

INTJ– Typewatching Profile

Everything Has Room for Improvement

INTJs have an inner world rich with endless possibilities that, when combined with their Thinking-Judging preferences, gives them a drive toward improvement of everything. Indeed, these are the “better idea” people of the typological world. Everything—words, plans, designs, ideas, even people—has room for improvement. In the INTJ’s eyes, even the best can be made better.

INTJs have a natural propensity for organization, and as such they often rise to the top of any system in which they find themselves. They tend to be “big picture” people (iNtuitive) who can see the forest as well as the intricacies of its component parts. (To an INTJ, there’s more to a forest than merely trees.) With their capacity for follow-through (Judging), they have a high completion rate in their many undertakings. People naturally look to them for a job well done, a word aptly spoken, an opportunity seized. And they usually rise to such occasions with aplomb.

INTJs are among the most independent of the sixteen types. Their theme song may be “My Way.” As with other NTs, this independence often gives them an aura of arrogance that make in-depth relationships develop slowly. At both work and play they can often seem aloof and sometimes argumentative. For INTJs, such behavior is simply the result of their attempt to stimulate the world around them. They can be stunned, even appear hurt, when others accuse them of being distant and seemingly uncaring, but it is, ironically, the INTJs’ caring that has been the source of the provocation. They may even seem surprised at others’ taking offense when their motivation was fostering improvement. Again, as with other NTs, INTJs learn by arguing, part of their continuing quest to understand the universe. The problem is that an INTJ’s “friendly discussion” may be seen by others as hostile, even obnoxious behavior.

Statistically, there are more male INTJ’s than female. Not surprisingly, the INTJ female’s independence, intellectual aloofness, and argumentative style may result in her feeling somewhat out of step with those attributes more traditionally associated with femininity. For an INTJ female being true to herself may put her out of step with the mainstream.

As parents, INTJs’ relentless pursuit for self-improvement becomes a model for their children as well. They encourage a child’s independence and self-sufficiency, the sooner the better. What may be seen by others as uncaring or unaffectionate is, to INTJs, the ultimate in caring: teaching their children to stand on their own. The situation may best be illustrated by the way in which an INTJ parent likely teaches a child to swim. An INTJ parent may allow the child to dive into deep water that other parents might consider risky—all the while supervising intently—in the name of learning how to swim. Other types may stick to shallower waters, wanting the child to feel more comfortable in the learning process. To the INTJ, the issue of comfort or fear is irrelevant. What’s important is learning how to swim. An old Chinese proverb was probably INTJ-inspired: “Give a man a fish and he eats for a day; *teach* him to fish, and he eats for a lifetime.”

The same model drives all INTJ relationships: any relationship that’s good today can be better tomorrow and both parties must be directed to constant self-improvement: learning, growing, confronting, and anything else that leads

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

to mutual self-competency. As lovers, mates, and companions, INTJs must be ever improving. When thwarted in the quest, they can become critical and often depressed over the seeming stagnation.

An INTJ's home reflects his or her current conceptual pursuits. Theoretical and practical books abound. To a casual visitor, the home may seem neat, but its more private corners reflect a series of half-started projects, collections of mementos, and an assortment of potential challenges: a guitar to be mastered, a file to be organized, a household repair to be made. Dreams and visions are the INTJ's form of relaxation. Unfortunately, seemingly ambitious plans may go unfulfilled if the INTJ falls into the trap of being seduced by the intellectual excitement of the plan without ever getting to the actual hands-on accomplishment. Such a dilemma sets them up for self-criticism, which leads, in turn, to frustration and depression.

INTJ children crave much of the same independence as their parents. Unless their parents are of the same type, this quest may be the root of an ongoing parent-child dispute. While sufficiently neat to pass parental muster, their rooms may be laboratories of endless explorations and experiments. For a parent to invade this territory may be seen as an invasion of privacy and result in a struggle for power. Often, in high school, INTJs can be “underachievers” who score well on formal tests but are unstimulated by the details of day-to-day classroom learning. Similarly, family events may be exciting if they are stimulating and challenging, but the final decision on whether to participate must lie with the INTJ child, not with his or her parent. A lack of understanding this by both parties can cause considerable tension. Clearly, in this context, such otherwise simple decisions as when to go to bed or whether to attend a family function can become major battlegrounds.

For the INTJ, work is the laboratory in which blueprints become reality—and give way for new blueprints. Consequently, INTJ managers strive to stimulate and stretch themselves and subordinates. INTJ subordinates, in turn, strive to stimulate and stretch themselves and their supervisors. They also want to be given a free hand to experiment, and if too tightly controlled, may become frustrated and resentful. They frequently master the language of whatever it is in which they find themselves: whether managers or counselors, they know all the correct words and phrases for the situation at hand.

In short, the workplace is one more “system” that can be organized and improved. As such, all assignments are undertaken with that underlying expectation. When improvements are not forthcoming, the INTJ may be subject to self-criticism. Careers particularly appealing to INTJs include those that provide mental challenge (teaching, especially college and research) and inventiveness in both business and science (program analysts and architects). They can become restless and frustrated in career choices that demand too much detail or a high demand for personal services.

Midlife, as with most other types, finds a moderating of some preferences. Their iNtuitive searching for the abstract begins to lean toward a desire for immediate Sensing fulfillment. Similarly, they may also “discover” the emotional and subjective sides of their Feeling non-preference, which may be at once exciting and frightening. Later years could easily find INTJs inspiring themselves with more sociability.

Best guesses of famous INTJs include Thomas Edison (who was given to almost daily inventions, upon which he was always improving); Richard Nixon (whose political genius made him a man ahead of his time, but whose grasp for control ultimately undid him); and Katharine Hepburn (whose private nature belies her take-charge, I'll-do-it-my-way style).

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