

The Nurturer



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

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

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

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

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

The ISFJ has an extremely well-developed sense of space, function, and aesthetic appeal. For that reason, they're likely to have beautifully furnished, functional homes. They make extremely good interior decorators. This special ability, combined with their sensitivity to other's feelings and desires, makes them very likely to be great gift-givers - finding the right gift which will be truly appreciated by the recipient.

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

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

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

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

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

Personal Growth

Working with Your ISFJ Talents

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

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

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

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

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

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

Areas for Development

With any gift of strength, there is an associated weakness. The strong expression of any function can overshadow others, whilst at the same time its own associated and unexpressed inferior function can mine the unconscious mind and throw up annoying resistances and unsettling emotions. We value our strengths, but we often curse and - even more limiting to our potential development - ignore our weaknesses. To grow as a person and get what we want out of life, we must not only capitalize upon our strengths, but also face our weaknesses and deal with them. That means taking a hard look at our personality type's potential problem areas.

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

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

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

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

Ten Rules to Live By to Achieve ISFJ Success

1. **Feed Your Strengths!** Let your talent for recognising harmony and balance spill out into the world around you, show your gifts to the world. Allow yourself to take opportunities to design, reorganise and rebalance things to make your home and work environments better for yourself and others. Find work or a hobby which allows you to realise these strengths.
2. **Face Your Weaknesses!** Realize and accept that some things are never going to be how you would like them to be. Understand that other peoples feelings are sometimes more important than whether they are right or wrong. Facing and dealing with discord or differences in others doesn't mean that you have to change who you are; it means that you are giving yourself opportunities to grow. By facing your weaknesses, you honour your true self and that of others.
3. **Discover the World of Others.** Don't let yourself fall into the trap of thinking you always know what is right for others. Open your heart to the possibility of understanding that their true needs are something that must be discovered through relationship, and recognition that their world might be very different, yet just as valid as your own.

4. ***Don't be too hasty.*** Try to let things settle before you make a judgement, allowing others to discover the best for themselves while you feel your way into their way of seeing things.
5. ***Look Carefully at the World.*** Remember, things are not always what they seem on the surface. You might need to look deeper to discover the truth, particularly when it seems you are sure of your first quick judgement. There are layers of meaning and truth beneath everything.
6. ***Try to Let Others Take Some of the Load.*** By letting others help, you are not letting things get out of control, but are validating their own need to be a part of your life. Remember, it is better to guide another to see your point of view than keeping them out of the picture.
7. ***Be Accountable to Others.*** Remember that they need to understand you and your needs too. Express your feelings and reasons and let them become partners to your goals.
8. ***Don't Hem Yourself in.*** Staying in your comfort zone is self defeating in the end. Try to make every day one where you get out and discover a little something different about the world and others. This will broaden your horizons and bring new ideas and opportunities into focus.
9. ***Assume the Best and Seek for it.*** Don't wait for others to live up to your expectations. Every person has a goldmine of worth in them, just as every situation can be turned to some good. If you let yourself believe this, you will find yourself discovering ways to make it true for you.
10. ***When in Doubt, Ask For Help!*** Don't let your sense of self sufficiency leave you on the horns of a dilemma or lead you into disaster. If you are uncertain of something or someone then get input from others you trust.

Career

Whether you're a young adult trying to find your place in the world, or a not-so-young adult trying to find out if you're moving along the right path, it's important to understand yourself and the personality traits which will impact your likeliness to succeed or fail at various careers. It's equally important to understand what is really important to you. When armed with an understanding of your strengths and weaknesses, and an awareness of what you truly value, you are in an excellent position to pick a career which you will find rewarding.

ISFJs generally have the following traits:

- Large, rich inner store of information which they gather about people
- Highly observant and aware of people's feelings and reactions
- Excellent memory for details which are important to them
- Very in-tune with their surroundings - excellent sense of space and function
- Can be depended on to follow things through to completion
- Will work long and hard to see that jobs get done
- Stable, practical, down-to-earth - they dislike working with theory and abstract thought
- Dislike doing things which don't make sense to them
- Value security, tradition, and peaceful living
- Service-oriented: focused on what people need and want
- Kind and considerate
- Likely to put others' needs above their own
- Learn best with hands-on training
- Enjoy creating structure and order
- Take their responsibilities seriously
- Extremely uncomfortable with conflict and confrontation

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

The following list of professions is built on our impressions of careers which would be especially suitable for an ISFJ. It is meant to be a starting place, rather than an exhaustive list. There are no guarantees that any or all of the careers listed here would be appropriate for you, or that your best career match is among those listed.

Possible Career Paths for the ISFJ:

- Interior Decorators
- Designers
- Nurses
- Administrators and Managers
- Administrative Assistants
- Child Care / Early Childhood Development
- Social Work / Counselors
- Paralegals
- Clergy / Religious Workers
- Office Managers
- Shopkeepers
- Bookkeepers
- Home Economics