeply about your social status, engaging in pointless repetitive activities, befriending random strangers etc. This may even feel liberating at times – for instance, you may feel strangely energized by social interaction or things that engage your senses but not your mind – although 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 INFPs' personal growth is emotional stability. This is determined by the last trait that we discussed in the "INFP 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 INFP, 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 INFPs tend to be rather firm when it comes to principles and ideals that are important to them, but Assertive INFPs 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 INFPs are likely to have a lower drive, and potentially productivity, due to lower sensitivity to negative outcomes. People with this variant of the INFP personality also tend to be more forceful and self-confident, which can isolate them from other people – it is important to remember that INFPs 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 INFP, you would still be rather confident in your ideas, knowing that you are empathic, sensitive and moral – however, it is also likely that you would push yourself to the limit, internalizing all the stress and worry that would inevitably accompany your perfectionism. Deep down, you may also care about how other people perceive you (or how your ideal self would perceive you), even though you may do your best to not reveal that sensitive side of yours. This would lead to certain “emotional rollercoasters”, with you feeling at the top of the world when you see your ideas become reality, and then plunging into the abyss when you are forced to face your weaknesses or when you feel lost or can no longer cope

with the workload. Turbulent identity is inseparable from higher stress levels, which can also lead to health problems if left unaddressed.

Then again, there are certain advantages to having a Turbulent identity. For instance, it could be argued that because Turbulent INFPs 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 INFP, everything depends on your willingness and ability to address the challenges posed by your identity type. Each side has its own advantages and disadvantages, although generally you should try to stay close to the middle of this scale in order to achieve optimal results and grow as an individual. If you have an Assertive identity, learn to recognize the benefits of setting more difficult goals for yourself and occasionally giving in to your emotions – they are an inseparable part of our lives and Assertive INFPs should not try to present themselves as principled warriors who cannot be affected by mood swings or social expectations. Similarly, if you have a Turbulent identity, learn how not to internalize stress or negative emotions, and do not see yourself as a superhuman who must always aim for the best and never fail.

Romantic Relationships



INFP personalities are extremely loyal and faithful. They are romantic idealists who can spend an extraordinary amount of time daydreaming about the perfect relationship, where harmony and warmth are abundant. Looking for a dating partner or nurturing an existing relationship is always one of the key goals for an INFP and this pure passion is one of their most

attractive traits.

INFPs can act wisely and spontaneously even in the face of unforeseen events, in contrast to less flexible Judging types. INFPs' dating and relationship partners can expect to be pleasantly surprised over and over again. That being said, the INFP's mood and affection are subject to hot-cold swings – for instance, they may be very affectionate in the morning, and withdrawn in the evening. It is also important to remember that INFPs are incurable romantics, and their expression of feelings may often be highly idealistic or even poetic.

One of the main issues faced by INFPs is that they gravitate towards putting their partners on an imaginary pedestal, both when they are still dating and even later in the relationship. In other words, INFPs tend to idealize and romanticize their (sometimes long-awaited) partners, assigning them unrealistic traits. This happens because INFPs are often so focused on the ideals of romance and love that when love finally knocks on their door, it becomes difficult to separate imagination from reality.

That being said, this is not necessarily a bad thing, provided that the INFP is mature enough to recognize and address these tendencies. As their imagination is so rich and vivid, INFPs can always come up with new ways to surprise their partner and improve the relationship. This is especially useful when the INFP is dating. However, they should make sure that this does not become an obstacle or a burden – not many types can cope with the unrelenting stream of INFP's ideas, especially if the relationship is still in its early stages. The INFP will do their best to help their partner grow and develop, although this may not always be appreciated.

INFPs tend to be perfectionists and this can sometimes irritate their partners – however, such a tendency also shows how sincere and serious INFPs can be. INFP relationships often reach the level of depth that most people could only dream of. This is clearly visible in the INFPs' approach to dating – they do not really enjoy having small talk or light-hearted activities and try to get past them as quickly as possible. What really interests them is the ideas, beliefs and dreams of their prospective dating partner. If the other person is unable or unwilling to try to communicate with the INFP at that level, the INFP will quickly lose interest. This is one of the reasons why INFPs usually find it much easier to connect with other Intuitive types (either Diplomats or Analysts) – Observant types do not really enjoy talking about abstract things.

INFP's love is deep and sincere, manifesting in unrelenting support and affection. People with this personality type will also do everything they can to avoid conflict, which can also contribute to the stability of the relationship. As long as their partner is willing to reciprocate and make conscious efforts to resolve disagreements calmly and peacefully, the INFP's love will endure all tests of time. It is doubtful that someone with the INFP

personality type will be jealous or overbearing – quite the opposite, an INFP is likely to trust their partner and respect their independence.

Despite their best efforts, the INFP's opposition to any kind of criticism or conflict can cause problems in their relationships. This is especially relevant if their partner has the Thinking trait or prefers Judging when it comes to tactics, as these traits inevitably push them towards rational, impersonal comments or conclusions and the INFP may find it very difficult to examine those ideas objectively without internalizing them and thinking that something must be their fault. INFPs are prone to reacting to stressful situations very emotionally, as if their entire value system is being threatened – they may also resort to guilt-tripping or irrational accusations.

When it comes to intimacy, INFPs are more likely to focus on satisfying the needs of their dating or long-term partner, as opposed to putting their own pleasure first. People with this personality type will not rush to sexual intimacy – they will study their dating partner, get to know them really well and only then consider moving on to the next stage of the relationship. That being said, INFPs are likely to get a lot of pleasure from intimacy as sexual acts will give them an excellent opportunity to express their love. INFPs truly enjoy becoming one with their partner, physically and spiritually, even if just for a short while. Their emotions are incredibly powerful and they cherish the idea of expressing them in this way – people with this personality type are likely to be very passionate and enthusiastic partners.

Ultimately, INFPs want to find their soulmate, their one true love, the person they can truly bond with – everything else is secondary. INFPs do not really want their relationship to be the source of intellectual stimulation (like Analysts do), or fun (sought by Explorers), or stability (cherished by Sentinels). The INFP will not settle if they do not feel a connection at

the deepest level. However, once they do settle, the INFP's dedication and passion tend to leave all other personality types far behind – people with this personality type see their relationships as eternal, unbreakable bonds, throwing everything they have at making their partner happy.

Recommended partners: ENFJ and ENTJ types, as their Extraversion and Judging traits counterbalance INFPs' Introversion and Prospecting 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 will have been pushed to "go out and socialize" numerous times in your lives. This is not going to happen in your relationship – in all likelihood, having a couple of close friends will fulfill all your socialization needs.

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

You may also have difficulties when it comes to resolving conflicts. As mentioned above, introspection is great when you are analyzing your mistakes – the problem is that you need to become aware of those mistakes to begin with. As you both are likely to keep your thoughts to yourselves instead of throwing them out in the open, you will probably encounter many situations where one of the partners is keeping feelings of resentment inside, allowing them to build up, instead of talking about them. 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. 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 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.

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 are recharged by it. There will be times when they will want to be alone – be understanding, give them space and do not ask them what is wrong. This has nothing to do with you – your Introvert simply needs some time alone to recharge.

An Intuitive (N) Partner

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

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

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

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

Tips for both individuals:

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

3. **Be realistic.** As Intuitives, you will both have plenty of ideas that may or may not be realistic. Do not overcommit yourselves.
4. **Enjoy the present.** You are both likely to spend a lot of time thinking about the future. Find a way to enjoy the present as well – time flows quickly.
5. **Share your ideas.** Imagination is one of your greatest assets – use it. Your partner will likely be able to see some things from a different perspective, while at the same time staying on the same wavelength as you.

An Observant (S) Partner

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

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

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

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

Tips for you:

1. **Be patient.** Your Observant partner is likely to have difficulties understanding some of your ideas.
2. **Improve your observation skills.** 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 your partner:

1. **Be patient.** Your Intuitive partner is likely to have difficulties handling practical tasks or noticing things.
2. **Improve your introspection skills.** You are likely to be practical and realistic, but it is also often necessary to spend some time reflecting on things. Forget the practical world and let yourself dream every once in a while.
3. **Be imaginative.** Observant types often focus too much on routines or physical things. Embrace your imagination and do not be afraid of exploring ideas without knowing whether they are actually practical or implementable.
4. **Remember to think about the future.** You are likely to focus either on the past or the present – find some time to think about the future as well, no matter how scary this may be. This does not mean that you should make complex long-term plans – simply imagine and explore possibilities in your mind. Your Intuitive partner is probably doing this all the time – you need to meet each other halfway.

A Thinking (T) Partner

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

A relationship between an INFP 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 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.

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.

A Feeling (F) Partner

A relationship between two Feeling individuals is usually full of uncontained excitement and expressions of love. You are both likely to wear your hearts on your sleeves, making

your emotions quite clear – in all likelihood, physical expressions of affection such as hugs and kisses will also be abundant, both in public and in private.

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

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

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Do not be afraid to deal with the facts.** There are times when you need to be sensitive and then there are times when emotions have to be brushed aside. Learn to recognize the difference between the two.

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

A Judging (J) Partner

Judging individuals enjoy planning and committing to things as opposed to keeping their options open. You, on the other hand, like to keep your options open, always looking for alternatives and opportunities. A relationship between a Judging individual and a Prospecting individual 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 Judging partner will try

to come up with an agenda and then stick to it until the end. In contrast, you may refuse to lay out all the possibilities and probabilities, making things up as you 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 relationships between Judging and Prospecting individuals are not an exception. Judging types can be relatively inflexible and this often brings tension into the relationship - which can then be defused by the easygoing INFP. Likewise, INFPs 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 Judging partner. 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, you 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 your partner's stability and your spontaneity, and you will both have to decide where that balance is in your relationship.

Tips for you:

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 Prospecting individual, 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 to 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.** Prospecting individuals 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.

Tips for your partner:

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 Judging individual, 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.

A Prospecting (P) Partner

As you both prefer Prospecting to Judging when it comes to tactics, you will rarely get stressed or have difficulties finding time for fun. Your playfulness and ability to spot opportunities will ensure that the relationship is never boring and you both have interesting things to do.

On the other hand, there are two sides to every story and relationships between Prospecting individuals are not an exception. Spontaneity and improvisation inevitably come with a degree of instability and this can cause tension in the relationship. For instance, Prospecting individuals are likely to balk at planning or doing routine, menial tasks, often finding it difficult to focus and wandering off in search of something more exciting - and since you both share the Prospecting trait, there may be no one to pick those tasks up.

Some Prospecting individuals can also be indecisive or even somewhat lazy, only focusing on things they find interesting and ignoring the rest - if this cannot be counterbalanced by their significant other, the practical side of the relationship can quickly become problematic. Furthermore, there are times in every relationship when it is necessary to plan for the future and stick to those plans, regardless of how challenging that is - such

situations may cause stress for Prospecting individuals as well. You both will probably find examples in your lives that illustrate such traits. That being said, recognizing the problem is already half of the solution – if you are both willing to make a conscious effort to recognize and address your weaknesses, then there is no reason why your relationship could not be as stable as a relationship where one or both of the partners belong to a Judging type.

Tips for both individuals:

1. **Communicate.** Your partner's indecisiveness or relaxed attitude will often frustrate you - and vice versa. Do not resort to name-calling and try to figure out how you can both support each other.
2. **Focus.** As Prospecting individuals, 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 to drift away when there is a job to be done.
3. **Watch your environment.** You both are likely to have a high tolerance for disorder, but that does not mean you should ignore your housekeeping duties. Split the tasks and do not postpone them until the very last minute.
4. **Do not be picky.** Prospecting individuals tend to balk at doing routine, menial tasks, often wandering off in search of something more exciting. Not all work is fun, but sometimes it is necessary to get things done regardless of how boring they are.
5. **Learn to plan.** There will be times when you will have to think about the future and plan for it. That does not necessarily mean that you will have to stop looking for opportunities or be unable to keep your options open - however, it is important to

find time to sit down together and discuss the direction in which the relationship is going.

Assertive or Turbulent?

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

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

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

their other half, simply because they really care about whether they are being good enough.

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

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

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

Assertive + Assertive

This is probably the most straightforward combination. You are likely to be confident, relaxed optimists, quite happy with your relationship and where it is going. If you are both Extraverted and Assertive, you are also likely to be more satisfied with life in general. You may rarely experience strong positive emotions, but you will not have many negative ones

either. You will also probably feel quite relaxed about your work or your social status, instead trusting yourself and paying more attention to what you want, not what others say you should do.

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

Assertive + Turbulent

As with all other traits, if partners are on opposite sides of the scale, there is a lot of potential for both mutual growth and for various misunderstandings. With the Assertive partner being the decisive, calm and level-headed half, and the Turbulent partner being the cautious, sensitive and self-conscious one, it is easy to see that they can both help and hurt each other.

In such relationships, it is important to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses instead of assuming that there is something wrong with the other person's attitude.

If you are the Assertive individual in the relationship, you should recognize that your Turbulent partner is much more emotionally reactive and vulnerable to stressful situations. They may be more pessimistic, anxious and shy – however, the Turbulent trait also pushes such individuals to reflect on their decisions and try to improve themselves and their relationships as much as possible. As a side effect, Turbulent individuals are also

likely to be more organized, driven and motivated. If they are able to master their emotions and use them as a driving force instead of simply giving in to the mood swings, this trait can actually be quite beneficial in a romantic relationship.

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

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

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

much about choosing the best possible option or worry about how their actions may be perceived by others.

Turbulent + Turbulent

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

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

Type Combinations

With all possible trait combinations covered, let us now take a look at the relationship dynamics between different type roles. A personality type is much more than just a sum of its traits, and romantic relationships are one the areas where that is particularly evident.

Diplomats – Analysts

Diplomats and Analysts share a visionary, open-minded view of the world. Both live with ideas and abstractions, and this distinguishes these types from Sentinels and Explorers. On a first date, this common area may become something that provides quick cohesion between two from these types. While the Analyst focuses more on systems and rationality and the Diplomat on humanity and values, they both love talking about big ideas. Neither type has much patience for small talk. There are endless subjects to talk about since both fill their mental landscapes with creative concepts and dreams.

The Analysts may feel that Diplomats balance them by providing a sense of warmth and emotion that are not usually traits Analysts trade in. Diplomats, on the other hand, may like Analysts for their cool-headedness and their ability to juggle ideas in a smart and unique fashion. Both may represent some ideal that they admire because it is complementary to their own approaches. Diplomats may romanticize the Analysts' reasoned approach while the Analyst may appreciate the emotional depth Diplomats bring to their relationships. Both see sex as something beyond just physical stimulation and release. They bring creativity, imagination and meaning to the bedroom, and this can make their sex lives powerful. Both groups are likely to be loyal to their partners and, once they've found the person they can really connect with, to commit fully and responsibly to that person.

However, there is no such thing as the perfect pairing and complications will always need to be addressed no matter what the type. An obstacle this pairing may face might be the differing views of romantic gestures and emotional expression. Some Analysts may see romantic overtures as silly and illogical. In contrast, Diplomats lead from the heart and find such overtures important when entering a relationship. An Analyst may think that buying flowers only to have them sit in a vase to die is a trivial gesture, and, unless told to, may not consider sending a bouquet. Diplomats, on the other hand, may feel the flowers serve as some larger symbol of appreciation. Diplomats will give such things metaphorical meanings.

Analysts may forgo some of the rituals of courtship or they may just “phone it in” having learned that others expect such behaviors. Diplomats will probably pick up intuitively on something that does not come from the Analysts’ hearts and may feel some disappointment. While not as much a problem once they get to know one another, at the beginning of a relationship when romantic gestures send messages of interest, this can be a little confusing. This “romantic gesture gap” might continue throughout their relationship, but its’ impact will lessen as the partners gain more understanding of each other. In time, Diplomats will learn the Analysts have a deeper, more thoughtful romantic interest that they don’t always express outwardly. In turn, the Analysts will learn the Diplomats are not simply being silly when it comes to such gestures.

Analysts may be too quick to offer a solution to a problem when Diplomats are simply looking for someone to listen to them and to “feel” their problem. The Diplomats’ concern for the feelings of others may seem “squishy” and inefficient to the Analyst partner. Analysts will seek the most rational solution to a problem, even if sometimes that means they sacrifice the feelings of others. Taking time to get to know one another and to

appreciate these differences can smooth over potential conflicts for Diplomat / Analyst couples. Learning and discussing each other's personality type can be a good conversation starter when it comes to these matters.

Organization can also be problematic for the Diplomat / Analyst couple. If both partners involve themselves mainly with the abstract, the larger ideas and the future, who's going to make sure dinner is on the table every evening? Who's going to buy the groceries in the first place? When you have two visionary types together, practical matters sometimes get lost or relegated to a lower place on a couple's list of priorities. It's necessary for a Diplomat / Analyst couple to concentrate on attending to life's more practical matters. A systematic list of chores and household deadlines can be helpful in making sure that someone pays the bills and keeps the house in order.

Tips for Diplomats with Analysts:

- Understand that the lack of emotional expression or a gesture does not necessarily signify a lack of interest on the part of your Analyst partner. It just means they that romance is sometimes a second language that doesn't trip easily off the tongue of Analysts. Don't mistake that for disinterest.
- Know that when your Analyst partner offers solutions to the problems, it may sometimes appear cold and callous. To them, the rational solution serves the greater good and is, therefore, valuable to others. You may not like their means to an end, but, with discussion, you may find their intent ultimately comes from caring.

Tips for Analysts with Diplomats:

- Understand that sometimes the romantic gesture is a metaphor for something deeper with your Diplomat partner. It's not something silly. Diplomats enjoy symbols and infusing meaning into things, and it can be quite an important expression of who they are.
- Know that when Diplomat partners bring a problem to you, they are not always looking for a solution as much as some empathy. Providing one of your trademark rational solutions may miss the target entirely. Try asking questions and listening. Don't be afraid to ask if it's okay before offering your fix.

Tips for Both:

- Should the relationship become a life commitment, it may become necessary to organize yourselves better. You may need to create a system to ensure that your life together runs smoothly on a practical level.
- Learn to deliberately spend some time in the "here and now". Both of you tend to spend a lot of time in a wonderful world of fantasies and abstractions. A dose of the present can bring some added texture to your relationship. Two visionary types constantly rearranging the universe can be exhausting. Add a little variety.

Diplomats – Diplomats

Old saws would have us believe that "opposites attract" as though the human heart were a magnet. So, what happens when two people within the same personality role group take on a romance? What happens when two Diplomats meet and fall in love?

Fortunately for Diplomats who do, no two people are alike even if they share the same basic personality traits. There are adaptations and nuances that prevent a relationship between two Diplomats from being the same as looking into a mirror. Degrees of other traits, such as Introversion and Extraversion, can also come into play. There can be plenty of the differences that keep a relationship interesting even among types within the same role group.

When two Diplomats come together romantically, the emphasis will more likely be on the ideal relationship. When they become a couple, they see it as an opportunity to express something deep and significant. Diplomats usually even endow the idea of sex with a sense of something large and spiritual beyond the simple physical act. Diplomats often place their romantic partners on pedestals and sometimes work hard to keep them there. A perfect couple finding each other in a paperback romance novel may best represent the Diplomat dalliance. They may feel they “complete” each other. They see growing as the central task of all people and may see their Diplomat partners as a “work in progress” – but usually in the most optimistic terms. This makes them supportive, perhaps even enabling at times. This level of energy channeled into a Diplomat couples’ love life can be exhausting. It can be so intense that little else matters. Needless to say, a Diplomat couple is usually a loyal couple.

Diplomats have strong empathic gifts. They sense where people are coming from. Two such individuals in this same role group can connect on a deeper level than perhaps any other groups when paired. This sharing and understanding can be satisfying between Diplomats. There can be an unmatched warmth and sensitivity in such a relationship. However, there is another side to this. Maintaining such a deep level of connection can be overwhelming. As a constant element in a relationship, it can cause burn out if not

managed. Diplomat couples need to be careful not to become annoying in their constant attending to each other's feelings. Sometimes the best response to a moody partner is simply to let him or her be moody in a room alone.

One of the traps of being a too idealistic couple is the disappointment and problems that occur when the reality that nobody can live up to an ideal sinks in. When one begins to notice the flaws in the otherwise perfect vessel which is their partner, the repercussion can be a problem. Diplomats joined in a relationship may need to ground themselves consciously in a reality where they can and should tolerate blemishes from time-to-time. Placing their relationship in the "here and now" world with plenty of down-to-earth laughs, squabbles and relaxing moments can enrich a Diplomat relationship. Perhaps a cutthroat game of Scrabble? Not only do these moments bring a dose of reality, but they allow a couple to catch their breath, figuratively speaking. Not everything needs to be idyllic. Not every conversation needs to be lofty.

As is the case with Diplomat / Analyst couples discussed in the previous section, organization can also be a problem. A Diplomat couple should make conscious efforts to ensure that life's more practical matters are not left unattended. Deep, meaningful conversations can be immensely rewarding, but it is sometimes necessary to talk about bills, savings and expenses too.

Tips for Diplomat Couples:

- With another Diplomat you have someone who understands your approach to the world. Enjoy and share your imagination, your visions and your sense of caring. This is a great opportunity to be yourself and not feel pressured to be something that you're not. You don't necessarily have to look like other couples.

- Experiment with living more in the “here and now”. Not everything in life is the stuff of the higher plains or the ideal future. Even Diplomat couples can get burned out without a little variety in their lives.
- With two Diplomats, it may become necessary to organize yourselves better. Try to come up with a mutually acceptable way to ensure that practical matters are not forgotten.
- Be careful about projecting too much onto your partner. Allow them some room to be themselves. Not everything your partner feels needs your attention. Flaws are an important part of your partner’s character and accepting them will make your relationship more solid.

Diplomats – Sentinels

Let’s start by talking about what these two diverse roles share. Both nurture and protect others: Sentinels by creating and preserving stability and Diplomats by fostering growth and values. Both groups also regard loyalty as an important part of any relationship and will commit fully once they find the right person. But then the two groups begin to diverge.

When a Sentinel dates a Diplomat, they may find the Diplomat’s almost fanciful flights of imagination and idealism to be interesting and maybe even attractive. The Diplomat’s focus on values may appeal to the Sentinels sense of what is right and fair. However, once the novelty wears off, a Sentinel will begin to question how practical all the Diplomats ideas are. Sentinels will begin expecting the Diplomat to be more practical and someone with whom they can set up a household – settling down and stabilizing being always on their minds. They will begin to wonder about the Diplomat’s preoccupation with the future and all the time they spend trying to rearrange the universe in their minds. Sentinels may never

say it, but some part of their minds will ask emphatically, “What are they talking about?” It’s not that they can’t understand what the Diplomat is talking about. It just won’t seem relevant to them. Nonetheless, to not make waves, Sentinels may listen dutifully with feigned interest to Diplomats for a long time before they take issue with the relevancy of a subject.

Diplomats, on the other hand, may start out appreciating the order and structure that Sentinels bring to the table. This may represent something they lack in their lives. It might be good to anchor to someone whose feet are more firmly planted on the ground. But soon, the Diplomats begin to wonder how this person can so readily miss the forest for the trees. The Sentinels with their attention to detail and tradition may begin to appear obtuse and suffering from a lack of vision. The Diplomat may become bored with conversations that are all about the nuts and bolts of living in the present according to some set of rules. A restless, growth-oriented Diplomat may even start to see their partner as “stunted” in some way.

So does this remove Diplomats and Sentinels from each other’s dating pools? Not at all. As hinted above, there may be complementary traits that can unite a couple who seem, on the surface, to have little in common. However, for that to work successfully there needs be understanding and a degree of tolerance for the differences. The problems occur when one type insists the other lives according to their worldview. The contrasting traits that Diplomat / Sentinel couples need to understand about each other include “the practical versus the imaginable” and “growth versus stability”.

“Practical versus imaginable” may be the opposing traits that most affect the day-to-day relationship of a Diplomat / Sentinel couple. Sentinels live in a world of fixed rules and traditions, and they organize the world around them in very precise ways. Understandably,

the Diplomats' creativity and lofty imagination may seem "immature" and "impractical" to Sentinels, especially if it challenges the rules they see as important. On the other hand, Diplomats see such attention to detail as out of touch with what is really important. When Sentinels see a sock on the floor, they may ask why someone hasn't picked it up and what they could do to make things more organized in the future. Diplomats, seeing the same sock, may instead wonder about whether we live in an organized or chaotic universe and ask what that means to us spiritually and philosophically, or whether that matters at all. While this example may be a little exaggerated, you can guess which one ends up picking up the sock sooner in real life.

"Growth versus stability" also can affect the lives of a Diplomat / Sentinel couple. While Diplomats are always looking for ways to grow humanity both collectively and as individuals, Sentinels show more interest in connecting the tried and true of the past with the present. This may not impact a couple that much until the point when the Diplomat inevitably begins to seek a deeper and more meaningful relationship – sometimes maybe even without having a clear idea of what exactly that entails, just being certain that things should be moving in that direction. For the Sentinel, life is likely to be just fine as long as everything is sailing along on an even keel in the manner that it should (emphasis on should). Transformational and soul-searching talk from the Diplomat may only serve to baffle the satisfied Sentinel. Diplomats may become impatient at their partners' "inability" to grow – not fully understanding that Sentinels do not see growth in the same way. There may be no obvious need for it from where a Sentinel stands. Sentinels may even see growth and change as something that threatens the stability of their household. It can feel like each partner lives in different attitudinal time zones – the Sentinel occupies the past and present grounded in certainty while the Diplomat is probing the future filled with potential.

These two hurdles typically need to be addressed if the Diplomat / Sentinel couple is going to make a successful go of their relationship. Understanding, communication, and a tolerance for individual differences can go a long way in any relationship, particularly if a couple's traits are markedly different from one another.

Tips for Diplomats with Sentinels:

- If you are presenting an idea, try to find some practical arguments too. They will go a long way in helping you communicate it clearly to your Sentinel partner. It may sometimes seem like it is worth exploring an idea just for the sake of it, but that is unlikely to convince the highly realistic Sentinel.
- Remember that your partner is likely to have different social attitudes. Diplomats seek authenticity and understanding in their environment and relationships, putting that above everything else, while Sentinels tend to focus on what is expected of them in a certain relationship, regardless of their personal feelings. For instance, you may have no intention of attending a family event because some members of your family are vocal racists, but your Sentinel partner is likely to be much more willing to bite the lip and go in order to keep up appearances.

Tips for Sentinels with Diplomats:

- Be patient with your partner when they are presenting an idea – Diplomats may sometimes be very enthusiastic and excited about something, but have difficulties outlining their initial thoughts clearly. Give your partner some time to fully think through the idea and do not question its practicality right from the start.

- Your Diplomat partner is likely to be more flexible and open-minded when it comes to experiencing or accepting something new or unconventional. You may shudder at the thought of inviting their anarchist biker cousin to a family gathering, while your partner may have no issues with that because they do not see that person's unconventional lifestyle as something that people should have a right to judge. Try to find the balance between the stability that you cherish and experiences that make life more colorful.

Tips for Both:

- Be careful of approaching your relationship with the intention of changing your partner. It's almost always a fatal mistake in modern committed relationships. Enjoy your commonalities and accept your differences.
- Enjoy the common ground of caring for others and each other. Neither you nor your partner likes to make waves. That is sometimes a sign that indicates a propensity for gentle and generous communication.

Diplomats – Explorers

Whenever an Intuitive person and an Observant person sit down to get to know each other, there are subtle or not so subtle differences. Diplomats have heads full of creative ideas and dreams, and they have a liking for seeing things in terms of human values. They approach other people with an eye for bringing out their potentials and finding opportunities for growth both for individuals and for groups. They are also romantic and sometimes idealize their relationships, placing the object of their affections on pedestals.

Explorers, on the other hand, live fully in the present. They are curious about everything – except long-winded conversations based on abstractions, ideas and values. They are always looking for what is new and exciting. Often they seek challenges of a material and physical nature that they can master or conquer – a musical instrument or a craft, for example. Where Diplomats focus on the welfare, feelings and potential of other people, such things can come in second for Explorers when they have a problem to solve or an obstacle to overcome. It's not that they are amoral or that they don't care about people. People usually fascinate them. However, conquering the tasks and problems before them fascinates Explorers even more. This difference between the two roles can be an area of conflict for them. Diplomats may, at times, see some Explorers' behaviors as cold-hearted. Explorers may view Diplomats as too soft and unrealistic.

At first, when dating, the Explorers' free-spirit and enthusiasm for living in the moment may enthrall the Diplomats. The Diplomats may project romantic qualities onto these "bohemian" people, fascinated by their desire for freedom and novelty. Similarly, the Explorers may, at first, be curious about the almost mystical essence that surrounds the Diplomat. When these two types begin dating, it can be a truly exciting time full of energy and anticipation.

However, in time, each will most likely revert to their core preferences. The Diplomats may try unsuccessfully to help reluctant Explorers go deeper into themselves to discover some greater potential. They may grow tired of what they see as the Explorers' superficial need for novelty and good times. The Explorers may become annoyed at what they see as the Diplomats' fuzzy world of ideas and feelings and try to bring them down-to-earth. The Diplomats' tendency to live inside their heads may become a major turn off for the experience-oriented Explorer.

And just like that, the exciting and interesting may become a source of frustration and resentment for both partners. When these types enter a relationship, they would both do well to learn about each other's personality types. With this understanding, the couple can thrive if they choose to practice acceptance and flexibility. However, trying to "fix" their partner may put their relationships in danger. Each needs to decide if the relationship is worth a measure of tolerance for something that seems foreign to them.

Explorers are playful and enjoy novelty. Diplomats have a fondness for metaphors and symbolism. This combination almost makes these couples perfect candidates for role-playing in the bedroom. However, all bets may be off if the Explorers sense the Diplomats are taking it all too seriously and expecting some kind of metaphysical connection between them.

Finally, small details never interest Diplomats nor are they usually involved with a lot that is hands-on and mundane. This may leave Explorers to deal with such matters in a shared household in their casual fashion. While it may sound like a small issue, things like this can take on exaggerated importance when the clothes are piled high in the middle of the bedroom floor. Such a couple may need to decide things like who does the laundry and when early on in their relationship before such things become a problem. Getting outside help when possible is never a bad idea with this pair as neither of them takes much pleasure in dealing with household chores.

Diplomats and Explorers can make interesting couples and may even complement each other if they can get past their differences. Diplomats can learn to be less cerebral from Explorers. Explorers can learn to be more aware of the needs of others from Diplomats. However, first, they need to work hard to find common ground and allow themselves to embrace and understand each other's differences.

Tips for Diplomats with Explorers:

- Try to find ways to de-stress through shared activities. As a Diplomat, you are likely to ruminate on the meaning of life, universe and everything – and your artistic and action-oriented Explorer partner may be the perfect person to drag you out of your mind palace, forcing you to relax and see the brighter side of life.
- Do not judge your partner too quickly. You seek meaning in all things, but you may sometimes forget that not everything has to have a deeper meaning, or that your definition of what is meaningful may simply differ from your partner's. Your Explorer partner may find as much pleasure and meaning in surfing as you do in heartfelt, soul-searching conversations – and there is nothing wrong about that. Embrace your differences.

Tips for Explorers with Diplomats:

- Remember that your partner does not share your love for the present moment. Your constant search for novelty may exhaust the Diplomat or worse, may be perceived as unreliability if it concerns the relationship itself. From your partner's perspective, actions should have some deeper meaning and the thrill of adrenaline may not always be a sufficient reason.
- Your pragmatic and laissez-faire attitude to life may often clash with your partner's deeply held values. Diplomats are highly cooperative individuals, maybe even too trusting at times – and if you adopt the “ends justify the means” approach in a morally ambiguous situation, that may make them very uncomfortable. Be aware of that and try to find the middle ground between your utilitarianism and their idealism.

Tips for Both:

- Take some time to understand each other's personality types. Suspend judgment and consider that both styles are legitimate – one approach is not better than the other. Accept that each type serves a purpose in the world and in your relationship. Learn to appreciate the differences and to enjoy the good things your partner brings to the relationship. And most importantly, resist trying to change your partner.
- Discuss household duties early in a committed relationship. Your different styles of approaching such matters may make this an important discussion. Consider hiring some help from outside to handle such chores.

Friendships

INFP personalities are quite difficult to get to know. Even their closest friends may often find it tricky to convince the INFP to open up and reveal their feelings – casual acquaintances will not get anywhere close to their inner self. People with this personality type do not care much about how many friends they have got; the quality of those friendships is far more important.



INFP friends are exceptionally loyal and supportive. They are also good at recognizing other people's emotional states and feelings, and this trait allows INFPs to be very sensitive and insightful. That being said, people with this personality type are likely to be quite private when it comes to their own feelings – again, INFPs do not feel comfortable revealing their sensitive inner core to people they do not know well. It will not be easy to get to know them well as INFP personalities hide their true thoughts deep within their minds – however, if their friends are determined enough to work on the friendship, its strength and depth will be remarkable. This personality type is very enigmatic and difficult to decipher yet able to see through other people's masks very easily. Authenticity and sincerity are extremely important if you want to become friends with an INFP.

INFP friends are likely to be intense, passionate and idealistic individuals – the quiet and relaxed exterior of an INFP can be deceiving. On the other hand, most INFPs need a lot of

“alone time” as well and this enigmatic trait can sometimes confuse even their closest friends.

INFPs are not really interested in friendships which mostly revolve around practical or daily matters. They are quiet yet very passionate idealists, brimming with desire to make the world a better place. Therefore, INFP personalities tend to seek friends who are willing to let a bit of idealism into their lives and engage in deep, meaningful discussions about things that go beyond daily routine. Similarly, INFPs are unlikely to be interested in events that center on physical activities, even though they tend to love nature.

INFPs are usually very good at reading other people’s motives and have no difficulties filtering out the suspicious individuals. However, if the INFP friend decides to open up and start trusting the other person, they will be able to form a very strong and stable relationship. It should also be noted that INFPs feel great respect for people with similar principles and values – these notions are extremely dear to people with this personality type.

INFPs should remember that they have a rare personality type and not get frustrated if their friends do not share 100% of their principles or goals. INFP personalities seek friends that they can trust, and who are both willing and able to understand their passions and ideas. Not many people can cope with the depth and richness of the INFP’s imagination, and even fewer can support the INFP in the way that they need. INFPs tend to be very loyal and supportive friends, and are sought out by many other personality types for their wisdom, but they need to learn how to meet potential new friends halfway. It is also important to point out that INFPs loathe conflict and lack of harmony, especially in their circle of friends – this may make finding (and keeping) friends a challenging task in the

younger years, e.g. at school. INFPs would much rather be alone than get involved in stressful, emotionally charged situations.

INFP personalities will probably feel most comfortable among friends with the Feeling trait. The rationality and perceived “coldness” of Thinking types may be threatening to them, while Judging types may appear too decisive and rigid. This does not mean that an INFP will be unable to communicate with these personalities on a professional level, but it is quite unlikely that they will become close friends.

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

Analyst Friends

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

Analysts and Diplomats also share a fascination for ideas, concepts and mysteries. If the topic is right, an INFP may spend hours discussing all the possible nuances of an idea with their Analyst friend. Personality types belonging to these type groups are very intuitive and imaginative, so it is more than likely that an INFP will find it very easy to communicate with

their Analyst friends. Their arguments may not necessarily focus on the same things, but this is also exactly why both the INFP and their Analyst conversation partner will both benefit from an opportunity to share their thoughts with each other.

Furthermore, INFPs often have problems focusing their efforts in a specific direction, choosing to brainstorm and imagine things without having a clear plan in mind. In contrast, Analysts (especially INTJs and ENTJs) dislike uncertainty and they will find it easy to help an INFP make their ideas a reality.

On the other hand, Analysts and Diplomats also have a fair share of differences that may cause tension in their friendship. The most important such difference is the criteria these types use for decision making. Analysts can be ruthlessly efficiency-oriented, utilitarian and objective, while Diplomats pay more attention to morality, principles and cooperation. If both individuals are overly direct, careless, and feel strongly about a specific issue, there is certainly the possibility that they will hurt each other. INFPs are very vulnerable to criticism and tension in any relationship, and Analysts do not appreciate having their logical conclusions challenged.

Consequently, both friends may want to avoid controversial or highly sensitive topics when it comes to serious discussions. This is important regardless of which Analyst type the INFP's friend belongs to - all Analysts tend to see debates as intellectual exercises, an attitude definitely not shared by INFPs and other Diplomats.

Another important difference is that unlike INFPs and other Diplomats, Analyst types usually find it difficult to support their friends emotionally. Analysts can have very strong feelings, but they are neither comfortable with nor experienced in coping with other people's emotions. If the INFP is not familiar with such a trait, it may surprise or even hurt

them. For instance, the INFP may grow accustomed to and enjoy having deep and meaningful discussions and understandings about concepts and ideas with their Analyst friend, developing a strong friendship – but then be surprised when the Analyst is unable to extend that connection into the realm of emotional guidance and support. INFPs should be careful not to put their friends on an imaginary pedestal and should not forget that not everyone shares the same set of strengths, principles and ideals.

On the other hand, the INFP's empathy and kindness can be invaluable to their Analyst friend, who will certainly appreciate having someone they can trust with their deeply held feelings. Few things are scarier to Analysts and make them feel more vulnerable than their own emotions - however, they also need to have someone they could discuss those matters with, if necessary. The INFP may be perplexed by this at first, as they see emotions as something that makes us who we are - but they will also cherish the fact that their Analyst friend trusts and values them enough to not put up their rationality shields while in their company.

Diplomat Friends

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

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

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

On the other hand, similarity does not mean that both Diplomat friends will be identical. There are important differences among all four Diplomat types and that can be both good and bad. For instance, an Extraverted Diplomat will help their INFP friend develop better social skills and make new friends; a Judging Diplomat will make it easier for the INFP to focus on what is important and not feel lost among numerous ideas and challenges. However, an Extravert's chattiness may also exhaust the INFP; likewise, a Judger's refusal to relax and be spontaneous may make the freedom-loving INFP uncomfortable.

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

Regardless of these hiccups, it is likely that two Diplomat friends will feel as if they have found a true soulmate. Diplomats' empathy, imagination and tendency to seek win-win situations make them kind and inspiring friends, and give them tools to resolve any conflicts that arise. The main challenge for the INFP, however, is probably going to be

finding another Diplomat, especially one with similar principles and values – not keeping such a friendship alive.

Sentinel Friends

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

Both Sentinel and Diplomat types tend to be kind, supportive and altruistic. It may be that the INFP will often find it difficult to explain their fresh, unfocused ideas to their Sentinel friend, who is unlikely to allow themselves to be carried away by abstract concepts – however, it is precisely this ability to stay focused on what makes the most practical sense that allows Sentinel friends to counterbalance INFP's dreamy, idealistic nature.

On the other hand, INFPs and other Diplomats tend to be more open-minded and flexible compared to Sentinel types. INFPs tend to see many things as exciting and worthy of attention, maybe even daring to experiment with them if that is in line with their morals and principles, whereas Sentinels care deeply about social norms, values and traditions, often actively resisting anything that challenges the established order of things. For example, an INFP may be very supportive of a protest movement (e.g., "Occupy Wall Street"), even if the issue in question does not really affect them or their social circle. In

contrast, a Sentinel friend may see such protests as a threat to public order and established institutions, or even just to their own stability, and be quite vocal in defending their position. Such arguments probably pose the greatest risk to the stability of such a friendship.

This clash of idealism and practicality can be both very beneficial and very challenging, depending on how dedicated each friend is to understanding the other. If they are flexible enough, these differences can give them a great opportunity for personal growth. The INFP will help their Sentinel friend to see the benefits of occasionally letting go of daily concerns and engaging in “what if” discussions; similarly, the Sentinel will be able to lend a hand when the INFP starts to struggle with practical tasks or challenges. Furthermore, if the Sentinel friend has a Thinking trait, they will be able to act as a cool-headed, rational judge in situations where the INFP may be too kind and altruistic. INFPs’ warm, poetic idealism is often misunderstood or even abused, and the Sentinel’s unyielding practicality can counterbalance that.

However, if both friends do decide to stick to their guns, arguments will be inevitable. All Sentinels share the Judging trait, which means they prefer planning and clarity, while many INFPs are very protective of their principles and ideals – consequently, it is possible that both friends will sometimes find it very difficult to give way and accept a different opinion, regardless of the importance of a particular debate.

Explorer Friends

This is the most challenging combination, yet a very interesting one for many reasons. First of all, Explorers and INFPs do not really have anything in common: unlike INFPs, Explorers are more opportunistic than idealistic; they are also far more practical and in tune with the

practical world; and they do not care that much about empathy and cooperation, which are quite important to INFPs. In all likelihood, the initial impression that the INFP will have of a potential Explorer friend will revolve around the latter's audacity and complete focus on the material world and the present moment. Similarly, the Explorer will likely see the INFP as incurably idealistic, withdrawn and impractical. So what could possibly bring these two types together?

The answer lies in their differences. Although challenging, such obstacles are by no means impossible to overcome – and if both individuals are dedicated enough, such a friendship will offer them plenty of opportunities for personal growth, exciting activities, and professional development. Being able to cover completely different aspects of intellectual, social and professional interaction, the INFP and their Explorer friend will ensure that no chance slips by, no avenue is left unexplored, and no weakness stays unaddressed. For instance, the Explorer will have little difficulty pulling their INFP friend from their world of dreams and ideas, and helping them see the more practical, sensual side of life; similarly, the INFP will act as a stabilizing moral compass for their far more materialistic and often relatively self-focused friend.

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

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

Parenthood

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



INFP personalities tend to be very warm, supportive and open-minded parents. Their children will rarely, if ever, see them angry or depressed. INFPs seek harmony within the family and do their best to shield their closest ones from the evils of the world. People with this personality type are very affectionate and dedicated, which makes them excellent parents.

INFPs place a lot of importance on imagination and creativity. It is likely that parents with this personality type will encourage their children to explore various hobbies and activities, hoping that they will eventually find something that will truly inspire and motivate them. INFP parents want their children to be true to who they really are, regardless of how difficult it is to find the right path. They are unlikely to be very demanding parents, but the tendency to cherish and adhere to one's principles and goals will be clearly visible. Even

though INFP parents tend to be open-minded and relaxed, they will not tolerate any breaches of their value system.

An INFP parent will not even blink an eye if they need to do something for their children, no matter how difficult that might be; they will bear that burden with a smile on their face. This devotion and idealism that all INFP personalities share makes them very warm and dedicated parents.

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

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

Having covered the INFP parents' goals, let us now talk about what is likely to keep them awake at night. INFPs' sensitivity and focus on morality mean that things that other personality types would probably shrug off may hurt INFPs deeply. This is especially true for Turbulent INFPs, who get stressed more often than their Assertive siblings, but both

variants tend to be quite sensitive. One of the biggest fears that INFP parents share is that their child may grow up to be cynical and irresponsible or, even worse, a criminal. Parents with this personality type do not worry too much about their child's achievements such as academic performance, instead often putting more emphasis on how the child feels or whether they are doing something that they truly enjoy.

However, few things could be more hurtful to an INFP than seeing their child go against something that they deeply believe in or something that they believe is noble and just. INFP parents will likely blame themselves for being unable to instill the right values in their children if the child follows a path that is inconsistent with their moral or idealistic compass. They may even try to fix that by resorting to emotional manipulation.

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

As far as parent-child activities are concerned, INFP parents are likely to prioritize creativity and emotional bonding. People with this personality type tend to enjoy things that excite their imagination and poetic spirit, and they will rarely have difficulties coming up with creative ideas. Many INFPs also love nature and everything it has to offer, believing in

harmony and understanding among all living things – more likely than not, they will encourage their children to experience and enjoy nature as well. Such activities also give INFP parents an excellent opportunity to teach their children the importance of empathy, kindness and understanding.

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

Regardless of their child's hobbies or interests, INFP parents usually assume an inspirational role. People with this personality type are dedicated and attentive, although their practical and administrative skills tend to be subpar compared to their creative and empathic abilities. Consequently, INFPs often feel happiest when they are free to help their child develop their creative thinking skills or emotional intellect instead of worrying about bills, home improvement or other practical matters, which they would gladly leave to their partners. Similarly, INFPs are much less interested in the intellectual exercises that usually fascinate Analyst types. Parents with this personality type place more importance on emotional rather than intellectual bonding with their children.

Let us now take a look at how INFP parents are likely to interact with their children, depending on the child's personality type.

Analyst Child

Analyst children are likely to be intellectually minded, curious and very imaginative. Their creativity and open-mindedness are likely to delight the INFP parent, who will be intrigued by their child's rich inner world and willingness to explore the unknown. Diplomats and Analysts share an interest in things that excite their imagination, which is why it is unlikely that the INFP will have difficulties communicating with their child or coming up with interesting activities. Furthermore, some Analyst children (INTJs and ENTJs) tend to be very focused and driven once they find something that interests them. INFPs are far more relaxed and spontaneous, but it is likely that they will secretly admire their child's determination, seeing that they are able to both come up with brilliant ideas and put them into practice. INTP and ENTP children are more sporadic in their activities, but they will also seek to deepen their knowledge and understanding in areas that excite them – a passion that INFPs will find it easy to relate to.

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

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

Diplomat Child

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

Like INFPs themselves, Diplomat children are also likely to place a lot of importance on harmony and understanding, often being very open about their feelings and eager to understand the difference between right and wrong. INFPs will cherish the idea of being able to instill a clear understanding of what really matters in their Diplomat child. That being said, such sensitivity is a double-edged sword. Knowing that their child takes many

things very personally, INFPs may be reluctant to discipline them or be firm in telling their child that, for example, time for play is over and they should get back to studying. This will be particularly visible if their child is also one of the Prospecting Diplomats as the INFP will share their relaxed attitude. INFJ or ENFJ children will likely be more disciplined in this respect – in contrast, they may need to learn to find time for fun and games.

Tangentially, INFP parents may also have difficulties teaching their Diplomat children that there are times to be firm and objective. INFPs tend to internalize their feelings and do their best to avoid conflict, often postponing the difficult conversation or decision for as long as possible. Consequently, they may have difficulties teaching their Diplomat child to recognize the difference between being confrontational every time someone disagrees with them and the importance of standing up for principles and values that are important to them.

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

Sentinel Child

While INFP parents are unlikely to encounter major difficulties communicating with an Analyst or a Diplomat child, a Sentinel child will likely require a different approach. While there are some shared traits, Sentinels are far more practical and down-to-earth than Diplomats, and focus much more on structure and stability. Let us start with the positives.

A Sentinel child is likely to be very dutiful and obedient, trying very hard to meet their parents' expectations. They will respect family hierarchy and traditional roles, expecting their parents to set up a clearly structured environment with well-defined rules. This is rarely the main goal of freedom-minded INFPs, although an INFP parent is likely to appreciate their child's willingness to cooperate and listen to what their parents have to say. Sentinel children usually seek a safe and stable atmosphere, which ties in nicely with the INFP's dislike of conflicts and tension. However, a Sentinel child may feel uncomfortable in an environment that is too relaxed and unstructured - children belonging to this type group often expect their parents to lay down clear rules and directives, while these concepts are foreign to INFPs. It is also worth mentioning that each Sentinel type has their own approach when it comes to these matters: ISTJ children are quiet, obedient and methodical; ISFJs care deeply about being able to help their parents and make them happy; ESTJs and ESFJs are eager to take on a more active social role as soon as possible.

On the other hand, a Sentinel child may try too hard to be like their INFP parent, feeling as if they are underperforming and not sufficiently creative. Sentinels' strengths revolve around responsibility, duty and practical matters such as daily or routine tasks; unlike INFPs, they are not fascinated by ideas, mysteries and hidden meanings. This different set of skills and attitudes can cause some misunderstandings between an INFP parent and a Sentinel child, with the parent hoping that their child will share their idealism or enjoy creative activities, and the child trying to play along, but without much joy.

INFPs should recognize these differences and remember that their Sentinel child is likely to be far more interested in what they can see, touch and experience than what they can imagine. These topics can be quite challenging for an INFP parent, whose interests

probably lie with more abstract ideas and activities; they may need to rely on their partner or consciously pay more attention to practical matters in order to find things that excite and interest their Sentinel child. For instance, an INFP parent could use their creativity to come up with trivia games and puzzles, and then ask their Sentinel child to find the facts or missing pieces, which would make good use of their practical and observational skills.

Similarly, a Sentinel is likely to place much more importance on their social status or the approval of their peers than an INFP, who is usually more focused on their own ideals and principles. There is nothing wrong with such an attitude and INFP parents should not criticize their child for wanting to be popular among their friends or for trying to meet other people's expectations. Sentinels are very community-oriented, even from a young age, and INFP parents should not dismiss this trait. On the contrary, INFP parents can encourage it by shifting some of their natural (often unwanted) popularity towards their child in the form of play dates and other community activities. For a Sentinel child, feeling part of a group of friends will likely be far more important than it ever was for their INFP parent.

Explorer Child

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

recognizing and understanding such traits due to their detachment from the practical world.

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

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

INFPs should remember that Explorers have a completely different set of strengths and weaknesses compared to them and other Diplomats. Most importantly, their Explorer child will focus solely on the present moment and what it has to offer, refusing to worry about the past or the future; not surprisingly, this will often make them appear careless or self-centered. These traits are not necessarily negative as there are many areas where the Explorer's ability to tune in completely to what is in front of them can be incredibly valuable – but it is the INFP parent's challenge to direct their Explorer child's apparent carelessness, impatience and boldness toward productive activities.

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

Academic Path

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



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

How INFPs Learn

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

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

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

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

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

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

That's not to be mistaken with the idea that a teacher should force them to "perform". They like and need a good amount of time to deliberate before they present. However, instructors should encourage them and give them an opportunity to share. Gently coaxing them to communicate what is on their minds can help them solidify the notions that are floating around in their heads, and can help other students who benefit from another perspective as well. They are verbally very capable, which can make turning their ideas into words exciting and satisfying work. For them, this is where most of the learning happens.

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

INFPs in High School

In the classroom:

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

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

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

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

interesting. Generally speaking though, they favor philosophy over physics when given the choice.

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

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

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

INFPs may not apply a great deal of work to certain subjects when they see how easily things come to them. They may take it for granted that they will do well and not put as much effort into acing tests and papers, especially if the subject doesn't excite them. They

are typically not as bound by conventional rules and structure in their inner lives. INFPs don't necessarily see this neglect as "being lazy" or not attending to their work. The bigger picture always takes priority, and putting a lot of labor into what they see as mundane or unimportant seems like a senseless act. If there's no challenge, what's the point?

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

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

INFPs' unique traits may not be appreciated in high school where "not being an oddball" is a social priority. They will always be more intuitive than most of their classmates. They "get" their peers, but their peers are probably not able to return the favor.



This may cause INFPs to be at least a little out of sync with their classmates. In the best case scenario, they may be seen as mysterious and interesting. In the worst, they may be

seen as odd and without any practical value for those seeking positions in popular cliques. Feeling apart and misunderstood can be quite depressing for some INFPs.

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

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

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

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

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

INFPs may be more surprised than anyone when they find themselves in a leadership position in a group, something they dislike being forced into. However, their intellectual agility, vision and genuine passion often make up for their lack of organizational skill, impressing the club’s faculty sponsor and enough of their peers to elevate them to such a role. It may not necessarily be something that INFPs seek but, depending on the thrust of the group, they may be the natural choice. They will need some very practical people around to support their leadership, but there’s hardly a better type to recognize and appreciate such support.

Work or College?

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

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

Will a degree be necessary in the work I want to aim for?

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

Will I be able to gain something intangible, yet valuable from going to college?

For many there is more to a higher education than just getting a good job. It's a life passage and an opportunity to grow and take steps toward becoming an independent young adult. For INFPs, who are naturally growth-oriented, college can be an exciting place to blossom.

There's no better place than college to explore ideals and play with the theoretical. Depending on the courses chosen, there is wide opportunity to look at the big ideas in life that INFPs are so fond of. Of course, these things can be explored outside of a university setting while working, but the guidance, structure and time available at college can be most beneficial for young INFPs who are discovering their place in the world. A liberal arts education is seemingly made for INFPs.

When INFPs go to College

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

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

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

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

INFPs' course choices are often similar to what they connected with in high school, continuing with subjects like humanities and social sciences. The arts may also be a direction that INFPs consider, but only if they focus on these courses as a means of communicating a greater message. The philosophy behind the art is often more important than the mastery of the craft itself. With some added attention, the technique can become part of the message for INFP artists, integrating their methods with their messages, much as Andy Warhol was able to master. Science and technology are much less attractive to INFPs, although should they find a reason to follow these disciplines, perhaps by connecting them to more human considerations, as a medical researcher may do, their strength of will and their perfectionism pull them through.

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

Some feel that higher education is only about getting the tools needed to make a good living. Most INFPs reject this as the primary reason to get a degree. A few INFPs can be found in MBA programs, but they are likely there to figure out how to make the economy

more equitable for all, rather than for their own financial success. Becoming wealthy captains of industry holds no interest for them.

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

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

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

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

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

Career and Professional Development

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

To begin with, most INFPs have strong principles and internal values. People with this personality type do not tire in defending ideas they hold dear and they are very devoted to both individuals and causes. This trait is the core focus of some of the best INFP careers – for instance, INFPs tend to be brilliant writers and they can be extremely persuasive when writing about a cause that they consider important. It goes without saying that some of the greatest writers were or are INFPs – this personality type is unmatched when it comes to writing skills. If you are an INFP and such a career interests you – by all means, give it a try, especially since internet gives you an excellent platform. You will likely be pleasantly surprised.

INFPs also tend to have a very strong intuition, which allows them to accurately judge events, situations and other people. Furthermore, people with this personality type are idealists, and there is nothing more important than their values and principles. For these reasons, typical INFP careers often include teaching, counselling, or psychology.



INFPs can act as leaders, even though they do not seek nor worship positions of authority, unlike certain other personality types. They approach leadership roles from the standpoint of sensitivity and understanding rather than authority and power. Consequently, INFPs tend to do best in careers that involve a certain degree of personal touch and sensitivity – for instance, one of the typical INFP career paths could lead to a religious institution. INFPs also tend to be excellent HR administrators, psychiatrists or doctors.

Next, the INFP personality type is one of the very few types whose ideal career list includes service-oriented roles. INFPs are sincerely interested in other people and, for better or for worse, tend to put their wishes above their own. Combined with creativeness, this personality trait makes INFPs skillful counsellors, social workers or psychologists. Some other typical careers make excellent use of such personality characteristics as well – many INFPs can be found in academia or other related professions.

INFPs are very growth-oriented, but they are also highly sensitive and very vulnerable to criticism. This is further complicated by their tendency to work alone – INFPs do not usually feel too comfortable in careers that are typically associated with stressful or teamwork-oriented environments. Some of the best INFP careers turn this trait into a great advantage – for instance, INFPs can be truly inspiring religious workers, musicians or personal coaches. These careers tend to be very individualistic and require a lot of personal effort – this would make most INFPs quite happy.

Overall, the INFP personality type is rare, complex and enigmatic – INFPs seek careers that are more than just jobs. People with this personality type need to know that what they do strongly resonates with their internal values and core principles. As already mentioned, there are quite a few careers highly suitable for INFPs – they simply need to find a worthy cause.

INFPs thrive in fields where they can combine their insightfulness, idealism and desire to “heal” the world. They are usually fascinated by ethical matters, hidden meanings and diplomacy, and try to reach harmony and consensus wherever they go. More often than not, INFPs also have many grand dreams and ambitions – however, they are likely to keep them hidden, even from their inner circle. Sometimes, INFPs may even find it challenging to trust their own instincts, mostly because they have learnt that their dreams often come crashing down.

INFPs dislike routine tasks, strictly impersonal work, or analyzing small details. They are also very vulnerable to conflict and criticism. These traits mean that INFPs should avoid careers that typically focus on data rather than people or are prone to pressure and conflict, e.g. finance, audit, programming, or data analysis. On the other hand, people with this personality type are very insightful and creative – they tend to be excellent architects, musicians, artists, photographers, and designers. Best INFP career paths revolve around these traits.

Regardless of the area they are working in, INFPs are healers and counselors at heart. Their strong will and desire to be cooperative make them perfect candidates for positions of moral authority – INFPs tend to be very devoted and passionate, able to spend an extraordinary amount of time and effort working for a cause they believe in or helping someone they trust and respect. Furthermore, people with this personality type are unmatched when it comes to restoring peace and finding a solution that is acceptable to all parties. This gives them a distinct advantage over other personality types when it comes to connecting with other people, even though INFPs are likely to be quite reserved.

The INFPs’ desire to do something meaningful can also be a very powerful driving force behind their professional development. While many other types feel satisfied if they have

achieved a certain goal in their careers, often of a materialistic or egoistic nature – a certain salary band, an impressive title, or number of subordinates. This is not good enough for INFPs. Even if they try to convince themselves that this is what they are supposed to aim for, deep down they will always know that they can do better. This makes it difficult for INFPs to get stuck in a rut – and that is great news for everyone. People with this personality type have the capacity to achieve amazing things and they need to put their idealism to work as opposed to being stuck in a role that does not suit them.

INFPs should also be aware of their tendency to pick career goals that are way too humble. People with this personality type tend to do very well in supporting roles, but they should seek something more – INFPs tend to avoid career paths requiring a great degree of independence, but this is often the only way to further professional goals. The best INFP careers combine healing and counselling skills with a relatively high degree of independence – this forces the INFP to improve themselves and consequently increase their contribution to the well-being of humanity. Ultimately, this makes them much happier as well.

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

Getting on the Career Ladder

As far as career-building is concerned, the best thing about being an INFP is that they tend to have excellent people skills. These skills are not going to be as clearly visible as those of more gregarious, expressive personality types – rather, INFPs radiate warmth and quiet idealism, working on their chosen causes and striving to help other people. Like other Diplomats, INFPs are unstoppable when they get a chance to combine their imagination with their quest for harmony – but getting such an opportunity can be a challenge.

Whatever their hobbies or aspirations, INFPs do best when they embrace humanities rather than technology and science (the business world tends to be especially unattractive to people with this personality type). It does not really matter whether a particular INFP wants or is able to get into a field that revolves around other helping other people – sometimes their chosen profession has nothing to do with this. What matters is the INFP's ability to correct the wrong, to restore harmony, and to help other people grow and develop. Even more importantly, this is how INFPs seek their true self and establish their own identity.

INFPs should embrace these strengths in the job-hunting stage as well. The good news is that they are likely to be quite well rounded, able to both rely on their network of friends and acquaintances, and be quite convincing in an interview. INFPs are at their strongest when they are doing something that they are passionate about – their dedication is usually clearly visible. People with this personality type tend to become more confident in their abilities as time goes by (the younger years are usually the most difficult for them), so they should not really have many difficulties when it comes to building connections and convincing other people.

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

Thanks to their idealism and ability to easily connect with other people on the emotional level, INFPs usually have little difficulties approaching prospective employers and getting their feet in the door. And this is what they should focus on – mapping out the potential channels and then crafting the introductory e-mail or visiting the employer in person. INFPs can be very convincing when they want to be – furthermore, not many people have the willpower or imagination necessary to come up with a highly targeted approach. One good e-mail sent to the right person is often much better than 100+ random applications. However, INFPs should take care when presenting their skills and experience – people with this personality type sometimes tend to overestimate their abilities (often because they are too passionate about something) and this can cause problems later on.

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

INFPs should also think about what hobbies could be attractive in a specific field and then find a way to turn those ideas into real-life projects. There are plenty of opportunities out there – they can participate in competitions or volunteer projects, build an online presence (e.g. a small blog), or write a couple of articles and try to get them published in the print media. It does not really matter what they do, as long as it is something they can put on the resume – not only this will make the INFP a more attractive and versatile candidate, but will also give them a lot of breathing space in the interview. Answering a question like “describe a situation where you used your problem-solving skills” is much, much easier when you have 5+ projects listed on your resume. INFPs should not be afraid to use their imagination to its full extent – after all, your skills are not worth much if you are the only person who knows about them.

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

Finally, INFPs should spend some time improving their presentation skills. If you have an interview coming up, great – but do not make the mistake of thinking that your enthusiasm alone will put you above everybody else. No matter how cliché it sounds, you need to be aware of the most common interview techniques and questions so that you are not caught off-guard by something like “what is your biggest weakness?” – answering “perfectionism” or “I work too hard” is not going to result in bonus points, quite the contrary. Try to highlight your achievements and things you are passionate about, but also be prepared to

get many template questions, especially in the early stages. In some cases, the recruiter will not know much about the role and will simply be going through a checklist – expect that and do not let your confidence cloud your judgment when it comes to preparation. INFPs tend to be very good candidates in many fields, but they sometimes find it difficult to get that message across and “sell” themselves in the right way, consequently losing out to less qualified but better prepared candidates. This is mainly due to the INFPs’ tendency to avoid rational and factual arguments, focusing instead on their feelings and dreams – while this approach may work in some situations, most employers will expect candidates to tell them, directly or indirectly, what would be the benefits of hiring them.

Professional Development

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

INFPs tend to feel happiest when they are doing something that allows them to combine creativity and empathy. Teaching, psychology and social work are obvious examples, but there are many other areas the INFPs can shine in. Regardless of the circumstances, people with this personality type should always try to move in that direction, even if it takes time – INFPs are unlikely to feel happy in the roles that are strictly impersonal or subject to extensive rules and regulations. It is true that with freedom comes responsibility, but INFPs should not be afraid to explore all the choices, as opposed to limiting themselves to just one specific role. It is unlikely that someone with this type will have difficulty coping with responsibilities, if they put in the effort – the INFPs’ tactical preference for Prospecting gives them the ability to juggle many different options rather easily.

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

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

your intuition will allow you to improvise and your empathy will attract people able to help you. Think about who you truly are and what you want to achieve in life – and be confident that your skills and knowledge will take you far. Consider self-employment as an example – there are many failed businessmen, but try asking any one of them if they have ever regretted trying. You will be surprised.

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

There are some other things worth mentioning in this section. The first is that INFPs do not fare well in situations where they need to do unfamiliar work under time pressures. People with this personality type are flexible, but they feel far more comfortable when they have enough time to assess the situation and make an informed decision. Being in the “emergency mode” can exhaust them very quickly. Unlike Explorers, Diplomats in general

are more suited to be negotiators or planners than frontline executors – stressful environments are not for them.

Second, it is crucial that INFPs dare to follow their instincts and choose paths they believe are right for them, as opposed to listening to other people and doing what they think is best for the INFP. Things that are suitable for 95%+ of the population may well make you unhappy simply because you are not like that 95%. You belong to a rare personality type – embrace your dreams and follow your own path instead of trying to live up to someone else's expectations. This is wise advice for everyone, but especially so for INFPs – while people with different personality types may be motivated by money and how they are perceived by others, INFPs need to focus on personal fulfilment and the knowledge that they are doing something good and worthwhile. Trust your gut, not advice from mass media or someone who does not really know what you truly care about.

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

Finally, do not be afraid to experiment and try different career paths. For instance, INFPs are likely to have excellent writing skills, so why not try your hand as a freelance journalist or start your own website? Do not allow yourself to settle, to get comfortable doing something that does not really satisfy you. INFPs tend to have many talents, but they often shy away from actually attempting to turn them into viable career paths – remember that

even if something does not work out the way you expect, it will still boost your self-confidence and give you invaluable experience. Eventually, you will find what you seek – but do not expect to get there on your first try. At the very least, you will find yourself a hobby.

Communication between Types

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

Diplomat – Diplomat Communication

Common Ground

Two Diplomats will have the advantage of speaking the same language. Diplomats are visionaries who focus on growth and humanity. When they sit down to talk to each other, their discussions sometimes wander into areas that may not seem practical if other types are listening in. While facts are of course essential, they play a secondary and supporting role to the grander ideas so important to Diplomats. They can focus on details, but only when it helps them make a point about a larger principle or ideal.

Diplomats find ready conversation partners in other Diplomats, who enjoy discussing these more abstract matters. Others may talk about the nuts and bolts of an organization, but Diplomats talk to one another about creating harmony and growth within the

company. While they appear overly idealistic to other types, Diplomats agree among themselves that there is always a better way and a better world possible. Their values are important to them, and they don't just leave them at home. Conversations between two Diplomats leans towards the lofty, as small talk interests neither of them. In fact, they may find one another a relief from the tedium they experience at the water cooler with some other personality types. Any time they respond to small talk, it is more a courtesy than a preference. Among themselves, Diplomats discuss work as something purposeful and relevant. Metaphors and symbolic language serve as shorthand for Diplomats, and they appreciate other Diplomats' understanding of their power and ability to use them as well.

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

Potential Problems

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

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

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

All this idealistic discussion can lead to gridlock, like when Diplomats are forced to make hard decisions about whether or not to let an employee go, even when every rational argument justifies it.

In such circumstances, Diplomats have to be careful not let inertia set in when the job calls action. Sometimes endless discussions about such matters can do more harm than good, and sometimes a company evolves beyond its need for an individual or a group. These may be difficult points for Diplomats to reach a consensus on among themselves. They may need to talk to those from other personality groups to help bring a dose of reality to the situation.

Tips for Communicating

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

- Express appreciation. Diplomats like to know they have been helpful and other Diplomats know this perhaps better than anybody. Encouragers need encouragement just like anyone else.

Diplomat – Analyst Communication

Common Ground

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

How They Complement One Another

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

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

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Potential Problems

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

As an illustration, let's suppose we have a Diplomat and Analyst trying to decide about an action in a wildlife organization.

As a solution to overpopulation, an Analyst might consider thinning a wildebeest population through hunting. Overpopulation of any one species wreaks havoc in an ecosystem. A Diplomat, on the other hand, may value all life as sacred and be reluctant to release hunters on the wildebeest, instead proposing trapping and relocation efforts, redistributing the population without harming the wildebeest themselves. The conflict between efficiency and empathy is obvious, but is either wrong? While you have limited

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

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

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

Tips for Communicating

Advice for Diplomats concerning Analysts:

- If you want an honest response, ask Analysts questions that begin with "why". Be willing to explore their view of your organization and what they think it will take to make it run well.

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

Advice for Analysts concerning Diplomats:

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

Diplomat – Sentinel Communication

Common Ground

Both Sentinels and Diplomats like to take care of other people and have much to talk about when it comes to the human side of work. While Diplomats focus more on ideological

matters involving compassion, Sentinels' interests lie more in taking care of others on a more practical level. For example, Sentinels might want to make sure they complete the payroll so everyone receives their pay. Meanwhile, Diplomats might focus on making sure that everyone receives fair treatment and that they genuinely benefit from professional development. Both find energy and self-respect in helping others, and there is plenty of common ground on which to bond in that area.

How They Complement One Another

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

On the other hand, Sentinels can become so involved in making sure they do every little thing correctly that they can "miss the forest for the trees". They can get so caught up in the details and procedures that they lose the larger purpose of what they're doing. Partnering with a Diplomat can help them hold onto the greater vision of an organization, especially around issues about human capital.

Potential Problems

Conflict arises between Diplomats and Sentinels when there is an opinion that one is too controlling (Sentinels) or the other is too lax (Diplomats). If one arrives 10 minutes early for work and another arrives 10 minutes late, you can almost guess which one is the Sentinel and which is the Diplomat. It won't be because Diplomats thumb their noses at

the rules or time clocks. It's just that those 10 minutes are not as important to them on their mental list of priorities. To them, as long as they get their job done, what does it matter? However, that might be hard to explain to a Sentinel supervisor who finds comfort in enforcing the rules. It can become difficult to bridge this gap in attitudes.

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

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

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

Tips for Communicating

Advice for Diplomats concerning Sentinels:

- Be careful not to judge Sentinels as too unimaginative, work-a-day or rigid. Try to remember that the efficiency and stability they offer is a necessary part of any

organization, and to try to communicate in those terms. Share abstract thoughts or imaginative ideas with them sparingly. While they might not have any trouble grasping your vision, they will probably have little interest in it.

- Don't spend too much time talking to Sentinels about feelings. While they can be warm and friendly at work, getting the job done and preserving order is more important to them than how an individual feels. They will most likely view any necessary sacrifice of someone's feelings as something "for the greater good."
- Show appreciation for what Sentinels do. While they may not actively seek recognition, it energizes them when they receive it, and they gain self-confidence from it.

Advice for Sentinels concerning Diplomats:

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

- Diplomats like to encourage others, but also remember that sometimes they need encouragement themselves. Take a moment to recognize their efforts out loud even if you don't always agree with their methods.

Diplomat – Explorer Communication

Common Ground

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

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

How They Complement One Another

If an Observant type and an Intuitive type are open to each other's differences, a partnership between the two can offer a lot. Explorers excel at hands-on activity. They relish mastery of objects within their physical environment. Diplomats are great at grasping, creating and transforming ideas, but they are more theoretical and thought-based and not as strong at seeing things through. Details bore them whereas Explorers

are fascinated by them. They want to know how they can manipulate each little piece and use it to create something new and better – especially if it meets a need or solves a problem. If you want a “vision”, call on a Diplomat. If you want the Diplomat’s vision realized in a down-to-earth, innovative way, call on an Explorer.

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

Potential Problems

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

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

Similarly, Introverted Explorers may trust their internal focus on problem-solving a little too much, going and doing something on their own without taking other people’s opinions

into account. Such occasions might create conflict between an Explorer and a Diplomat, and the only way to stay on top of it is by making sure both sides put in the effort to communicate. There will be a negative response when one does anything that crosses a Diplomat's values.

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

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

Tips for Communicating

Advice for Explorers concerning Diplomats:

- If you want to find out what motivates Diplomats, find out what their values are. They extend their values and ideals into their work life as much as they can.
- Don't bog them down in too many discussions about details or specific techniques. These things will be of little interest to the Diplomat.

- If you're on a team with a Diplomat, explore your common ground by asking questions that begin with "what if".

Advice for Diplomats concerning Explorers:

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

Career Progression

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

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

However, this does not mean that INFPs cannot be excellent managers. INFPs are very good at bringing people together – they instinctively know how to facilitate and motivate, defusing any conflicts in the workplace. People with this personality type care deeply about the feelings of their subordinates and they usually try to get to know everyone, seeking to understand what drives and inspires them. On the other hand, INFPs are prone to getting emotionally overwhelmed – as they find it difficult to be impersonal and detached, the emotional troubles of their subordinates affect them deeply as well. It is also important to note that despite being enthusiastic and imaginative most of the time, INFPs can still slip up and focus too much on the negative side of things – people with this personality type should keep their desire for purity and integrity in check, especially in uncertain situations.

INFPs focus on human relationships and harmony, and usually strongly dislike an impersonal results-oriented approach. They also share an aversion to conflict, controversy and dispute, believing that there is always a way to keep all parties happy. Nevertheless, people with this personality type are quick to show their displeasure and are likely to adopt a “black and white” approach to things they are really passionate about. If the field they are working in rewards these traits, INFPs should have no difficulties progressing in their career. However, INFPs should also make conscious efforts to develop backup plans where necessary – this is not one of their strengths, but it is often important to have a plan B, no matter how vague it is, if something goes wrong.

INFPs should also keep their desire to help others in check – people with this personality type are often too willing to sacrifice their own needs and wishes for the sake of what they see as the greater good. Others rarely recognize this pure altruism and never-ending internal conflict so common among INFPs – this is unfortunate as INFPs are probably the most selfless and kindest among all personality types. However, it is very important that

they themselves take care not to burn out and exhaust that internal energy, throwing everything at their favorite cause. INFPs should conserve their energy and choose their causes carefully instead of getting too enthusiastic about their job.

Finally, it is 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. INFPs excel in roles where they are able to help other people grow and develop, both within and outside of their organization, and they also want to stay true to their principles and be recognized. Ironically, getting promoted can often hinder rather than ease such efforts – sometimes, you may be better off staying in the same role longer, using the time to learn something new and then looking for a better-paid job at a different company. Traditional promotion paths and corporate jockeying are not made for INFPs.

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 INFP can offer, or simply because of the lack of room for growth. Here are some ideas of what INFPs could do – changing the employer is an obvious option, but is it the only one?

Alternative Options

However radical this may seem, you do not need to be employed to live comfortably. We live in an age of possibilities and selling your time to a corporation is not the only way to generate income. INFPs are imaginative, passionate individuals, and their ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated things and ideas can be very valuable. So why not try putting some of those ideas into practice and turning them into your own business?

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

Furthermore, self-employment solves one of the major hurdles that INFPs are likely to encounter in the corporate environment – forced interaction with other people. As a self-employed individual, you are free to choose which tasks you want to perform and which ones you want to delegate or outsource – no more following orders, doing tedious administrative work or dealing with people who are unable or unwilling to improve. Self-employment offers many major benefits to INFPs, 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 especially important for INFPs as people with this personality type tend to have a strong aversion to the business world. However, not every business is built around selling used cars or products shipped from the East and sold in the West – finding a worthwhile cause and turning it into an ethical business idea can be even more rewarding, both financially and morally. The most straightforward path to a successful business is giving other people something that they truly need – every INFP considering this path should first think of an interesting way to fulfill an existing need (or create one) and be willing to experiment. This

way they will be able to achieve their self-realization goals and contribute to the good of the society.

Suitable Careers

Let's look at some specific jobs that INFPs 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 INFP personality traits with added explanations of why they fit. Use this to create guidelines when thinking about your own career goals.

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

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

Counseling, Psychology, and Medicine

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

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

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

Education

The work of teaching and working with students suits INFPs well. With younger students, they are imaginative and connect with them using their intuition and empathy. With older students, they present their subject with passion and creativity, especially if they teach something in the humanities. With adult learners, they are simply inspirational. They are keen on treating their students as individuals with their own specific traits and

needs. While the more strongly Introverted INFPs may find the constant contact with students and colleagues throughout the day taxing, they will nevertheless enjoy the sense that they are changing lives for the better.

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

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

Business

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

- Human resources manager
- Recruiter
- Trainer

- Career guidance counselor
- Conflict mediator

Causes

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

- Lawyer
- Diplomat
- Politician
- Journalist

Writer What Makes a Job Unsuitable for INFPs?

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

Work That Is Cold or Data-Driven

INFPs need their work to have a personal touch and prefer to focus on the human side of things. Factory or a data-entry jobs, where they have limited contact with other people, are

probably not a good fit. Work revolving around something rather than someone just leaves INFPs unfulfilled. They need work that has “soul”. It’s essential that their work feels purposeful and creative, so repetitious tasks are very unlikely to appeal to INFPs.

Loose Principles or Unclear Values

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

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

No Alone Time

Like any Introvert, too much time with other people can be exhausting for INFPs. They need an opportunity to go off and work on their own every once in a while. It doesn’t mean they don’t work well with others or that they don’t enjoy it, just that this kind of work depletes their energy if they don’t have reasonable breaks in their routine that include a bit of solitude. Some jobs, like many sales positions, require that employees be “on” and performing with people all the time – such jobs are very difficult for the typical INFP.

Workplace Habits

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

INFP Colleagues

- Seek harmony and cooperation in the workplace
- Very pleasant and friendly, but also comparatively shy and reserved – INFPs may have some difficulties fitting in if their colleagues' personalities are significantly different
- Dislike hypothetical brainstorming sessions or technical discussions
- Likely to maintain a psychological distance from their colleagues
- Dislike communicating via phone and loathe interrupting calls
- Will do everything they can to avoid conflict at work – INFPs feel extremely uncomfortable in situations where they need to choose which side to support

INFP Managers

- Flexible and open-minded
- Likely to become very emotional in stressful situations – though INFPs will also be able to hide this from other people
- Respect every subordinate, doing their best to support and motivate the team

- May find it very difficult to discipline or criticize somebody in the workplace
- Like delegating responsibilities to trusted subordinates
- Very goal-oriented
- Highly intuitive listeners – INFPs can easily sense the change of mood in the team
- Prefer flat hierarchies and do not see themselves as stereotypical managers

INFP Subordinates

- Can function very well both alone and in the team environment
- Respond to moral and emotional arguments rather than cold rationalizations
- Cannot stand routine work or bureaucracy
- May make factual or logical mistakes, but are great at dealing with people
- Strongly opposed to “Nothing personal, just business” type of thinking at work
- Extremely dedicated and committed, especially if their efforts are recognized by the management
- Very vulnerable to criticism and take critical comments personally

What Do Other INFPs Say?

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

“I am graduating from psychology and will be attending graduate school in clinical psychology. I enjoy psychology and do believe it will be my dream job one day.”

“I am studying philosophy and history. I despair at the thought of employment. I cannot see where I could possibly be employable. I write and perform music – to be paid for this would be my dream job.

Why? I guess because I can give people pleasure whilst doing something I love, plus, given my lyrics, I might even encourage some people to think!”

"I work as a consumer panel data analyst. Telling the story of the data to my clients. I do love it. I can work alone when I want to and be marginally part of an account team if needed."

"I am part time writer and part time horse trainer."

"I am a writer. I love imagining new things, people, places, experiences, etc. I do not necessarily want to be a part of those experiences, but writing about them is fun. Also, writing fiction gives me the opportunity to work mostly alone. My editor calls or emails every now and then about deadlines to keep me on track, but for the most part, I spend my time quietly working on new books."

"I have not found a good paying position in my chosen path. I always wanted to be a writer and was often told to find something that pays instead. I spent ten years in the Army. Then ten years in a retail book store. Since leaving the Army I became a freelance auto racing reporter on the weekends and a freelance webmaster for a press association in my free time. The organization could not afford to pay me but since I believe that it is a good and honorable cause, I do it for free and to increase my portfolio. I guess that I am a jack of all communications trades and master of none. I would love to find a position where I was paid a living wage instead of living off my husband. I would love to work for a media organization or in a library, museum or zoo."

"I am a designer at a game company. This position is very close to being my dream job."

"I am a veterinarian for horses. I would maybe consider this my dream job because of my love for animals, especially horses, and being able to care and help them."

"I am a college professor at a regional, public university in the U.S. I teach journalism and mass communication, including courses in news writing, digital journalism, introduction to mass communication, and media ethics."

"I am a writer and social media editor for a very well-known entertainment news outlet. It is a perfect job for me as an INFP because writing is a strong suit, but the social aspect allows me to engage others (at a distance and at my discretion) and to entertain people. Any dream job of mine would allow me to spend my time making other people laugh, and this job lets me do that in spades without putting pressure on me to perform for the crowd myself, if that makes any sense."

"I work as an actress on stage. I would consider this my dream job because I can use other characters to show my own emotions."

"I am a designer, singer songwriter and creative consultant and work at my own studio. It is my dream job because I am allowed to freely explore my creative wonderings and execute anything that I imagine."

"I am a Sport and Remedial Massage Therapist. Self-employed, working from home. I can work on my own, one to one with clients, and I am always involved with helping people."

"I work as a project and program manager for a small consulting firm, doing mostly IT projects. I also do coaching for other consultants, agile software transformation and organizational change management."

"I work in retail for a high-end art store. I would not consider this my dream job, because I am not creating, but I get to explain art concepts to people and learn about all different kinds of ideas and perspectives which is satisfying. The hardest part is trying to keep a bubbly exterior all day and interacting with people constantly."

"I am a School Psychologist. I do not know if it is my dream job, but I am not sure what that would be! I can change my mind daily about what I would love to do, but this job affords me plenty of autonomy and variety, so it keeps me on my toes, interested, and happy!"

"I am a Street Pastor. There are no walls, however I can be within walls if I feel I need to at times. I didn't at first consider this a dream job, but I do now. To a lot of people, I am a hero... I walk in when everyone walks out. I have no agenda but to love unconditionally. I sit with people going through very difficult times. I go to court with people for every reason under the sun and speak up on their behalf. I give tents to the homeless, take them out to eat, not just give them money and run. I go into prisons. I am never bored. God is my boss. I never ask people for money, and all my needs are met."

"I work as a life coach. It is absolutely my dream job. Channeling my intuition and passion where it can do the most to change the world: into others who will magnify and multiply it."

"I work at a radio station, and I also pet sit. I love pet and house sitting, but it's just a job to keep while I'm in school. I want to work with animals, or with an overseas mission project."

"In the last decade I have been a sculpture artist and ceramic instructor. I spent 20 years prior to this in advertising art and publishing. I am an occasional professional writer and I also make jewelry."

"I currently work as a bartender and also as an independent consultant selling personal care products. Bartending works surprisingly well for me, much better than I ever thought it would – probably because it is flexible, simple, and I can make money in a short amount of time with relatively little effort. Still, my dream job would be to work from home. I hope that my other business will make that possible sooner rather than later. I do not really like the fact that I must talk to a huge number of people to make it successful; that wasn't what I had in mind when I signed on."

"I am a communications consultant, working with a high value organization to translate concepts into information that touches people and changes attitudes OR invites positive action."

"I had worked in office as IT and office manager after being a legal secretary and legal assistant. Had enough. Hated the politics and back biting and career obstruction from others who thought they were better. Loved the job but hated the environment. Now starting new life. Studying law to become a legal advisor for wills and inheritance planning. Will be great to advise people on such a personal and sensitive area of their lives. Have written a novel and intend to work independently and start a regular type of blog. Also started a new business selling unique and original art at affordable prices from UK and across the world. In fact, only energy will prevent me from doing more."

"I have gone from being a dancer to a stunt performer to a model and actor, and zookeeper, to a writer. They have all been my dream professions. They all suit me well in themselves and I have a natural talent for all of them, but because of other, extroverted and slightly bullying people involved in those professions and the hectic lifestyle they need I can see now that painting and writing are the best ones for me. They are calmer and I can produce things that are purely from within me. Painting is my strongest natural talent and I never thought of it as a potential profession unfortunately. Now I believe I could have made a living of it in one way or another. Now I pursue writing for a career"

and painting for a hobby so that I get to exercise both my left and right side of the brain in a creative, satisfying way.”

“I am a social worker and a psychotherapist. I work with 14 year olds and up. I have been doing this my entire life. I see it as a calling – I know I was born to do this. It comes with a lot of learning, but it is also feels so natural.”

“I am a nurse, and it is definitely my dream job because I get to help people in a practical way.”

“I work in a bakery/cafe, and I love it because I get to work with (and for) my family and close friends, and when my hands are doing routine production jobs my mind can be leagues away.

However, I hate customer service (not because I don’t like people, but because I find three transactions in a row to be overwhelming – even physically!) This is hardly my dream job, but it is a job I will keep doing as long as my family owns the restaurant. Being on their team is much more important than enjoying the details.”

“I am currently in an Environmental Engineering college program, and I hate it. I am concerned about the environment and want to help solve global problems, but most of my classes bore me. The only classes I have thoroughly enjoyed were my Liberal Art classes. Everyone was telling me that Animation (my dream career) was dead, and it scared me into major in engineering.”

“My chosen career path is graphic design. For me, it is about communicating a message. I find that though words are important, getting someone to read them is a vital component. Visual design can encourage reading a message, and can communicate that message deeper and more quickly than words alone can. I just graduated from school, so I am still looking for a job, but I will always be doing this, whether I get paid or not. Getting paid would be nice, though.”

“I have chosen to be a training consultant, I currently work in the development sector. I love informing and helping people and I have observed that most youths lack the necessary capacity or skills to develop themselves outside the classroom. I want to be the motivating factor for people to reach out and turn their dreams into reality.”

“I am a medical doctor/researcher. It is hugely satisfying to be helping people daily.”

As you can see, INFPs can be found in a variety of jobs, ranging from writing to project management. It is not the role itself that matters, but the INFP's ability to use their imagination, counselling and diplomatic skills. There are fields that are more INFP-friendly than others (e.g. humanities, arts or personnel), but people with this personality type can carve out their niche anywhere, if the circumstances are right and they are willing to put in the effort.

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