

ISFJ– Typewatching Profile

A High Sense of Duty

ISFJs like to work behind the scenes. Quick, easygoing, neat, orderly, and given to a higher sense of duty and obedience, they find their source of energy within (Introversion) and their reality in those things they can see, hear, feel, taste, and smell (Sensing). That energy is focused outwardly in the service of others (Feeling), always in an orderly and timely fashion (Judging). As a result, ISFJs find meaning in life by serving human needs and making others happy.

One appropriate image of the ISFJ is that of the dependable bulwark who will always be there when needed, waiting silently. As Judgers, they might complain about being intruded upon, but ultimately their high sense of duty compels them to do what needs to be done, without complaint.

Mates and friends of ISFJs often criticize them for letting others continually take advantage of their goodness, even though these same mates and friends may be guilty of doing so themselves. Indeed, ISFJs take commitments and obligations very seriously and often do allow others to take advantage of them. Possibly more than other types, they allow themselves to become doormats of a marriage, family, job, or whatever situation in which they find themselves. More often than not, this is a result of their high sense of obligation and allegiance, coupled with their strong values and commitment to serving humanity.

Gender issues for ISFJs are complex for the male and almost too simple for the female. ISFJ characteristics are almost stereotypically female—quiet, reserved, gentle, steady, dependable, caring, dutiful, obedient, neat, and tidy. In fact, ISFJ females may be quietly critical when females of other types don't behave “like the other girls.” For the ISFJ female, her feminine “script” may be so tightly written that if, later in life, she exerts her individuality, the action may both surprise those around her and result in negative reactions from others.

If the ISFJ profile is a female stereotype, it's to be expected that the male ISFJ will face special problems. The gentle, caring, quiet, and dutiful attributes are the opposite of typical “male” behavior. As a result, male ISFJs may be pressured to suppress their natural behavior in order to act more typically male. In such cases, ISFJs may go overboard, becoming super macho, drinking or smoking to excess, or becoming highly competitive to “prove” themselves.

In relationships, as with most everything else, the ISFJ's strong sense of duty and commitment dominates. They are typically careful and exact in the words they use, words that represent bonds and contracts to be taken very seriously. Relationships may develop slowly but surely for an ISFJ and when a declaration comes, it may—at least by the ISFJ—be considered permanent. ISFJs more than other types, may remain in relationships that long ago went bad, simply because of their sense of duty and obligation.

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

Their sense of loyalty may make them appear quite serious. It may take another type individual to mitigate the seriousness of life's demands on an ISFJ. Some ISFJs are quietly tantalized by the bizarre and extreme. However, they give in to such longings only on special occasions or vicariously—by way of a movie, perhaps, or a friend's tale of intrigue. Beyond those exceptions, it is generally “work first, play later”—and then only if the work is completed. For the ISFJ, there is almost always some work somewhere yet to be completed.

Parenting for an ISFJ is another serious responsibility, one that ISFJs more than other types may recognize as a lifetime commitment. As a consequence, they often assume a quiet, guardian-like role. Generally, as parents, they are diligent, protective, and extremely patient with the many facets of the job. While each of these characteristics is admirable, when maximized in ISFJ parents it often means subjugation of the parents' needs in favor of the children's. Though ISFJs never really feel like saints, that is probably the way most children of ISFJs would describe their parents.

Because duty, obedience, and responsibility permeate all that the ISFJ does, the entire living style is marked by caring and concern for others, expressed in an orderly, well-regulated way. Relaxation can come only when all work is completed and, as stated earlier, it rarely is. ISFJs generally schedule their leisure activities; indeed, such leisure may become part of the ISFJ's repertoire of duties.

It is ISFJs, more than other types, who will complain about all the work, responsibilities, or demands placed upon them, and yet be dismayed and disappointed if someone tries to spare them such agonies. Cooking a big, festive family meal, for example, or taking care of an aged parent or arranging a class reunion, may all engender a variety of protests or complaints from the ISFJ. In fact, there is nothing that ISFJs would rather be doing. Should someone try to rescue them, they would be hurt and consumed with guilt.

As children, ISFJs are a treat that every parent should be allowed to experience. Content to play by themselves, they are relatively undemanding, neat, and obedient—in general, model children and hardworking students. As both child and adult, ISFJs may be given to streaks of stubbornness that seem entirely out of character. But even that stubbornness will give way when confronting authority, role definition (“I'm the teacher and I want it done this way”), or some other sense of responsibility. ISFJs respect authority and respond accordingly.

As students, ISFJs prefer teachers and courses that are organized and practical. They like following outlines and doing homework and assignments that are highly defined. For them, learning, like most other aspects of life is best when nobody makes waves and everything happens as it should—according to schedule.

Family events for ISFJs are very meaningful occasions, chances to gather and observe tradition and ritual, to express in action and deeds the family's importance. For the ISFJ, the meaningfulness of the event is directly related to the extent he or she contributes to it—by cooking, cleaning, whatever; such efforts are a direct expression of love. No matter how reserved the behavior, the ISFJ has depths of loyalty that should not be underestimated; to do so is to seriously miss the inner quality and strength unique to this type.

Work, for the ISFJ, is fun, rewarding, satisfying, and ultimately fulfilling. If it is not, the ISFJ will likely work harder in the hopes that things will improve. It must have been an ISFJ who said of heaven, “Whatever else is there, it

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

must involve work or it wouldn't be heaven." In general, a happy ISFJ is one who has most of the hours of the day filled in some sort of service to family, friends, or employer. For ISFJs, work builds character; it brings growth, maturity, satisfaction, and fulfillment. In fact, parenting, relating, mating, teaching, and managing are all forms of work through which ISFJs express their sense of duty and service.

As an older person, the ISFJ employs tried and true methods in every activity. Later years may allow some relaxing of the schedule and more extraverted expressions of the self's needs. Though such expressions are still tempered by a larger sense of social responsibility, this is still a refreshingly liberating opportunity for the ISFJ to pursue his or her own needs with a bit more zeal. ISFJs may enjoy some risk-taking as they grow older; by some other types' standards, however, they may still appear to be overly cautious. Retirement, if there is such a thing in ISFJ terms, is yet another thing to be filled with meaningful activity.

Famous likely ISFJs include Bess Truman and Nancy Reagan (whose loyalty to and defense of their respective husbands made them seem the real powers behind the presidential thrones); and "Radar" on *M*A*S*H** (who would spend endless hours dutifully waiting at the short wave radio for an important message, despite whatever chaos might be going on around him).

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