

ESFP– Typewatching Profile

You Only Go Around Once in Life

Of all the sixteen types, ESFPs are most in touch with the here and now and live primarily for the moment. As with ESTPs, their slogan could easily be “Act now, pay later.” As Extraverted-Sensors, their only certainty is the here and now. They personify the bird-in-the-hand-is-worth-two-in-the-bush philosophy. When the bird is in hand, they have all they need; when there is no bird, their energies are focused on getting one. While their Introverted counterparts might reflect a bit before acting, ESFPs’ are driven by their Extraversion to act first to achieve the immediately tangible.

ESFPs may be the inspiration for Madison Avenue pitchmen: they exemplify such slogans as “You only go around once in life...” and “If I only have one life to live, let me live it as a blonde.”

Their focus on the immediate leaves them with a low tolerance for procedures, routines, and anything else that stands in the way of immediate gratification. The combination of Extraversion, Sensing, and Feeling drives ESFPs to make each moment a successful interpersonal experience. They are very accepting of others and believe people should “Live and let live.” So strong is their need for harmony that they constantly tend to accentuate the positive, denying and repressing anything that is less than positive, often employing diversionary tactics to circumvent a conflict. If an argument erupts, ESFPs may quickly start a conversation about something pleasant, hoping that the combatants will join in and forget their differences.

Although Extraverted-Sensors are the ultimate realists, with a firm grasp of the outer world, they tend to lose their way very quickly in the nether regions of their inner world of abstraction. They tend to experience it as an ominous place in whose coil they become quickly enmeshed. Like their ESTP first cousins, given half a second to speculate, they can proceed to the worst possible conclusion. A mate or guest who is late for dinner is presumed, after a moment’s reflection, to be killed en route; when the guest then shows up and offers a perfectly plausible excuse, it will be viewed with distrust and suspicion. The imagination of the ESFP tends to run wild if given half a chance.

All of this gives ESFPs an uncanny skill for making life a three-ring circus, juggling many activities and people, and, for the most part, enjoying the hustle and bustle, and the spotlight that is on them. Unfortunately, they have low tolerance for those times when the circus lights are down or the curtain is closed. Their need for action can earn them negative labels like “flighty,” “hyperactive,” or even “egotistical,” which may appear to be accurate even when they are not. In the presence of an ESFP, one often feels positive, enthused, and excited, albeit somewhat tired and out of breath from trying to keep pace and follow each new dynamic as it surfaces.

Gender has a lot to do with how ESFPs are viewed by others. Female ESFPs, unfortunately, are often cast as “dizzy blondes” (whatever their hair color), while male ESFPs are viewed, at best, as “spacey” and, at worst, as wimps. Both males and females constantly bemoan the fact that “no one takes me seriously.”

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

The characteristics usually linked with ESFPs are considered more traditionally female than male, such as “works well with children” and “enjoys serving others” as well as “conflict-avoidant” and “fuzzy-headed.” As a result, when a male ESFP demonstrates some or all of these traits, his masculinity may be suspect. Because of their tendency to be somewhat abrupt and quick-spoken, ESFPs can be seen at first blush as harsh—although in the long run, they are caring and sensitive—so an ESFP male sometimes must work harder at giving in to his natural “soft” side without feeling his masculinity is threatened.

In general, both male and female ESFPs are often misperceived. The spontaneity and immediacy of their nature (Perceiving) and their firm grounding in “what is” (Sensing) as opposed to “what can be” may make the ESFP appear lacking in depth, direction, and purpose. But this is not the case. It’s just that their depth, direction, and purpose are always interpreted in light of the demands of the existing moment. “I don’t need a long-range plan if I make the most of what I’m doing right now,” they are likely to say. It is precisely such sentiments that cause them to be perceived as shallow.

Like all Extraverted-Perceivers, ESFPs make more starts than finishes, and it is therefore vital that they somehow develop a system of benchmarks against which their accomplishments and progress can be measured. This will act as a check on the ESFP’s tendency to live only for the excitement of the moment, with no real long-term satisfaction, or sense of self-worth.

ESFP parents bring their three-ring circus into their homes as well as their jobs. Multidirected, they can pack into a single evening for their children everything from Little League to dance class, a church meeting, and a home-cooked dinner. While this can be very exciting for all involved, it also results in a feeling of overextension and scatteredness that can ultimately cause guilt and self-flagellation over all the things left undone. (One of those things left “undone” can, unfortunately, be paying attention to a mate.) Even when they themselves are not overextended, ESFP parents can make their children feel that way, especially children of a different type. In fact, ESFPs can seem like competition to their children. After all, as believers in “living for the moment,” they’d much prefer to be one of “the kids” and get involved in an activity than to sit on the sidelines as spectators with all the other parents. All of this makes ESFP parents very popular with the neighborhood kids (and their parents) but may lead an ESFP’s child to conclude that “Dad doesn’t care about me personally, he’s always off with my friends. There’s never time for just me.” For the child, there are times when the circus needs to stop. But even children who find life with ESFP parents tiring will enjoy their warm, supportive, easygoing ways.

One possible drawback to being so easygoing is that it can frustrate the family with not enough restraints, direction, and general discipline, to say nothing of “thinking about the future” –any or all of which may be important to family members of different types. Judging children, for example, while appreciating their parents’ fun-loving nature, may go to bed frustrated, hungering for a plan, a schedule, an overall pattern for their lives.

The thrill-a-minute intensity ESFPs bring to parenting also characterizes their intimate relationships. They are good at translating the excitement of falling in love, or the intensity of commitments, into each day’s experiences. Today’s passion, for example, may be tomorrow’s home-cooked meal, and the next day’s “special surprise.” All of which, while exciting, may be misunderstood by a mate of a different type. An Introverted mate may wonder why the relationship needs constant external affirmation; the Judging mate may long for less upheaval and more stability.

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As with everything else, relaxation for an ESFP involves “doing.” Remember: to spend too much time alone or reflecting can lead an Extraverted-Sensing-Perceiver to leap to all sorts of bad conclusions. So, “doing anything” beats “doing nothing.” “Relaxation” can include a great many demanding activities that other types might not find so relaxing. But for the ESFP, such activities provide not only fun and relaxation but the chance to do more of the many things they’ve “always wanted to do.” Going to the beach for a relaxing weekend may result in a variety of activities that may include exploring all the interesting shops on the boardwalk or gathering a multitude of shells and making them into gifts for friends.

An ESFP child must often struggle to be understood. The ESFP child sees himself as entertainer, dancer, garbage collector, car washer, train engineer, the identities changing daily. As a result, these children can often be seen as hyperactive, constantly needing strokes and affirmation. The plus side is that they are very capable of self-entertainment—though their activities may not necessarily meet with parental approval.

The need to be “doing” also applies to learning. When learning is fun and social and a chance to entertain or be entertained, the ESFP excels. When it begins to become more abstract and theoretical, the ESFP starts to withdraw and ultimately loses interest. While Sensing-Perceiving types tend not to do well in college (which requires considerably more facility for the abstract and the conceptual than earlier education) and often drop out before graduation, ESFPs do well once they learn that college can be a four-year party at parents’ expense. They may not excel academically, but they manage to perform well enough to stay in school, making the most of campus social life.

At bedtime, ESFPs, like other Extraverted children, would rather fall asleep at the top of the stairs than miss any excitement that may be going on downstairs. And if any of the activities can serve as an opportunity to be in the spotlight for one more moment, the ESFP child is ready, willing, and able. Therefore, family rules, bedtime rituals, study hours, and all other regimens will be stretched to the limit—as will be the patience of the parents.

ESFPs generally make family events exciting and entertaining, though they generally are “happenings” rather than carefully planned rituals. The lack of planning can cause family members of different types (particularly Judges) to become highly stressed as the event approaches, although they may greatly enjoy the outcome. ESFPs can work wonders at the last minute, pulling together a successful party in mere minutes, often to the consternation of those watching on the sidelines.

Career choices for ESFPs often include service to humanity such as teaching, especially elementary school, or working in the arts or theater. They love athletics and anything else that provides relatively instant gratification and allows for self-expression, concern for others, and a challenge to accomplish, improve, and grow. Conversely, careers requiring adherence to rigid routine or other kinds of constraints will not only have low appeal for ESFPs but, in the long haul, will be very frustrating. They are challenged by things that are different, fun, and require some special effort to accomplish.

In later life, the hunger for the unknown and the unexpected does not end. This may best be illustrated through a woman we know who, when her husband died, met with a minister the night before his funeral. When asked by the clergyman whether there was anything special she wanted included in the service, she thought briefly, looked up, and replied, “Surprise me.”

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Famous likely ESFPs include people who are viewed as flighty by all but those who know them well. The character played by Gracie Allen—flighty to everyone but George Burns, who viewed her as the backbone of their team—could easily be an ESFP. So could Edith Bunker, seen by the audience as flaky, called “dingbat” by husband Archie, who nonetheless recognized that she was his Rock of Gibraltar. Both of these women viewed the world in very concrete, literal-minded terms, which made for much of the comedy of their roles. They were usually to be found in the midst of a variety of activities, juggling several people’s problems and doing so in caring ways, accepting of others’ perceived eccentricities.

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