

Portrait of an INFP:

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, 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 NFs, 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.

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 conflict. 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.