

# ENFP– Typewatching Profile

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## *Giving Life an Extra Squeeze*

ENFPs are generally described as dynamic, enthusiastic, highly skilled with people, affirming, and gregarious. The combined preferences of Extraversion, iNtuition, Feeling, and Perceiving give them an exceptional capacity for dealing with a variety of people, events, or challenges—often simultaneously.

ENFPs prefer to perceive the world through its possibilities (N) and translate these possibilities inter- and intrapersonally (F). All this takes place in lively interaction with the outside world (E), and their Perceiving attitude (P) keeps them open to a never-ending flow of alternatives in any situation.

The ENFP has a high need to be affirming of others—and to be affirmed. This drives them in such a way that they may appear overly positive, even insincere, in praise of other people’s simplest deeds. Craving such affirmations, ENFPs will overexert themselves—physically and psychologically—to please. They may also expend extra energy giving strokes to everyone and trying, at times desperately, to get strokes in return. It is not uncommon for ENFPs to work themselves into exhaustion while following an inspiration or seeking an approving response from someone important to them.

This ability to see the potential in people and be positive about them gives ENFPs a decided edge in interpersonal dynamics, especially when combined with their almost psychic awareness of what’s going on with people around them. Sometimes in their Extraverted enthusiasm, however, they may share some of these iNtuitive insights and be so accurate as to be intimidating rather than helpful to the people involved. These unsolicited but freely offered insights can often win them disapproval rather than approval, although that may only make the ENFP try harder the next time around.

Because of their enthusiasm for life, it is easy for ENFPs to rally support around a number of exciting ideas or causes. Unfortunately, somewhat like their first cousins, the ENTPs, ENFPs make more starts than finishes. So while a crowd may be attracted by an ENFP’s charisma, it may soon grow frustrated by the lack of organization and follow-through.

Gender differences can be significant for males because the qualities most associated with ENFPs are more traditionally attributed to females: sociability, spontaneity, and concern for other people. As a result, when an ENFP male “plays” into those natural preferences of his personality, he can find himself outside the male “establishment.” Ironically, this may set him up to overcompensate and behave in ways atypical for ENFPs—to be, for example, competitive or overly argumentative. Seeking group approval, he may get involved with contact sports or other “tough” activities, though he would really prefer to be elsewhere. ENFP males, somewhat more than other F males, may also fall into the trap of physical seduction as a way of establishing their masculinity. Indeed, both male and female ENFPs can be intellectually and physically seductive.

By virtue of their enthusiasm and generally accepting nature, ENFPs are highly resistant to categorizing and “putting people in boxes,” and they are equally resistant to being put in boxes themselves, since they enjoy their own multifaceted personalities. With a little bit of effort they can “get into another person’s moccasins” and identify with that individual’s thoughts and feelings so readily that they run the risk of virtually losing their own

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identity. This beautiful quality of effortlessly taking on both the characteristics and the problems of another type is seen by others as very supportive and accepting. However, it can become a problem to the degree that it leaves ENFPs adrift, wondering who they are and what they should be doing. Obviously, this tendency has a restlessness to it, as well as an unfinished quality that haunts ENFPs lifelong.

In a relationship, ENFPs are rarely complacent. While highly committed, they can never give up thinking that either “This relationship could be better if I worked harder” or “There’s a better relationship, still out there waiting for me.” Such ambiguity and tension can be disconcerting for mates who are of a different type, particularly Judgers and most especially Sensing-Thinking-Judgers.

Parenting is fun for the ENFP and with the ENFP. The home, while often not the world’s neatest, is a playground for fun, creative explorations. “The more the merrier” is the theme and each person and his or her differences must be affirmed. Expression, affirmation, and growth happen all the time. All life is a party and so even family chores must be converted to play in order to be worth accomplishing. If there is a family or individual job to do, it must either be put off (if it is boring) or involve others (so it becomes fun). The ENFP home is a gathering place for the neighborhood and friends. If the children are not ENFPs, they may not only misunderstand such a social whirl, they may also be confused or affronted by their parents’ “immature,” childlike behavior.

The basic theme of the ENFP’s life is self-expression. The 1960s emphasis on self-awareness and group dynamics, the conversation pits where talk of peace and love and “flower power” took place, epitomize the values of the ENFP. The more that people can be themselves—and be affirmed for being themselves—the more growing they will do and the more they will contribute to the good of society. ENFPs believe that and will give their energies to help others achieve their goals. It’s possible, however, for their enthusiasm to lead them in so many directions simultaneously that they can squander their best intentions, leading to frustration and self-punishment.

Obviously, relaxation—even in play—does not come easily to ENFPs. In fact, they almost have to “work at it.” ENFPs go in fits and starts, and so when they become excited, they lose all sense of time, physical needs, and anything else. They follow their enthusiasm until totally fatigued, then collapse. As a result, relaxation, unless as part of a creative adventure, may take a backseat, sometimes even at the expense of the ENFP’s physical well-being.

As children, ENFPs are a delight and yet often thoroughly exhausting and exasperating to parents. Everything around is material for daydreaming about who they are and might be. So, an upright vacuum cleaner becomes a radio microphone and the ENFP is a disc jockey. Tomorrow, a tree house will be built, and the ENFP is an architect, artist, painter, or interior decorator. Still another day, he or she may be program director for a large playground, responsible for many activities. All of this, while exciting for the ENFP, may be something of a merry-go-round for the parent, as the ENFP solicits parental approval and help in implementing each of these activities. While desperately wanting such approval, ENFP children, in their enthusiasm, can sometimes do things in direct conflict with the affirmation they’re seeking: talking incessantly instead of listening, for example, or losing something they were entrusted not to lose, messing up their rooms in the name of straightening, or coming home later than promised.

In their quest to be liked, ENFP children are hypersensitive to the criticism of others, especially playmates. With a tendency to personalize everything, they are easily crushed by a harsh remark, so that their trademark phrase could be: “Everyone is so mean to me!”

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ENFPs approach learning as they do everything else: it is a creative adventure that, if done well, will bring affirmation. They may be the ultimate apple-polishers. They want to be liked and they want to like the teacher, their classmates, the school, the administration, and everything else. As Extraverted-iNtuitive-Feelers, they generally do well academically and are people-pleasers. Interestingly, more than other types, they may suffer test phobias, because even those who do very well in class and know the material feel boxed in by fact-oriented exams that have only one “right” answer. On the other hand, they do well on essay tests, which give them the opportunity to integrate their knowledge into a bigger picture.

Family events for ENFPs are parties. If they are not, the ENFP will make them so. The Irish wake was probably designed by an ENFP who preferred to celebrate a life rather than mourn a death. One of the beauties of ENFPs is their ability to take an ordinary family event and, with almost no planning, using only the people and materials at hand, convert the occasion into a virtual work of art, an expression of affection or family affirmation that will be long remembered.

In this and many other ways, ENFPs are great improvisers. In the pursuit of pleasing others, their capabilities can be boundless. They may, for example, reach into the refrigerator and pull out whatever is at hand, and transform it into an impressive, spontaneous dinner, served with artistic flair. While this is clearly admirable, they still have a tendency to be hypercritical of their own performance. So after the dishes are done, they may decide that the dinner would have been better had they only, say, planned a day earlier, or remembered to defrost the brownies. Such “what-if” speculation can haunt ENFPs, turning otherwise successful occasions into opportunities for needless self-criticism.

For the ENFP, work, too, must be play or it is probably not worth doing. Worthwhile tasks are those that affirm and enlarge the self and involve more fun than drudgery. Like other EP’s, ENFPs have a great deal of difficulty settling on just one career, for three reasons: They truly believe they can do most anything they want; the search for ever new fields to master is always more fun than remaining in a career already conquered; and they usually *can* do almost anything they set their minds to. Unfortunately, their career choices, like so many other things, may result from trying to please others. To please parents, for example, ENFPs may find themselves in careers involving the kinds of skills that, over the long haul, may become frustrating or stressful for them. They generally find more satisfaction and greater rewards in careers that involve human services, such as family medicine, psychology, teaching, and theology, than in such fields as engineering or accounting. As managers, they are far more advocates and mentors than “bosses,” believing that their role is to help everyone achieve their individual goals.

In later years, the ENFP may cultivate the more objective, grounded (Sensing) side of life. In combination with the opportunity to take more time for quiet reflection (Introversion), these preferences may give greater stability to the ENFP’s life of enthusiastic work and play. Good growth will allow this settling process to take place in a way that the ENFP will find welcoming.

Famous likely ENFPs include Will Rogers (who “never met a man I didn’t like” and whose entire performance each night consisted of appearing onstage and responding to the audience), Tevye, the main character in *Fiddler on the Roof* (whose life was one of hope and possibilities in the face of austere oppression and unsettling change), and Charlie Brown’s dog, Snoopy (whose imaginative imitations range from vultures through snakes to little kids; whose leadership style among his bird friends consists of setting a good example; and whose great ENFP lines include “I think I’m allergic to mornings” and “I’m going to get organized—tomorrow”).

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