

INFJ

(About 1.5% of the U.S. population)

INFJs are an *inspiration* to others. They are insightful developers of others, whose genius, caring, and concern inspire and motivate all those whose lives they touch. They have the ability to trust their own inspirations and visions, using those talents to help other people.

INFJ Personality Highlights

INFJs are reservoirs of quiet, intellectual, introspective imagination who can inspire insight and growth in others. They often are deep thinkers who can bring great ideas forward. Typically, they spread their ideas in a quiet, deliberate way – more by the pen than the sword.

- Their **Introversion** fosters inward focus and direction.
- Their **iNtuition** gives them a gift for generating ideas and possibilities in an imaginative, creative way.
- Their **Feeling** means they feel called upon to serve the needs of humanity; they make their decisions based on the impact those decisions will have on the people involved.
- Their **Judging** allows them to operate in an organized, decisive, and orderly way.

INFJs are gentle, compassionate, and accepting. But when an INFJ is committed to an ideal or cause, you can expect stubbornness to surface. These otherwise compliant, reserved individuals can become extremely rigid and demanding of themselves and others when pursuing a goal in the external world.

Here are some other characteristics. INFJs...

- Have a tendency to become stressed and have self-doubts when others do not support their ideas, foresight, and values. They take their remarkable intuitive abilities seriously and may resent it when others do not understand or value their talent.
- May personalize events that may not even concern them. Once INFJs have accepted a problem, they feel it's their total responsibility to save everyone and make things right.
- Lead with quiet enthusiasm and serve as a positive role model for others, building warm personal relationships along the way.
- May fail to pay attention to their own needs and try to "save" (as well as develop) others. As a result, INFJs may work themselves to exhaustion and burnout.

INFJs in Personal Life

INFJs may be sincerely puzzled why everyone doesn't behave in an affirming, honest, and productive manner. They believe there is no need for war, only efforts to improve understanding among people. INFJs are the embodiment of the Golden Rule and the notion, "Let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with me." That is how INFJs live, it's where they put their energies, and it's

what they want from everyone else. Though they may be somewhat slow to express their feelings, they can be counted on to stand by those to whom they feel loyal. Their interest in other human beings is fierce, firm, and genuine. Life is generally better because of INFJs.

Their natural quietness gives INFJs a low profile, but they have deeply felt concerns and commitments which have a way of adding intensity in most situations. The INFJ's quiet strength can be felt by others. Their capacity for caring has limits, however, which may be invoked at any moment. Because these limits emerge from within and may have no apparent relationship to external events, others can end up feeling frustrated and confused.

INFJs often need an Extraverted (E) type to fully tap their inner richness. Otherwise, their creativity and inspiration can be lost – either due to their introversion or their scramble to meet the demands of their structured lives. When INFJs are around Extraverts (Es), they are likely to share jokes, ideas, whimsical thoughts, and inventive models or theories. Those close to an INFJ may feel frustrated that they don't see much of what is inside. It can be a paradox: they must respect the INFJs' need for space, but doing so can diminish their contributions to the world.

No one word does justice to the complexities of the human personality. However, in addition to *inspirational* the word *gentle* comes to mind when thinking of the INFJ. They have a rich, imaginative inner drive that reveals itself in the form of caring and concern for others – with just enough structure to be believable. They're not just talk; they deliver the goods.

INFJs often have, without formal training, skills in group dynamics. Appearing to be almost psychic, they are aware of what's going on among people. However, this awareness remains largely internal, and they can be frustrated when they try to make these observations known to others.

INFJs at Home

Home is the ultimate arena where INFJs can act on their idealism and their humanitarian concerns. However, their longing for harmony is such a driving force that they sometimes create tension in their relationships by working so hard to eliminate it. They often carry very heavy inner burdens, fostering the sense of martyrdom that is typical of Feelers (Fs). Inner tension can plague them as they continually strive for – and never reach – an ideal of total harmony that even they may not be able to put into words. In the long run this can generate an underlying sense of guilt in INFJs and their family members.

The INFJ's home and living style seems relatively neat to outsiders, but just below the surface are dozens of books, articles, and projects to be addressed "later." It is more important for their home to be congenial, stimulating, and accepting than precisely neat and tidy. The INFJ's home can be a reference library for a wide variety of interests and pursuits. Almost everything has some symbolism or meaning, and things are seldom thrown away. The (usually unfulfilled) fantasy is that someday the INFJ will wander through this big box of goodies and actually work on all of those interesting projects.

Few people fully appreciate the INFJ's rich inner life and how steeped it is in imaginative, creative, abstract ideas and concepts. The INFJ can easily spend an entire day just dreaming and envisioning. This pursuit is its own reward, and to be allowed to do that – and to encourage others to do the same – is what life is all about for the INFJ. Their nonstop search for learning, growth, and personal development – and their wish to help others do the same – makes them very reassuring to others and people worth emulating. Their keen insights and generally strong character are an inspiration to all.

INFJs as Children

Often, INFJs are contented as children. Other than stubbornness about the values they prize, their love of harmony makes them generally compliant. If anything, parents may be amazed at how content their INFJ child seems, though somewhat concerned about their daydreaming. But INFJs also are curious and hungry for knowledge, so this “spaciness” typically gives way to good scholarship. They are excellent students and usually find school quite rewarding. Their Introverted-iNtuitive (IN) nature leads them to prefer theoretical and abstract coursework, but their desire to please teachers and parents makes them successful and productive in most subjects. INFJs quickly discover that learning enriches the mind and that the mind is their gateway to the world.

Family events are opportunities for INFJs to explore and learn, so they are usually eager to attend. But INFJs are especially sensitive to family tension and have a tendency to personalize situations, even blaming themselves for problems they did not create. If family events are tense and brittle, INFJs will tend to avoid or fear them. However, if they are filled with warmth and joy, INFJs can become quite involved, though perhaps passively.

INFJs as Parents

Parenting to an INFJ means accepting intense responsibility to help young minds and spirits develop on their own. They work hard to see that their children have every intellectual opportunity available. INFJ parents strive to be stimulating, resourceful, and helpful in everything because they believe that a young spirit is a terrible thing to waste. They will encourage all kinds of self-development, even if they have no interest in a particular activity themselves. To the best of their ability, INFJ parents provide whatever is necessary to foster growth.

INFJs in Professional Life

The INFJ's overall work style nicely balances scheduling and accountability with an awareness of others' needs. INFJs are particularly sensitive to conflict, and they often know before anyone else when it's about to erupt. Their Introverted-iNtuitive-Feeling (INF) skills bring a radar-like perception that can serve as an early-warning system. Unfortunately, this ability can fly in the face of their intense dislike of conflict. The resulting tension can leave them exhausted. They may bury the trauma, hoping that the whole thing will just go away. As a result, they may be prone to stress-related illnesses.

INFJs as Leaders

Wherever there's an INFJ, there is work, particularly if that work offers an opportunity to grow and learn. As managers, INFJs are fairly open and very interested in both people and the product or

service. They may be slow to give positive strokes, but INFJs are inwardly proud of the accomplishments of their employees and are open to their desires for professional growth. In general, INFJs are adept at helping others to achieve their goals, and they're eager to also realize their own. They are at their best in situations that encourage personal enhancement. The biggest problems at work for an INFJ, as both a leader and an employee, arise from conflict and tense interpersonal relationships.

INFJs are masters at facilitating an understanding of an organization's vision and gaining others' commitments to fulfill that vision. Their zeal for any given leadership situation is related to the core values embedded in their personal mission. Confident that their vision and mission are important, they will invest whatever energy is necessary to encourage, support, and organize related efforts. Often more concerned about the congruence of mission and values than with identifying concrete and realistic objectives, their strength – building relationships of commitment toward a vision – may become a weakness if they are perceived as being unrealistic about the challenges of implementing a plan.

INFJs as Employees

Wherever scholarly dependability is needed in the workplace, turn to an INFJ. They are often found in the human services; most of their energies are directed toward bettering conditions for others. Feeling types tend to be idealists, and INFJs (along with their cousins, the INFPs) lead the pack. INFJs are not given to rocking the boat, but when their ideals are on the line they will take on any odds and win. It's the INFJs who will make sure an issue gets presented to the public correctly and forcefully. They may not walk picket lines or make speeches, but they will be a driving force behind the scenes. INFJs can suddenly and unexpectedly become strong-willed and resilient, using their expertise and intelligence to leave opponents defenseless.

INFJs' Workplace Stressors

INFJs take their unique intuitive abilities seriously. While other types may be inattentive and/or dismissive in a situation, INFJs pick up on what's happening at a subtle level. This can lead them to experience significant tension and anxiety. With a keen focus on possibilities, coupled with trusting their intuition, they can become deeply disillusioned whenever an organizational environment doesn't support their vision. When their image of "what I can and ought to be doing here" is blocked or derailed, they can become edgy, worried, and begin fueling their own fears. This can lead to a constant sense of pressure and become a severe energy drain.

INFJs' Careers

The INFJs' greatest strengths are their intellectual prowess, their personal idealism, and their general caring and concern for humanity. Any career that takes these qualities into consideration will offer years of satisfaction. INFJs will quietly consider a number of ideal long-term career options before taking action. They will seek environments that meet their needs to be imaginative, focused, and to help others.

Feeling that a job search is grueling or that they cannot find their ideal position may get in the way of taking action. INFJs will naturally gather information through reading and get excited about new ideas, but may not register key facts and details about options. They also will weigh the effects of decisions on themselves and others, but may not look in a tough-minded way at the pros – and especially the cons – of any given option. INFJs are good at setting goals but may need to narrow the focus of exciting possibilities to a short list so practical action can be taken. Their occupational choices may encompass a wide variety of nurturing roles where their iNtuition (I) and Feeling (F) can be used to support others and help them grow. INFJs gravitate toward occupations such as the ministry, teaching, psychology, social science, or counseling.

INFJs like neatness and order at work and prefer a setting of quiet congeniality – a place where people are affirmed for their contributions, feel a sense of accomplishment, and work harmoniously toward some common good. These qualities are highly valued in teaching and academia, where the INFJ helps students to think for themselves and to appreciate learning. These same traits are also valued in other professions, such as the ministry and psychology, where they can share some friendly insight or inspiration.

Summary

The INFJ's contributions to the workplace, to the home, and to the world can be significant. At their best, they are imaginative and creative visionaries who are a source of inspiration to everyone. They are often the ones behind the scenes who make others look good by providing words, wit, and wisdom.

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

INFJs On a Team

Naturally Bring to a Team

- A talent for developing and guiding people; their relationships are about supporting human potential
- Bring quiet enthusiasm and industry to projects that are a part of their vision
- Organized, with a strong sense of purpose
- Loyal to both people and organizations
- Actively listen and give their full attention to others

Teamwork Style

- Lead quietly and by example in a predictable, orderly, and personal way
- Use insight and interpersonal warmth to organize, counsel, and teach
- Inspire others with a positive, enthusiastic approach
- Approach problems from a global perspective

Potential Blind Spots

- Can be seen as distant by others as they try to manage their own emotions
- May lose sight of their own needs and personal identity, leading to eventual burnout
- Might focus on developing people to such an extent that they lose a sense of perspective
- May have difficulty separating their personal values from the impersonal

To Help Them Succeed

- Try to create an open, honest, and sincere relationship with them
- Provide a work environment that focuses on people and their needs, with an identity and purpose that goes beyond everyday routine
- Give them positive feedback

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

Managing the INFJ

WORK LABEL – FORESEER

- Quietly forceful
- Concerned for others
- Serves the common good
- Puts their best effort into work
- Single-minded concentration

STRENGTHS

- Conceptual
- Conscientious
- Compassionate
- Determined
- Harmonious

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

- Be objective and flexible
- See beyond own values
- Put insights in language of others
- Set priorities and stick to them
- Be open-minded and listen

TO FUNCTION BEST Support for ideas and the opportunity to put them into practice.
INFJs NEED: Variety and freedom from dull routine. Recognition and appreciation for their unique contribution. A cause or leader to work for.

INFJs ARE FRUSTRATED BY: Being told how to do things. Not being listened to. A lack of feedback and impersonal attitudes. Criticism and confrontations.

INFJs IRRITATE OTHERS BY: Taking an emotional stand and being moralistic. Being too anxious to please.

INFJs VALUE: Participation, cooperation, and determination.

ON A TEAM: They are the ones to put it in writing.