

INFJ– Typewatching Profile

An Inspiration to Others

INFJs are gentle, compassionate, and accepting, yet given to streaks of extreme stubbornness. The INFJs' driving force is their iNtuition (N), which is directed inward (I), generating a never-ending stream of possibilities and ideas. In fact, the more the INFJ introverts, the more malleable and open-ended life can seem. But the external world has a way of interfering with this flow of inspirations and creativity because INFJs feel called upon to render service to humanity (F) in a very orderly and demanding way (J).

Consequently, when INFJs are committed to an ideal or cause, the stubbornness surfaces. These otherwise compliant, reserved individuals become extremely rigid and demanding of themselves and others, when pursuing a goal in the external world.

INFJs are dreamers whose genius, caring, and concern can be an inspiration to many other people. Their quietness gives them a low profile and their concern has a way of being intense in most situations in which they find themselves. In almost any interpersonal activity, from a board meeting to an intimate family gathering, the INFJ's quiet strength is felt by others. Their hope, aspiration, and caring have limits, however, and those limits can be invoked by the INFJ at any given moment. Such limits may have no apparent relationship to external events, and may leave others feeling frustrated, confused, possibly even deprived.

INFJs often need an Extraverted type to tap the reservoir of their inner richness. Otherwise it can be lost, either in the INFJ's introversion or as a consequence of pressure from the typically scheduled life of those who prefer the Judging function in their outer worlds. When in the presence of more Extraverted types, they are likely to share jokes, ideas, whimsical thought, and many inventive models or theories. Those close to the INFJ may feel frustrated that so much of what is inside the INFJ is so rarely fully tapped. The frustration continues as those close to INFJs recognize that while they must respect INFJs' space, doing so diminishes INFJs' contributions to the world.

INFJs often have, without formal training, skills in group dynamics. Almost psychically, they are aware of various levels of interaction between and among people. However, such awareness remains largely their own, and efforts to make these observations known to others can be frustrating to INFJs.

Though they may maneuver themselves to receive affection, INFJs may be quite sparing in dispensing it to others because of their naturally Introverted manner. For the INFJ, talk is cheap, and the resulting sparsity of their communications can have a negative effect on relationships at work and home.

Gender differences can be seen with the INFJ. The female INFJ clearly has the advantage. As a Feeling type, she has the nurturing qualities traditionally associated with femininity. Often, however, because of her Introversion, the INFJ female does not project those qualities, even though they are very much a part of her nature. At home as well as at work, she tends to be aloof, so that the sense of her caring and concern is ultimately lost, particularly to those types more demanding of overt affirmations. A common complaint about the INFJ female is that she is "nice but seems removed." People feel this about her even though they would admit that in fact she's always there when

Excerpted from *Type Talk* by Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen

needed, quietly dependable, steady. Female INFJs must work hard to be understood and may find themselves taken for granted because of their own failure to make their needs known. Consequently, when they do express their needs, it seems out of character and can lead to general disbelief, which, of course, is frustrating to the female INFJ.

Male INFJs have a more problematic situation because the qualities naturally preferred by INFJs are not those traditionally considered to be “male.” To counter the image of being weak, male INFJs can become stubborn, often to a degree disproportionate to the situation at hand. They are capable of taking a seemingly small issue and making it seem as if the entire world—or at least their masculinity—were riding on the outcome. This behavior unfortunately belies the fact that both male and female INFJs are reservoirs of quiet, intellectual introspective imagination who can inspire insight and growth in men and women alike. INFJs are often great thinkers whose pondering of the immense can bring great ideas to the forefront. Typically, they seek to spread their ideas in a quiet, deliberate way—more typically by the pen than by the sword.

At home, INFJs are given the ultimate arena in which to act on both their idealism and their humanitarian concerns. Their longing for harmony is such a driving force that they sometimes create tension in their relationships by working so determinedly to eliminate it. They would do better to work out tensions within themselves than to focus on eternal conflicts, because they often carry very heavy inner burdens. In some ways, this fosters a sense of martyrdom typical of Feelers generally. Over the long term, the inner tension that plagues them as a consequence of imperfectly realized aspiration toward total harmony can do little except induce guilt in INFJs and others. The INFJ goal of harmony is particularly difficult to achieve because the model for it is rarely articulated, though the drive toward it is nonetheless unrelenting.

Parenting to an INFJ means accepting intense responsibility to help young minds and spirits develop on their own. By example and by direct involvement, the INFJ exerts great energy to see that all children are afforded every intellectual opportunity available. There is considerable allowance for differences—as long as each individual exerts himself or herself. The INFJ parent strives to be stimulating, resourceful, and helpful in everything. A young spirit is considered a terrible thing to waste. Toward that end, if a child shows interest in any kind of self-development, no matter how different from the preferred activities of the INFJ parent, that interest would still be encouraged. To the best of their abilities, the INFJ parent will provide whatever is necessary to foster growth.

The home and living style of the INFJ seem relatively neat to outsiders, but just below the surface lie a million books, articles, and projects to be addressed at a later date. It is more important for the home atmosphere to be congenial, stimulating, and accepting than for it to be precisely neat and tidy. The home is a reference library for a wide variety of interests and pursuits. Most everything has some symbolism or meaning and rarely is anything discarded. The fantasy is that some day, the INFJ will wander through the Pandora’s box of goodies and attend to each of the many projects contained therein. Usually that remains only a fantasy for the INFJ.

As children, INFJs are frequently very complacent. Except for the stubbornness exhibited around values they prize, their love of harmony, coupled with a general curiosity and hunger for knowledge, make them compliant children and excellent students. If anything, parents, especially Extraverted ones, may be amazed at how content the INFJ seems, though somewhat concerned about their daydreaming. But the dreaming typically gives way to good scholarship and the INFJ child finds school, at most levels, quite rewarding. Clearly, their Introverted-iNtuition prefers theoretical and abstract course work, but their desire to please teachers and parents makes them successful and productive in most subjects. Learning enriches the mind and the INFJ learns very early on that his or her mind is the gateway to the world.

Excerpted from *Type Talk* by Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen

Family events are opportunities for INFJs to explore and learn, so they are attended with eagerness and satisfaction. INFJs are especially sensitive to family tension and have a tendency to personalize those tensions, even blaming themselves for problems they did not create. If family events are sources of tension, INFJs will tend to shun them, even be terrified by them. If, on the other hand, they are filled with warmth and joy, the INFJ can become quite involved, though often in a more passive than active way.

Wherever the INFJ is, there is work, particularly if the work offers some opportunity to grow and learn. As managers, INFJs are fairly open and very interested in both the people and the product. Though usually slow to give positive strokes, they are nonetheless inwardly proud of their subordinates' accomplishments and open to their desire for self-improvement. The biggest bane of the INFJ's work is conflict and tense interpersonal relationships. In general, INFJs are adept at helping others actualize their goals and eager—as both workers and managers—to actualize their own. They are at their best in situations that encourage personal enhancement.

INFJs can benefit from their mature years if more leisure time and less compulsiveness give them the freedom they need for dreams and inspirations. To daydream, fantasize, theorize, read, build something, or simply “follow a star” allows the INFJ to bring forth all sorts of inner creations. Later years can also be pleasant for INFJs who allow themselves to drop the world's many troubles, problems, and issues from their shoulders. Though this is very hard for them to do, and few succeed completely, it can be sweet relief for a type that, by virtue of their unique combination of preferences, tends to allow many of the world's cares to be heaped upon them.

Famous likely INFJs include: Thomas Jefferson (whose creativity, genius, and idealism helped to forge the Republic, even though his own aristocratic value system was different from that of the Constitution he helped to author); Jimmy Carter (whose Introversion kept him from being understood, and whose iNtuitive-Feeling preference enabled him to be a powerful mediator in bringing Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat to an accord); and Sigmund Freud (whose iNtuitive psychological theories revolutionized the world, and whose strong Feeling preference kept him working to help people his entire life, although others' criticism of his work made him ever more rigidly entrenched in his own beliefs).

Excerpted from *Type Talk* by Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen