

ENFP

(About 8.1% of the U.S. population)

ENFPs are generally described as dynamic, enthusiastic, affirming, gregarious, and highly skilled with people. The combined preferences of Extraversion, iNtuition, Feeling, and Perceiving give them an exceptional capacity to act as *catalysts*. They have a natural ability to deal effectively with various people, events, or challenges – often simultaneously.

ENFP Personality Highlights

- Their **Extraversion** promotes lively interactions with the outside world and a zest for life.
- Their **iNtuition** allows them to perceive the world through its possibilities.
- Their **Feeling** focuses these possibilities through the lens of their potential effect on themselves and others.
- Their **Perceiving** attitude keeps them open to a never-ending flow of alternatives in any situation.

ENFPs have a high need to affirm others and to be affirmed. In fact, they may sometimes appear to be overly positive or even insincere in praise of others' simplest deeds. Craving such affirmation within their own lives, ENFPs may do too much – physically and psychologically – to please. They may spend too much energy giving strokes to everyone and trying to get strokes in return. ENFPs are inspiring to be around, but they may work themselves to exhaustion while following an inspiration or seeking approval from someone who is important to them.

Because of their enthusiasm for life, it is easy for ENFPs to rally support around any number of exciting ideas or causes. They are great “starters.” Unfortunately, somewhat like their first cousins the ENTPs, ENFPs make more starts than finishes. You can count on an ENFP's charisma to attract a crowd. But let another personality type handle the organization and follow-through.

Here are some other characteristics. ENFPs...

- Have the ability to always see the potential in people and be positive about them.
- Possess a decided edge in interpersonal dynamics, especially when combined with their almost psychic awareness of what is going on with people around them.
- May be so accurate with their iNtuitive insights that they can be intimidating rather than helpful to the people involved.

ENFPs in Personal Life

Because they have an enthusiastic and generally accepting nature, ENFPs resist categorizing and putting people in boxes. They also resist being put in boxes because they enjoy their own multifaceted personalities. With little effort they can get into another person's shoes and identify with that individual's thoughts and feelings. 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. But this tendency has a restlessness to it, as well as an unfinished quality that may follow ENFPs throughout their lives.

ENFPs at Home

The basic theme of the ENFP's life is self-expression. They believe that the more people can be themselves – and be affirmed for being themselves – the more they will grow, accomplish, and contribute to the good of society. ENFPs will happily give their energies to help others achieve their goals. It is 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.

Family events for ENFPs are parties – and if they're 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 and using only the people and materials at hand – convert it into a virtual work of art, an expression of affection, or a memorable family affirmation.

In this and many other ways, ENFPs are great improvisers. In pursuit of pleasing others, their capabilities can be boundless. They may, for example, reach into the refrigerator, pull out whatever is at hand, and transform it into an impressive, spontaneous dinner served with artistic flair. But while others may clearly admire what they have accomplished, ENFPs will still tend to be hypercritical of their own performance.

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. Positive personal growth has the potential to allow this settling process to take place in a way that the ENFP will welcome.

ENFPs as Children

In their quest to be liked, ENFP children are sensitive to and supportive of others. They can also be hypersensitive to criticism, especially from playmates. With a tendency to personalize everything, they are easily crushed by a harsh remark. This sensitivity extends into adulthood, causing the ENFP (like most NFs) to see a personal attack when none was intended. This tendency can be confusing and frustrating to others, particularly the Thinking (T) types.

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 (ENFs), they generally do well academically. Interestingly, more than other types they may suffer from test phobias. 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.

ENFPs as Parents

Parenting is fun for and with an 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's differences will be affirmed. Expression, affirmation, and growth happen all the time. Life is a party and so even family chores must be converted to play to be worth doing. 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 usually a happy gathering place for the neighborhood and friends.

ENFPs in Professional Life

The ENFP's characteristics – effervescence, enthusiasm, and spontaneity – aren't usually considered to be those of top corporate managers, but ENFPs do very well in executive roles. At their best they bring a refreshing alternative style to top management and decision-making.

As with ENTPs, ENFPs can exhibit wide mood swings – almost within the same moment – and may experience "higher highs" and "lower lows" in the process. Nevertheless, they tend to bring enthusiasm and energy to most activities; this can be highly contagious, especially to those they lead. If there is a problem, it is that ENFPs can be so skilled at flying by the seat of their pants and doing a lot of different things fairly easily, they may neglect to make preparations.

ENFPs as Leaders

The ENFP leads by the imaginative use of ideas and enthusiastically rallying the troops to achieve stated objectives. They tend to be adaptable and collaborative when working with others. They actively engage people in democratic decision-making while promoting their values of growth and well-being. Innovative problem-solvers, ENFPs try to find the basic good in those involved and promote a new pathway toward a solution. They are masterful at making connections between events, people, and situations; they communicate insights quickly and passionately. ENFPs are more concerned with their ideals and relationships with people than with the structures or procedures needed to execute given tasks. This strength, when overdone, can derail them if they fail to focus on the important details needed to implement a plan.

ENFPs are quite productive when allowed to work by themselves. But those who depend on ENFPs for guidance can become frustrated by their poor ability to manage time, work flow, and quantity. This can create tremendous stress for everyone around them. Another constant plague is mixed signals: starting one thing and then getting redirected, misdirected, or losing interest altogether. Again, this can be quite frustrating to colleagues and subordinates. ENFPs who lead organizations will constantly generate great ideas or alternatives, but may not understand the nitty-gritty involved in implementation. This is potentially a source of frustration, especially to Judgers (Js).

ENFPs have the ability to empower others and it is one of their most impressive contributions to the workplace. Unlike control-obsessed Thinking-Judgers (TJs), ENFPs easily encourage freedom and independence. When they use persuasion, they can be good managers – getting work done through others while making them feel vital and useful in the process. There are some areas of work where ENFPs need to feel in charge, which may be different for each person. But as a general rule, they are

thrilled about and revel in others' accomplishments. In the process ENFPs do not hesitate to give credit where credit is due. This can be inspirational, to say the least. Inspiration, rather than control, is the key to the ENFP's management style.

ENFPs as Employees

While ENFPs can make quick decisions in response to opportunities that match the "ideal," they may agonize over choosing the one right thing. They can get overwhelmed by all of the options they see if they are not thoroughly in touch with their values. ENFPs generate possibilities based on the global impressions, feelings, and emotional tone they read in a situation. They respond to their immediate impressions, and will either take action accordingly or put off a decision if their personal values are not involved. Their decisions are based on what they perceive to be individually and universally important.

For ENFPs, it is usually more exciting to engage in several projects at once and to have more than one way to accomplish each of them. Like other Extraverted-Perceivers (EPs), ENFPs are "idea people" who love to come up with new ways to handle boring routines and slow-moving projects. They may find it more exciting to generate alternatives than to actually complete the task at hand.

Another asset is the ENFP's people skills. As a rule, they give strokes freely and are responsive to others' needs. They generally find time to pause and help, affirm, listen, or do whatever else is needed to get someone unstuck and back into the swing of things. They tend to feel loyal to those who are responsive to their own enthusiastic way of relating, which then generates more loyalty throughout the organization.

ENFPs' Workplace Stressors

For ENFPs, stress generally comes from those areas of their lives that cannot be converted into play or fun. As a task or responsibility drags on and becomes increasingly routine, they can become pensive and moody. When a great deal of structure is demanded of ENFPs, they can become excessively rigid, giving way to behaviors very different from their normal enthusiasm and effervescence. Filling out income tax forms, paying bills, working too much alone, or being compelled to meet specific deadlines are the kinds of tasks that are stressful to ENFPs. And these tasks can make them quite stressful to be around.

A happy work environment is very important to ENFPs; without it they can waste a great deal of company time on the wrong issues. Their natural ability to identify with others can mire them in unconstructive bitching sessions. Or they may respond to a stressful workplace by avoiding issues, certain tasks or people, or even coming to work. It is an ENFP trait to become absorbed with others' personal problems, so they suffer in sympathy when others are unhappy at work.

Their hunger for the new and different can lead ENFPs to respond to the brushfires of the moment, sometimes neglecting their own responsibilities. This potentially misplaced enthusiasm can lead to wide mood swings and may result in any of the three physical maladies common to both ENFPs and ENTPs: headaches, upper back and neck pain, and extreme fatigue.

ENFPs' Careers

For the ENFP, worthwhile tasks are those that affirm and enlarge the self and involve more fun than drudgery. Like other Extraverted-Perceivers (EPs), ENFPs have a great deal of difficulty settling on just one career for three reasons: (1) the search for ever-new fields to master is always more fun than remaining in a career already conquered, (2) they truly believe they can do almost anything they want, and (3) they usually *can* do anything they set their mind to. Unfortunately, their career choices may go astray as a result of trying to please others. They generally will find more satisfaction and greater rewards in careers that involve human services than in fields such as engineering or accounting. As managers, they are most likely to be happy as advocates and mentors, helping others to achieve their individual goals.

ENFPs can be successful in many different careers. But their greatest reward will come from careers that allow free and nonbureaucratic response in some sort of service to humanity. ENFPs excel especially in independent sales, public relations, pediatrics, psychiatry, general family medicine, teaching, customer service, and almost anything entrepreneurial.

Summary

ENFPs are enthusiastic, positively focused, people-oriented team members and leaders. They are passionate about causes, especially those that provide benefits to other people. ENFPs are often an inspiration to others and willingly take time to help other people grow and develop. This focus on helping others may lead ENFPs to neglect themselves and their own tasks (“I know, but they need me!”). They may be hypersensitive to criticism and often avoid conflict by withdrawing or changing the subject.

Adapted from the writing and teaching of Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen.

ENFPs On a Team

Naturally Bring to a Team

- A talent for grasping the significance of a situation, revealing truths, and motivating others; their relationships are about getting involved at a personal, empathic level
- Tend to be great at people skills: listening, facilitating, training, motivating, recruiting, counseling, and understanding others' perspectives
- Keep communication channels open to make the best of a situation
- An understanding of others that fosters collaborative teamwork while encouraging individual contributions to the team

Teamwork Style

- Highly people-oriented, they lead with their energy and enthusiasm for causes
- Get involved with individuals on a personal level, inspiring and facilitating them to find and reach their full potential
- Focus on others' concerns; listen and negotiate when differences threaten them

Potential Blind Spots

- May make strong assumptions and projections that are incorrect
- Can easily get bored with routine, becoming depressed and failing to complete ongoing projects
- Might focus so much on interpersonal issues in a situation that they forget the task and pull the team off track
- May be seen as too talkative or as randomly interjecting ideas

To Help Them Succeed

- Provide a warm, understanding, and people-oriented work environment
- Provide minimal insistence on rules, systems, and procedures (mechanical restrictions)
- Honor their need to authentically live with themselves
- Help them recognize that what is easy to conceive often takes longer to achieve

Adapted from [Quick Guide to the 16 Personality Types in Organizations](#) by Sue A. Cooper, Roger R. Pearman, et al.

Managing the ENFP

WORK LABEL – CATALYST

- Warm and enthusiastic
- Charming and interesting
- People-oriented
- Knows everyone and everything going on
- Able to do almost anything they want

STRENGTHS

- Creative
- Imaginative
- Communicator
- Energetic
- Spontaneous

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

- Develop self-discipline to be true to self
- Look on the objective side
- Recognize value of others' motives
- Take time alone to set goals
- Structure time to take care of details

TO FUNCTION BEST ENFPs NEED: Acceptance and appreciation for their unique contribution and creativity. Harmony, care, and support for ideas. Recognition, appreciation, and a lot of encouragement.

ENFPs ARE FRUSTRATED BY: Criticism and cold logic. Impersonal attitudes and doing things by the book. A lack of flexibility. A lack of positive feedback and dull routine.

ENFPs IRRITATE OTHERS BY: Getting too excited. Taking an emotional stand. Being too anxious to please. Being moralistic and illogical.

ENFPs VALUE: Recognition, approval, and relationships on their terms.

ON A TEAM: They can be great integrators.