

MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR GENERAL PROFILE

INFP

Personality

INFPs present a calm, pleasant face to the world and are seen as reticent and even shy. Although they demonstrate a cool reserve toward others, inside they are anything but distant. They have a capacity for caring which is not always found in other types. They care deeply – indeed, passionately – about a few special persons or a cause. One word that captures this type is idealistic. At times, this characteristic leaves them feeling isolated, especially since INFPs are found in only 1 percent of the general population. INFPs have a profound sense of honor derived from internal values. The INFP is the Prince or Princess of mythology, the King's Champion, Defender of the Faith, and guardian of the castle. Sir Galahad and Joan of Arc are male and female prototypes of an INFP. To understand INFPs their cause must be understood, for they are willing to make unusual sacrifices for someone or something believed in.

INFPs seek unity in their lives, unity of body and mind, emotions and intellect. They often have a subtle tragic motif running through their lives, but others seldom detect this inner minor key. The deep commitment of INFPs to the positive and the good causes them to be alert to the negative and the evil, which can take the form of a fascination with the profane. Thus, INFPs may live a paradox, drawn toward purity and unity but looking over the shoulder toward the sullied and desecrated. When INFPs believe that they have yielded to an impure temptation, they may be given to acts of self-sacrifice in atonement. The atonement, however, is within the INFP, who does not feel compelled to make public the issue.

INFPs prefer the valuing process over the purely logical. They respond to the beautiful versus the ugly, the good versus the bad, and the moral versus the immoral. Impressions are gained in a fluid, global, diffused way. Metaphors and similes come naturally but may be strained. INFPs have a gift for interpreting symbols, as well as creating them, and thus often write in lyric fashion. They may demonstrate a tendency to take deliberate liberties with logic. Unlike the NT, they see logic as something optional. INFPs also may, at times, assume an unwarranted familiarity with a domain, because their global, impressionistic way of dealing with reality may have failed to register a sufficient number of details for mastery. INFPs may have difficulty thinking in terms of a conditional framework; they see things as either real or fancied, and are impatient with the hypothetical.

Career

At work, INFPs are adaptable, welcome new ideas and new information, are well aware of people and their feelings, and relate well to most, albeit with some psychological distance. INFPs dislike telephone interruptions and work well alone, as well as with others. They are patient with complicated situations, but impatient with routine details. They can make errors of fact, but seldom of values. Their career choices may be toward the ministry, missionary work, college teaching, psychiatry, architecture, and psychology – and away from business. They seem willing and usually are able to apply themselves scholastically to gain the necessary training for professional work, often doing better in college than in high school. They have a natural interest in scholarly activities and demonstrate, as do the other NF's, a remarkable facility for languages. Often they hear a calling to go forth into the world to help others; they seem willing to make the necessary personal sacrifices involved in responding to that call, even if it means asking others to do likewise. INFPs can make outstanding novelists and character actors, for they are able to efface their own personalities in their portrayal of a character in a way other types cannot.

Home

As mates, INFPs have a deep commitment to their pledges. They like to live in harmony and may go to great lengths to avoid constant conflicts. They are sensitive to the feelings of others and enjoy pleasing those they care for. They may find it difficult to reconcile a romantic, idealized concept of conjugal life with the realities of everyday living with another person. At times, in fact, INFPs may seem fearful of exuberant attainment, afraid that current advances may have to be paid for with later sacrifices. The devil is sure to get his due if the INFP experiences too freely of success, or beauty, or health, or wealth, or knowledge. And thus, INFPs guard against giving way to relaxing in the happiness of mating. They may have difficulty in expressing affection directly, but communicate interest and affection indirectly. For INFPs, their home is their castle. As parents, they are fierce in protection of home and family and are devoted to the welfare of family members. They have a strong capacity for devotion, sympathy, and adaptability in their relationships, and thus are easy to live with. They are loyal to their family and, although they may dream of greener pastures, if they stray into those pastures they soon locate the nettles. The almost preconscious conviction that pleasure must be paid for with pain can cause a sense of uneasiness in the family system of an INFP, who may transmit an air of being ever vigilant against invasion. In the routine rituals of daily living, INFPs tend to be compliant and may even prefer having decisions made on their behalf, until their value system is violated! Then INFPs dig in their heels and will not budge from ideals. Life with an INFP will go gently along for long periods, until an ideal is struck and violated. Then an INFP will resist and insist.

Midlife

At midlife INFPs may want to increase mastery of intellectual interests, perhaps taking advanced degrees in a chosen profession. They also may want to explore the sensual side of their natures, expanding their aesthetic appreciations to include physical sensory appreciations. Extending social activities and contacts may offer new horizons for INFPs, but they will have to guard against over extension psychologically, for before, during, and after midlife the vulnerability and sensitivity of the INFP will continue, and he or she can easily become emotionally drained.

MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR MATING PROFILE

INFP

Mates

The INFP questor probably has more problems in mating than any other type. Let us be mindful of the relative infrequency: about 1 ¼ percent, say two and a half million people in the USA. Their problem lies in their primary outlook on life. “Life,” says the INFP, “is a very serious matter.” Now when a person makes his life a kind of crusade or a series of crusades, then there’s bound to be some taxing of the spouse. If the INFP takes the other tack, the “monastic” (and the same person can tack back and forth – now a crusader, now a monastic), the spouse will find himself again taxed, trying to draw the monastic out of his dark meditative cave.

The opposites of our crusading monastic seem well equipped for this alternating-phase taxation: ENTJ and ESTJ. Both are anchored in the real world with a vengeance. The ENTJ marshalling his or her forces toward distant objective, the ESTJ administering in a solid, dependable, and traditional way whatever is his or hers to administer. Both provide anchorage to a person who might otherwise get lost in meditation or in crusade. Selection of a mate of irrelevant form (e.g., an ISTP artisan or an ESTP promoter) would not be the wisest of tactics in so serious a business as life.

Courting

If ever a person died for love, it was sure to have been an Apollonian (NF). Romeo and Juliet, both NFs, could not face the prospect of life without each other and so chose to die in a way which was symbolic of their single minded and eternal commitment to each other. Other famous lovers, such as Heloise and Abelard, the Brownings, Antony and Cleopatra, Beth the landlord’s daughter and her highwayman, all created a work of art in their courtships. This is not surprising, since one of the arts at which the NF is skilled is that of creating the romantic relationship. In fact, the term sex would seem somehow crude when used in discussing the NF; love better captures their appreciation of the physical relationship. Both the NF female and male respond to their mates with sympathy, tenderness, and frequent, passionate expressions of love, both verbal and nonverbal. Possessing facility with language, NFs are able too express nuances of emotions that may escape other types. NFs are not afraid of using poetry, music, and quotations to enhance their courting relationships; the tokens of affection and dedication. NFs have a flair for dramatizing their courtships, making each the perfect love. A storybook flavor permeates their courtship behavior. The NF suitor is certain he will live happily ever after, and transmits this certainty to the object of romantic pursuit. The ideal of the perfect love that will never die motivates the NFs in their search for a partner who can relate spiritually as well as physically. Seeing their identity as mate is a major part of their personality.

Just as the possible rather than the actual lures NFs in other parts of their lives, so do the possibilities in relationships inspire them. When a relationship is being established, the recipient of the NF's attention is apt to be the center of his world. The pursuit is given almost single-minded attention and no effort is spared in the wooing. An undying love is in the offing, and once the physical relationship is consummated (for the male NF) or the words of love spoken (for a female NF) the relationship will be blessed with romantic bliss. Both NF males and females are likely to be blind to any flaws in their beloved in the early stages of romance. Life will be happy ever after (although the details of this happy ever after are usually not explored in depth). The romantic gesture and the idealization of the relationship are characteristic of the courting behavior of the NF. The dream is sometimes preferred to reality. At times, the fantasy of the sexual encounter cannot survive the reality of consummation, especially for the male NF.

Sex

It appears female NFs are more able to sustain the depth of romanticism involved with a relationship longer than male NFs. Once the physical side of the relationship is acted out, the male NF can lose interest and turn to another fantasy. In a Quixotic way, he seems to be compelled to pursue the impossible dream of a larger than life, giant-screen goddess who will be Madonna, mistress, lover, whore, mother, daughter, and wife. His real -life mate is not always able to measure up. The NF male, in hot pursuit, is likely to express a love which is undying but which can vanish all too soon in the harsh light of the morning after. The female NF does not demonstrate this characteristic; rather, she is likely to increase her dedication after the physical relationship is consummated. She becomes more and more devoted, continuing to romanticize the relationship and believe in its perfection, to give small transactions profound significance, to dramatize the interactions with her mate, to be willing to die for love. She seems seldom disappointed in the sexual act; orgasmic response on her part is seen as inconsequential compared to the pleasure of giving pleasure to her mate. What matters is that he is fulfilled and satisfied. For the male NF, ennui can set in as a result of familiarity; for the female NF, this is not as likely to happen. The SP can say, and mean, with Dorothy Parker, "I'll be true as long as you, and not a moment after...," the female NF is more likely to have as a part of her mating identity the image of falling in love once and for a lifetime. The fact that his does not always work out does not negate the possibility of the dream coming true. Fortunately, both male and female NFs have a capacity for deep affection and caring over and above sexual expression and out of this capacity can grow a lasting, satisfactory relationship.

In the last decade or so a curious phenomenon has occurred, perhaps arising from the female NFs characteristic of maintaining her romantic dream even in the face of a contradictory reality. The group that spearheaded the sexual revolution were the female NFs. It has been the female NFs who have said "NO" to the double sexual (and other) standards. It has been the female NFs who have decided that they are not sure they will be true, even as long as their male partners. Somehow female NFs have decided that their vision of a better, more satisfactory mating relationship can be actualized. They seem willing, in ever growing numbers, to take whatever risks are necessary to find that relationship, either in or out of a legal contract. In fact, more and more the NF females seem reluctant to tie themselves down to a legal arrangement, putting off the urgings their housemates, asking that both wait until she is sure she is doing the right thing. More and more NF females seem to be willing to bear their children outside a legal arrangement and to raise them alone. This is not to say that other types are not also involved in this movement, but it is the NFs, along with a limited number of NT females, who provide the vanguard of the revolution. Instead of being ready and willing to die for love, the current NF female seems to be willing to live for the possibility of a better way of relating to mates.

Interpersonal

Both male and female NFs are likely to be charming mates, and a source of continuing warmth, support, and understanding. They are usually ready to lend sympathy to a mate when the outside world turns hostile and are not apt to use that moment to point out the errors of a mate's ways, something which other types might be tempted to do. The NFs are generally skilled socially, and people usually feel wanted and well hosted in their homes. They often are experts in the arts of appreciation, especially in the area of personal characteristics, and they are apt to be generous in expressing these appreciations to their mate. It is probably the NF who is the most loving, dedicated, affectionate, appreciative mate, and is unstinting in the expression of these emotions, both to mate and to children. Their conversations, particularly those of extraverted NFs, are apt to be sprinkled with terms of endearment, especially in private. The NF can be as extravagant as an SP when expressing love through the media of gifts, but the NF is more likely to present the gift in private, and select with extraordinary care something with special or even symbolic meaning. NFs, both male and female, usually remember birthdays, anniversaries, and the like without being prompted, or at most needing only a hint. If in turn, the NFs' milestones are not heeded, they are deeply hurt, as deeply as they are appreciative when theirs are noticed.

Although NFs. Especially the male NF, become restless if others (including mates, children, or parents) are dependent, NFs have in their own personalities characteristics that promote this dependency. They pride themselves on being sensitive to others and caring about them. It is almost impossible for NFs to be unaware of others' psychological needs. Yet the NF becomes restless when these ties begin to bind, as they do when the amount of emotional input becomes a psychological overload for the NF. At this point the NF can seem cruel, insisting unexpectedly that the other "stand on his own two feet." This shift in

attitude is usually abrupt and the person who heretofore believed that he was very special in the eyes of the NF now finds himself apparently rejected. The NF does not mean to be unkind; he or she is simply disconnecting a relationship which can no longer be handled – in spite of the reality that the NF created this dependent relationship through expressions of empathy and unique understanding. Building empathic relationships is second nature to this temperament, a master of the art of intimacy. But as those around the NF want more and more attention, more and more expressions of this unusual appreciation, more and more signals of deep affection, the NF mate becomes restless and resentful of pressures to deliver what had seemed promised; the ideal love, the perfect friendship, complete understanding, and total acceptance.

Social

A danger an NF faces in his intimate relationships is that he will move from relationship to relationship rather than making the necessary effort to develop those already existing. The NF's tendency to experience anticipation as more attractive than consummation can cause him to use his energies pursuing the dream at the expense of what is actually available. Once an NF believes that he or she knows all there is to know about another, disinterest sets in; restlessness and a sense of boredom develop. NFs, as do other types, want a certain amount of variety and change in their lives. Other types, however, may seek this through intellectual pursuits, adjustment of living routines, vacations, new activities. The NF is most vulnerable to seeking this through searching out new relationships, more often than not at the expense of deepening those already existing.

A quality an NF can bring to intimate relationships is an extraordinary sensitivity and ability to communicate emotionally. In the affective areas the NF is without equal. No other type is as sympathetic to others as is the NF. As mates they can be a source of warmth, appreciation, and support which other types have difficulty emulating.

Domestic

After the honeymoon is over, the mate of an NF can feel let down when the reality of living with the NF may be in some contrast with what was anticipated. The discovery by the mate that the NF is, after all, less than perfect often results in feelings of resentment ill-deserved by the NF, but nonetheless real. NF mates themselves are in a dilemma. They are caught up in the romanticized expectations of the psychological and sexual experience generated in their own perceptions and encouraged by others. The fantasy is more than likely to be exaggerated by both the NF and the mate, and it is a common experience for NFs to express that anticipation was more delightful than consummation. The actual sexual act, in particular, can be less than anticipated, for, more often than not, the NF's romantic nature will not allow him or her to acquire sexual expertise through study. Rather they see themselves as somehow supposed to know the appropriate loving and tender approach intuitively. Consulting scientific studies is seen as cold and objective and somehow destructive. Thus, the actual sexual relationship may be a let down initially and a disappointment to both partners until both acquire the necessary competency.

Although NFs are almost hypersensitive to the moods of their mates, especially if they are also introverts; they may not always be willing to deal positively with the other's emotional reactions. NFs report that they find their own emotional circuits often so overloaded with their own concerns that they cannot deal with the emotional experiences of others who are especially close to them, particularly when experiences involve conflict and hurt. Thus, the mates of NFs can see their mates responding to relative strangers with a degree of warmth and acceptance that may not be available to them.

As parents, NFs are sensitive to the viewpoint of their children, sometimes to the point of siding with them in a way, which reinforces the youngsters' antisocial, self-defeating behaviors. An NF parent, for example, can rush to rescue a child from consequences of his wrong doing and, in the process, not permit the child to develop necessary skills which he needs to deal with the realities of a less protective world.

NF mates may have difficulty detaching themselves from their jobs or social demands in order to preserve time for family. In this the NF is like the SP. They have some difficulty saying no to attractive offers and thus may neglect priorities. Whoever is there and demanding time gets it, even though others may be waiting elsewhere.