

PROTAGONIST

PREMIUM PROFILE



16 Personalities

What's in This Profile?

This profile is designed to cover all the main aspects of the Protagonist personality type as it affects different areas of their life, including key strengths and weaknesses, relationships, academic path, career and professional development, as well as their communication and friend-making styles, parenting tips and advice, and much, much more. It combines personality type theory with practical, real-world advice from other people who share the Protagonist personality type.

Personality types have been the topic of many discussions, some of them dating back to ancient times. It's wise to draw from this source of knowledge and experience, especially when unsure of how to handle a specific situation. This kind of knowledge offers the power to control and understand oneself. As Aristotle said millennia ago, "The hardest victory is the victory over self." Consider this profile a plan for success.

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The Puzzle of Personality



When they receive their personality test results on our website, most people's first question is, "What do these letters mean?" We are of course referring to those mysterious acronyms – INTJ-A, for example, or ENFP-T. As you may have already learned from the type descriptions or articles on the website, the five letters of these acronyms each refer to a specific trait, with certain trait combinations forming various types and type groups. But before we discuss those traits in depth, let's explore their historical foundations.

Since the dawn of time, humans have drawn up schematics to describe and categorize our personalities. From the four temperaments of the ancient civilizations to the latest advances in psychology, we have been driven to fit the variables and complexities of human personality into well-defined models. Although we are still some time away from being able to do that, the current models account for our most important personality traits and can predict our behavior with a high degree of accuracy.

Personality is just one of many factors that guide our behavior, however. Our actions are also influenced by our environment, our experiences, and our individual goals. This profile describes how people belonging to a specific personality type are *likely* to behave. We will outline indicators and tendencies, however, not definitive guidelines or answers. Significant differences can exist even among people who share a personality type. The information in this profile is meant to inspire personal growth and an improved understanding of yourself and your relationships – not to be taken as gospel.

Our approach has its roots in two different philosophies. One dates back to the early 20th century and was the brainchild of Carl Gustav Jung, the father of analytical psychology. Jung's theory of psychological types is perhaps the most influential creation in personality typology, and it has inspired many different theories. One of Jung's key contributions was the development of the concept of Introversion and Extraversion – he theorized that each of us falls into one of these two categories, either focusing on the internal world (Introvert) or the outside world (Extravert). Besides Introversion and Extraversion, Jung coined the concept of so-called cognitive functions, separated into Judging or Perceiving categories. According to Jung, each person prefers one of these cognitive functions and may most naturally rely on it in everyday situations.

In the 1920s, Jung's theory was noticed by Katharine Cook Briggs, who later co-authored one of the most popular personality indicators used today, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®). Briggs was a teacher with an avid interest in personality typing, having developed her own type theory before learning of Jung's writings. Together with her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, they developed a

convenient way to describe the order of each person's Jungian preferences – this is how four-letter acronyms were born.

Of course, this is just a very simplified description of the Myers-Briggs theory. Readers interested in learning more should read *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type* by Isabel Briggs Myers. As we define personality traits and types differently in our model, we will not go deeper into Jungian concepts or related theories in this profile.

Due to its simplicity and ease of use, the four-letter naming model is now shared by a number of diverse theories and approaches, including Socionics, Keirsey Temperament Sorter®, and Linda Berens' Interaction Styles, among many others. While the acronyms used by these theories may be identical or very similar, however, their meanings do not always overlap. As a result, if you meet five people who say, "I am an INFJ," their understanding of what that means may vary significantly.

Regardless of its structure, any type-based theory will struggle to describe or characterize people whose scores lie near the dividing line. A different way to look at personalities is through the lens of a trait-based rather than a type-based model. What do we mean by that? Instead of creating an arbitrary number of categories and attempting to fit people within them, a trait-based model simply studies the degree to which people exhibit certain traits.

You may have heard the term Ambivert, which is a perfect example in this case. Ambiversion means that someone falls in the middle of the Introversiion-Extraversiion scale, being neither too outgoing nor too withdrawn. Trait-based theories would simply say that an Ambivert is moderately Extraverted or moderately Introverted and leave it at that, without assigning a personality type.

A trait-based approach makes it easier to reliably measure correlations between personality traits and other characteristics – for example, political attitudes. This is why trait-based approaches dominate psychometric research, but that’s more or less the only area where these approaches are dominant. Because they don’t offer types or categorizations, trait-based theories don’t translate as well as type-based theories into specific recommendations and takeaways. Assigned categories such as Extravert or Introvert may be limiting, but they allow us to conceptualize human personality and create theories about why we do what we do – something that a more scientifically reliable but colorless statement, such as you are 37% Extraverted, simply cannot do.

With our model, we’ve combined the best of both worlds. We use the acronym format introduced by Myers-Briggs for its simplicity and convenience, with an extra letter to accommodate five rather than four scales. However, unlike Myers-Briggs or other theories based on the Jungian model, we have not incorporated Jungian concepts such as cognitive functions, or their prioritization. Jungian concepts are very difficult to measure and evaluate scientifically, so we’ve instead chosen to rework and rebalance the dimensions of personality called the Big Five personality traits, a model that is very popular in psychological and social research.

Our personality types are based on five independent spectrums, with all letters in the type code (e.g. INFJ-A) referring to one of the two sides of the corresponding spectrum. We’ll talk more about these concepts in the next chapter. This approach has allowed us to achieve high test accuracy while also retaining the ability to define and describe distinct personality types.

During the last few years, we have conducted more than 800 studies to uncover trends and correlations between personality traits and various behaviors. Many of

these studies will be referenced in this profile, and additional information can be found in our online [Academy](#). Our goal is to give you access to our sources without repeating ourselves or overwhelming you with information. If you are particularly interested in a specific study or its statistical characteristics, please feel free to contact us via our website, and we will do our best to provide additional information.

With that aside, let's dig deeper into the five personality aspects!

Five Personality Aspects

Mind: Introverted (I) vs. Extraverted (E)

The distinction between Introverts and Extraverts may be the oldest notion in the history of personality theories. It has long been observed that some people are expressive and outgoing, while others are reserved, quiet, and more comfortable alone. The first group recharges by engaging with the external world and communicating with other people, whereas members of the second group are energized by spending time alone and connecting with their own inner world.

We focus on these differences in our first scale, which we call Mind. This scale – which is based on a person's level of expressiveness and the degree to which he or she seeks external stimulation – determines how we see and approach the outside world, including people, objects, and activities. This scale correlates with a number of other personality traits, such as willingness to volunteer, desire to engage in thrill-seeking activities, and romantic assertiveness, to name just a few.

On one side of this scale, we have Introverted individuals (the I letter in the type acronym). You might associate Introversion with being private or withdrawn – or even clumsy or antisocial – but our studies show a far more complex picture. Generally speaking, Introverts do



not seek or require much external stimulation. As you might expect, an Introvert requires less communication with others than an Extravert would, but an Introvert's preference for less stimulation can also influence his or her hobbies, political attitudes, and even eating or drinking habits. To give a practical example, our studies have found that Introverts are less likely than Extraverts to enjoy coffee and energy drinks.



But what about Extraverts? Compared with Introverts, Extraverts are more interested in engaging with the people, objects, and environment around them. This preference manifests itself in many ways: Extraverts are less sensitive than Introverts to noise, for example,

and they are likelier to wear bright and colorful clothes. Extraverts not only tolerate external stimuli, however; they actually need these stimuli in order to support their own energy.

Extraverts are often energetic and willing to take the lead, especially in social situations. They enjoy pushing themselves to the limit and challenging themselves and those around them. Unlike Introverts, who are more cautious in their approach, Extraverts are likely to feel that they can handle life's challenges without much forethought. Whether that turns out to be true depends on many other circumstances, but overall, Extraverts tend to be more proactive in experiencing – and embracing – the world around them.

Worldwide, the three most Extraverted countries are Oman (61.66%), Yemen (59.44%), and Saudi Arabia (58.95%). The most Introverted countries are Japan (59.88%), Lithuania (55.85%), and Portugal (54.25%). In the United States, New York (50.92%), Mississippi (50.87%), and Illinois (50.64%) top the list for Extraverts, while West Virginia (53.62%), Alaska (53.6%), and Maine (53.41%) report the highest percentages of Introverts. Interestingly, if the District of Columbia were included in the comparisons, it would easily top the Extraverted list. In our study, the average Extraversion score for the capital city's 23,310 respondents was 53.06% – significantly above New York, its closest competitor.

Protagonists are Extraverted – they tend feel recharged after spending time in the company of other people, and consequently often have excellent social skills. As Extraverts, Protagonists enjoy taking the lead and speaking their mind, often going ahead and voicing their opinion as they develop it. People with this personality trait tend to instinctively connect with others, regardless of their background or personality, making them popular and well-liked in many circles.

Energy: Intuitive (N) vs. Observant (S)

Energy is the second scale in our model, and in our opinion it is the most important. While the other four scales determine how you interact with the world (Mind), make decisions (Nature), schedule your activities (Tactics), or react to external feedback (Identity), the Energy scale actually determines how you see the world and what kind of information you focus on.

All personality types can be divided into those that favor the Intuitive energy style and those that favor the Observant energy style. Intuitive individuals tend to be visionary, interested in ideas and abstractions, and attracted to novelty. Observant individuals, on the other hand, prefer facts, concrete and observable things, and the tried and true.

It is important to stress that this scale has nothing to do with how we absorb information: Intuitive and Observant types use their five senses equally well. Instead, this scale shows whether we focus on what is possible (making connections *intuitively*) or what is real (*observing* the environment). If you are familiar with the Big Five personality traits, you might recognize this scale as a reworking of the openness to experience concept, with a focus on preference for (and tolerance of) novelty and ambiguity.

Individuals with the Intuitive trait rely on their imaginations and think in terms of ideas and possibilities. They dream, fantasize, and question why things happen the way they do, always feeling slightly detached from the actual, concrete world. Although they observe other people and events, their minds remain directed both inwards and somewhere beyond – always questioning, wondering, and making

connections. When all is said and done, Intuitive types believe in novelty, in the open mind, and in never-ending improvement.

In one 16Personalities study, we asked people whether they wish they had been born in the Age of Discovery (roughly speaking, the 15th through the 18th centuries). Our results showed that Intuitive types were much more willing to give up the convenience, comfort, and predictability of modern life in exchange for the excitement of exploration, distant civilizations, and the undiscovered mysteries of the New World.



In contrast, individuals with the Observant trait focus on the actual world and things happening around them. Preferring to see, touch, feel, and experience, they are happy to leave theories and possibilities to others. They keep their feet on the ground and focus on the present,

instead of wondering why or when something might happen. Consequently, people with this trait tend to be better at dealing with facts, tools, and concrete objects as opposed to brainstorming, theorizing about future events, or handling abstract theories. Observant types are also significantly better at focusing on just one thing at a time instead of juggling multiple activities.

The Energy scale influences communication style as well. Intuitive individuals talk about ideas and have no difficulties with allusions or reading between the lines, while Observant types focus on facts and practical matters. This is why Intuitive types may find it challenging to understand someone with the Observant trait, and vice versa. Intuitive types may think that Observant individuals are materialistic, unimaginative, and simplistic, and Observant types may see their Intuitive conversation partner as impractical, naïve, and absent-minded. These assumptions and biases can be quite damaging, and it takes a mature person to get past them.

Geographically, the Middle East and Asia have the largest percentage of Observant individuals, with 8 countries in the top 10 list. Saudi Arabia (71.94%), Oman (71.03%), and Yemen (69.76%) have the top scores among Observant countries, while Nepal (48.92%), Albania (48.51%) and Maldives (48.44%) top the Intuitive table.

In the United States, North Dakota (59.43%), Minnesota (59.23%), and Iowa (59.04%) are the most Observant states. On the opposite side of the table, we have Nevada (43.92%), Rhode Island (43.75%), and West Virginia (43.47%).

Protagonists are Intuitive individuals. This is why they are so good at seeing possibilities and honoring different points of view. People with this personality type spend more time engaging in various internal discussions than observing things around them. Protagonists are not that concerned about what is happening; instead, they focus on what might happen or why something has happened. Protagonists hone this focus throughout their lives, which makes them passionate and insightful thinkers.

Of course, every stick has two ends, and focus on novelty and change comes at a cost. By directing their mental resources toward possibilities and the future, Protagonists

inevitably lose sight of what is happening around them. They may have difficulties dealing with practical matters or data. If they aren't paying attention, they may even miss something right under their nose. Because the majority of the population has the Observant trait, Protagonists may have difficulty finding a partner and connecting with others.

Nature: Thinking (T) vs. Feeling (F)

The third scale, which we call Nature, determines how we make decisions and cope with emotions. While we all have feelings, there are significant differences in how different types react to them. This scale influences a number of areas of our lives, particularly our interactions with other people.



People with the Thinking trait seek logic and rational arguments, relying on their head rather than their heart. They do their best to safeguard, manage, and conceal their emotions. “Whatever happens, you must always keep a cool head” – this is the motto of Thinking individuals. These

types are not cold-blooded or indifferent, however. People with the Thinking trait are often just as emotional as those with the Feeling trait, but they subdue or override their feelings with their rational logic.

In several of our studies, we analyzed the attitudes of different personality types toward philanthropy and charitable causes. Thinking types are significantly less likely to engage in charitable giving or to be touched by charities’ emotional appeals. Does

this mean that they are unwilling to help? Not necessarily. It turns out that Thinking personalities don't believe that giving money to charity is the best way to make a difference. They may look for other ways to be of assistance – for example, investing in education for the disadvantaged.

In contrast, people with the Feeling trait follow their hearts and care little about hiding their emotions. From their perspective, we should not be afraid to listen to our innermost feelings and share them with the world. These individuals tend to be compassionate, sensitive, and highly emotional. They would rather cooperate than compete, although they are not naïve or easily swayed.

In fact, people with the Feeling trait are likely to fight tooth and nail for their values and beliefs. For many Feeling types, principles and ideals are much more important than, say, professional success. Although this perspective might not seem rational, Feeling types generally adhere to their own highly individualized – and perfectly valid – logic.



Worldwide, Iran (51.91%), Georgia (50.74%), and Albania (48.94%) report highest scores on the Thinking side of the scale. On the Feeling side, we have Singapore (61.41%), Australia (60.1%), and New Zealand (59.98%).

In the U.S., northern states tend to be slightly more Feeling, but not significantly so. One interesting example is the contrast between Utah and Nevada: two neighboring states that are each first on opposite sides of the scale. In Utah, the average score is

61.19% on the Feeling side, well above Minnesota (59.61%) and Idaho (59.54%), which take second and third place, respectively. Nevada, on the other hand, is the most Thinker-heavy state in our study, with its 34,576 respondents getting an average score of 42.99% on the Thinking side of the spectrum. While that still means Feeling personality types outnumber Thinking types significantly, we rarely see such differences between neighboring regions. Other top Thinking states include Delaware (42.71%) and New Mexico (42.7%).

Protagonists have the Feeling trait – they trust and prioritize feelings, relying on moral and ethical arguments, and doing everything they can to stay true to their deeply held principles. People with this personality type are kind and sensitive, always able to find something positive regardless of the circumstances. The Intuitive and Feeling traits form the core of the Protagonist personality, making them very insightful, idealistic and open-minded individuals, capable of amazing feats, especially in fields related to morality, philosophy or diplomacy. However, they also push Protagonists away from the majority of the population, sometimes making it difficult for them to relate to other people, especially when it comes to accepting what they see as egoism and self-interest.

Tactics: Judging (J) vs. Prospecting (P)

The Tactics scale determines how we approach planning and how we handle available options. The implications reach well beyond our calendars, however. At its core, this scale determines our attitudes toward certainty and structure in our lives.

People with the Judging trait do not like to keep their options open. They would rather prepare five different contingency plans than wait for challenges to arise. These individuals enjoy clarity and closure, always sticking to the plan rather than going

with the flow. It's as if Judging types keep a mental checklist, and once a decision is crossed off that list, it is not open to reassessment. This mentality applies as much to grocery shopping as it does to life goals, like buying a house.



Individuals with the Judging trait tend to have a strong work ethic, putting their duties and responsibilities above all else. Our research indicates that Judging types are also strict when it comes to law and order. Of course, this doesn't mean that Prospecting individuals

are lawbreakers, but if you see someone go out of his or her way to use a crosswalk, that person is likely a Judging type.

In contrast, Prospecting individuals are flexible and relaxed when it comes to dealing with both expected and unexpected challenges. They are always scanning for opportunities and options, willing to jump at a moment's notice. People with this trait understand that life is full of possibilities, and they are reluctant to commit to something that might prove an inferior option in the future. They also focus more on what makes them happy than what their parents, employers, or teachers expect. If a specific task is not particularly important or interesting, a Prospecting individual will always come up with something better to do.



Looking at the geographical data, the global Judging-Prospecting chart has interesting similarities with the Extraverted-Introverted one. While these scales do not influence each other from a statistical perspective, many of the countries topping the Extraverted-Introverted charts have correspondingly high Judging-Prospecting scores. At the top of the Judging table we have Oman (58.05%), Yemen (57.78%), and Kuwait (55.8%), while the most Prospecting countries are Japan (55.21%), Nepal (53.74%), and Lithuania (53.62%).

The map of the United States, however, does not show significant overlaps between these two scales. On the Judging side of the spectrum, we have South Carolina (51.05%), Alabama (50.97%), and Tennessee (50.8%). On the other side, the most Prospecting states are Alaska (51.2%), Vermont (50.86%), and West Virginia (50.76%).

Protagonists are Judging individuals – they are decisive and usually find it difficult to cope with uncertainty and unpredictability. This is what makes them not just natural visionaries, but also implementers, both willing and able to dedicate time to making sure that their ideas come to life. That being said, people with this personality type aren't too meticulous or rule-bound – they seek closure, but don't obsess over tiny details or procedures. Protagonists are idea people rather than logisticians.

Identity: Assertive (-A) vs. Turbulent (-T)

The last scale, Identity, affects all others, reflecting how confident we are in our abilities and decisions. In a way, this scale acts as an internal sensor, reacting to the input we get from our environments – for instance, success or failure, feedback from others, or pressure caused by unexpected events. The Mind and Identity scales are the alpha and the omega of our model, acting as an external shell that we wear in all of our interactions with the outside world. Later, we will discuss the four possible combinations of these traits, which we call “Strategies,” but in the meantime, let’s

take an in-depth look at the Identity scale.



Assertive individuals are self-assured, even-tempered, and resistant to stress. They refuse to worry too much, and they don’t push themselves too hard when it comes to achieving goals. Similarly, they are unlikely to spend much time

thinking about past actions or choices. According to Assertive types, what’s done is done and there is little point in analyzing it. Not surprisingly, people with this trait are generally satisfied with their lives, and they feel confident in their ability to handle challenging and unexpected situations.

In contrast, Turbulent individuals are self-conscious and sensitive to stress. They experience a wide range of emotions and tend to be success-driven, perfectionistic, and eager to improve. Always feeling the need to do more, have more, and *be* more,

Turbulent types may forget how exhausting this dissatisfaction can be – both for themselves and for the people around them.

While the Assertive variant may seem more positive on the surface, that is not necessarily the case.

Turbulent individuals are more willing than Assertive types to change jobs if they feel stuck in their current roles, and they think deeply about the direction of their lives. Turbulent individuals may also outperform Assertive types in certain instances, because they may care more about the outcome. The willingness of Turbulent types to push themselves may ultimately enable them to achieve their goals.



Worldwide, Japan is by far the most Turbulent country, with an average score of 57.48% on the Turbulent side. Italy (53.8%) and Brunei (52.89%) come in second and third, respectively. On the Assertive side of the spectrum, we have Uganda (57.91%), Barbados (57.11%), and Nigeria (57.01%).

In the United States, there is a clear east-west divide, with the East Coast being significantly more Turbulent. West Virginia (49.3%) takes the lead on the Turbulent side, followed by Rhode Island (48.84%) and Maine (48.73%). The most Assertive states are New Mexico (54.7%), Colorado (54.66%), and Hawaii (54.28%).

Type Groups

Now you know what each type consists of. But how do they fit together?

Our system has two layers: the first (inner) one defines our Roles, the second (outer) one, our Strategies.

Roles

The Role layer determines our goals, interests, and preferred activities. Each of the four Roles covers a set of personality types that are very similar, and we will use these groups later in this profile to draw contrasts and similarities between personalities. They also serve to highlight the importance we have placed on the Energy trait. Each personality type will share either the Observant or the Intuitive trait with all other members of their group, as well as one other key trait. Protagonists belong to the Diplomat Role group, along with three other personality types: Advocates, Mediators, and Campaigners.

Analysts

Shared traits: *Intuitive* and *Thinking*

The personality types in the Analyst Role – Architects, Logicians, Commanders, and Debaters – embrace rationality, excelling in intellectual and technological pursuits. The Thinking trait makes Analysts exacting, and the Intuitive trait lets them apply their minds to almost anything, with their imaginations aiding calculated, strategic thinking, or seeing just how far the rabbit hole goes with a crazy scheme or thought experiment.

These personalities are driven to understand and create, and have no problem switching between speculative musing and frank, solutions-oriented approaches to whatever problems are at hand. Broad, intelligent vision gives Analysts an ingenious

air, but they can become overwhelmed and scattered if they don't learn to hone these abilities and use them to advance a worthwhile cause or project.

The biggest pitfall is that their intellect can give them a false sense of accomplishment. They tend to prefer the world of ideas to the sober reality of follow-through, and by assuming the role of critic instead of participant, Analysts sometimes risk being functionally outpaced by those who simply sit down and do the work. They can earn themselves the unsavory title of “armchair analysts” while those with more real-world experience continue to create real results. Analyst personality types can lack a proper respect for those of simpler vision and expression, whatever their background, and it can hold them back.

Analysts value their intellect above all else, and it can be a challenge convincing them it's worth checking their many hypotheses with an experiment or proper evidence to be sure. To many Analysts, if something makes sense in their minds, that's as good as proved, and a great deal faster. Analysts can be brilliant, but they're still human; under the influence of ego, these personality types can get in the habit of advancing clever opinions instead of objective facts.

Analysts' positive self-identity stems largely from their formidable drive to learn, and their clever and sharply witty banter can make them excellent debate partners. Often insatiable readers as well, Analysts can be found stockpiling books, questioning teachers, and driving conversations in forums across the world wide web. These types prefer their own processes and pace, and are energized by exercising their minds on their own time.

Analysts are also relentless self-improvers. Once they've recognized a flaw, they apply all of this cold rationality, honest reflection, imagination, and desire for results

to make it right. Analysts' forceful, imaginative vision, when trained and focused, enables these personalities to conceive and accomplish things most thought impossible.

Diplomats

Shared traits: *Intuitive* and *Feeling*

Diplomats – Advocates, Mediators, Protagonists, and Campaigners – tend to be warm, caring, and generous individuals, shining in diplomacy and counselling. These personality types promote cooperation and harmony, tolerating discord only as a step towards positive change. Their perceptive abilities seemingly go deeper than the traditional senses – it's as if they have a full set of tuning forks in their hearts that can resonate with people's emotional states, and this empathetic sensitivity creates deep connections with others.

This is not as mystical as it can seem. Diplomat personalities deeply value understanding, and a lifetime of self-reflection grants them insights into others' motivations that they might not even understand themselves. Diplomats can use this to shape the way others feel, but it would be out of character for them to use this for ill.

Diplomats' people skills nurture friendship and healing with pure, genuine empathy. Causing distress feels to them like wounding their own psyche, so they prefer to gently nudge loved ones and strangers alike in a positive direction. Diplomats find the ideals of humanism rewarding: kindness, understanding, altruism, and growth warm them like a bonfire on a chilly autumn day. These personality types envision a prismatic, kind world.

The Intuitive trait plays a big part in this optimism, but it also makes Diplomats sensitive to injustices that would jeopardize that ideal world. They can be aggressive against forces they perceive as evil, and are capable of steely action when they feel they have moral high ground. Diplomats' sensitive emotions may flare to outright combativeness if provoked; with self-righteous momentum and weighty ideals, these personality types can steamroll others. If they let inspiration trump rationality unchecked, they can sometimes go too far, damaging the very causes they hold dear, however justified the outrage.

Tempering this passion with cold practicality is a challenge for Diplomats. They are often reluctant to make and carry out tough decisions or plans lacking in empathy, and often struggle with carrying out a plan at all. They find greater satisfaction in abstract self-exploration and understanding the issues that affect those least able to defend themselves than mundane accomplishments and day-to-day tasks. Diplomats emphasize experience and understanding rather than calculable achievement.

Among friends and family, Diplomat personalities can range from quietly caring to brightly gregarious, so long as they can pursue the mutual exchange of thoughts and feelings they value so highly. But they can overextend themselves in this more personal aspect of their lives as well – emotionally, physically, or even financially. Diplomats' open hearts make them vulnerable when others aren't as considerate, though they wouldn't have it any other way. Someone must trust first, and they will almost always be the volunteer.

Diplomats embrace travel as readily as anyone – they like exploring other cultures and people's colorful ways. These personality types are creatively inclined, often practicing artistic expression in diverse forms, and see magical beauty where others

see the hum-drum of daily life. For a group with such progressive attitudes, they also appreciate seeing things as they are, a pure expression of a way of thinking and being. Diplomats can be passionately inspired by experiences: music, cuisine, theater, nature, and anything else that goes beyond the obvious can rise to divine art in their eyes.

Like a gardener planting in fertile earth, Diplomats seed the world around them with progressive change and gentle beauty. Diplomats feel connected to forces they may not fully understand, a deep sense of faith that may express itself, if not always through traditional religion, as spiritual belief. Diplomats pursue things with an underlying idealism and a sense of higher purpose; activism, spirituality, healing, the arts, and charity are common interests for these personalities. They have a conviction to serve a greater good, motivated by intangible rewards felt in the heart and soul.

Sentinels

Shared traits: *Observant* and *Judging*

Sentinels – Logisticians, Defenders, Executives, and Consuls – are cooperative and practical. Their grounded approach helps them feel comfortable with who they are, defining themselves not by individualism, but by character and competence. These personality types seek order, security, and stability, and tend to work hard to maintain the way of things, leading to a deserved reputation as the core of any group or organization, from family to church to the office and the factory floor.

These types embrace teamwork, but expect the same performance and respectability from others that they strive for themselves. Sentinels often dislike strident nonconformity because they envision progress through collaboration and hard work within a known set of rules – to let everyone do their own thing on a whim

would be anarchy. Sentinels prefer proven methods and honest accomplishment to self-indulgent exploration and esoteric ideas. Because these personalities are deeply prudent, they also tend to be self-motivated, and rarely need external inspiration to be productive.

Their grounded perspective leaves little room for random musings, but Sentinels are not unimaginative. They experiment for anticipated gain rather than intellectual thrills, and excel in making challenging situations work. Revolution does not appeal to people from this Role, who tend to learn from the past and remain loyal to the tested truths and traditions they were brought up with. Where some see fascinating philosophy, Sentinels may see preposterousness: these personality types favor practiced methodology over abstract theory.

Having authority allows Sentinels to practice their virtues. Effective in leadership roles, these types motivate others by energetic example and feel satisfaction from guiding a well-functioning group – they tend to make excellent teachers, managers, and community officials, as well as parents and hosts. These personalities are meticulous and traditional, excelling in logistical and administrative fields with clear hierarchies and rules as well. Opting for successful completion whenever they can, Sentinels can be controlling, but gladly compromise when needed to get things done.

Sentinels feel rewarded by shepherding others, and enjoy coordinating and sharing fun social experiences with friends and family. They believe it is their responsibility to give their families safe, happy lives that prepare them for the real world. An appreciation of strong relationships allows them to share generously with those they respect and love – these types feel bolstered by having reliable people in their lives, and will do what they can to make sure they hold up their end of the bargain.

Birthdays, dinner parties, and camping trips are delightful events under their enthusiastic direction.

These personality types are happiest without drama, though their admirably stubborn loyalty can certainly attract it if they feel they need to stand by a friend, regardless of whether they're in the right or wrong. Inconsistent people can test Sentinels' tolerance and provoke harsh judgement. Sentinels tend to prefer predictability over novelty and familiar pleasures more than cutting-edge excitement. It can be difficult for Sentinel personalities to accept people who lack their studious ideals, but they often respond as engaged and caring mentors to those who wish to grow in that direction.

Explorers

Shared traits: *Observant* and *Prospecting*

Explorers – Virtuosos, Adventurers, Entrepreneurs, and Entertainers – possess a self-reliant mix of enthusiasm, quick thinking, and ingenuity that can lead to impressive personal and professional accomplishments. Comfortable with uncertainty and minimally concerned with preparation, these personality types simply adapt and overcome as events present themselves. Explorers' flexibility helps them make snap decisions in the moment, and they're unlikely to dwell on the future or the past.

They aren't obsessed with precise detail (unless they're really in the zone, in which case they can muster a level of precision and focus that would make a seasoned engineer blush). Usually, they require workability rather than perfection. Explorer personalities are utilitarian masters of diverse tools and techniques, ranging from instruments and engines to the art of persuasion, and they distinguish themselves in crises, crafts, and sales.

This versatile decisiveness doesn't mean commitment, however. Explorers can change their minds with minimal regret or second-guessing. People in this Role dislike monotony, and often feel tempted to stray from obligations in favor of entertaining new things. They experiment with many interests and live and breathe whatever they connect with – for a time. If these personality types sometimes leave business unfinished, let clutter build up, or misplace important things, it's because they've moved on to something fresh.

Explorers enjoy being free of obligations, where they can indulge themselves or their interests on their own time. An Explorer might design and build their own dream house, enthralled with the process, but end up procrastinating on simple repairs after a few years. They are highly motivated when steering themselves through something interesting, but don't like being restrained by anything “mandatory.”

Their relaxed, free-form attitude makes Explorer personalities socially dynamic as well. They often seek out people and experiences that cater to their senses, finding more pleasure in stimulation than planning. They happily approach appealing strangers and interesting experiences, and when things get in the way of a good time, they apply their ingenuity to getting around it. Explorers want to see what happens next!

The same themes run through their friendships and families, though these relationships have much more staying power than most other interests. Rather than forcing relationships into or out of existence though, Explorers let things flow naturally according to their desires. Compatible people simply become a part of their lives. These personality types tend to be individualistic and freedom-loving, going their own way with little regard for naysayers, but they do enjoy knowing that the people they trust will be around in the end.

Explorers are highly spontaneous, connecting with and adapting to their environment in a way that is almost childlike in its wonder and sheer fun. It can be a challenge for them to work for things with a distant or unexciting payoff, as they need a sense of immediacy to feel truly engaged, but when they are passionate, Explorer personalities can move heaven and earth.

Strategies

The Strategy layer reflects our preferred ways of doing things and achieving our goals. There are four strategies: Confident Individualism, People Mastery, Constant Improvement, and Social Engagement. Depending on their type variant, Protagonists fall under either People Mastery (Assertive Protagonists) or Social Engagement (Turbulent Protagonists).

Confident Individualism

Shared traits: *Introverted* and *Assertive*

Confident Individualists typically trust in themselves, and they often embrace solitude to pursue their own interests rather than seeking out social activity. Fascinated by personal projects, people following this Strategy often have an impressive range of skills and interesting ideas. But projects are usually only pursued for their own merit – Confident Individualists tend to feel that social displays and bragging are time and energy wasted. These personality types are proud of who they are, what they know, and what they can do, but they don't feel the need to prove themselves to others.

Confident Individualists engage their internal inspiration instead of searching for motivation outside themselves. They favor privacy, and aren't particularly fond of

interacting with society, whether in a strictly social sense or when embracing broader societal goals. These personalities often favor substance over superficiality and personal honesty over playing along, and prefer a utilitarian approach, even when pursuing esoteric goals.

This utilitarianism also means that Confident Individualists are not easily drawn into emotional drama. They hold their own opinions firmly, but tend to see little reason to try to convince others. When drama does arise, these personality types express their truth with little concern over whether they'll cause friction or offense. Confident Individualists tend to endorse self-reliance over cooperation, and are rarely pressured into agreeing with or lending support to others unless they believe in the cause.

This relaxed self-assurance means that Confident Individualists may not push their boundaries. Their live-and-let-live attitude goes both ways: they don't need to convince others, and they tend to expect others to return the favor. While highly capable, they can miss information and opportunities that challenge their views because they simply don't place much importance on factoring in others' approval. They can be tolerant in disagreement though, respecting others' individualism just as they respect their own.

When these personality types form friendships, they tend to be strong and honest. Because these types don't feel like they need other people's approval, their loyalty and affection is a deliberate expression of affection. Impressing a Confident Individualist earns their respect and care, and these types make for dedicated, passionate friends.

Self-reliance is central for these types, and they handle difficult situations well because they tend to be emotionally secure, bold, and resistant to stress. They rarely seek leadership or the spotlight, but when they do find themselves in these positions, these personalities lead by an example of self-determination and uncomplicated honesty – they appreciate grace, class, and form, and rarely seek to impress by appearances alone. When acting with knowledge and wisdom, Confident Individualists can be noble pillars of strength.

People Mastery

Shared traits: *Extraverted* and *Assertive*

People Masters are highly stress-resistant, maintaining confidence through life's challenges, social pressures, and any questions of their capabilities. These personality types seek social contact and have solid communication skills, feeling at ease when relying on or directing other people. People Masters' mantra is fearless engagement – to be is to do. This is not a group known for its timid opinions or idleness.

People Masters feel rewarded by stimulation and challenging experiences. They like travelling to see things, people, and places, where they can experience a richer understanding of the world around them. These personalities like sampling new foods, lifestyles, and cultures; even things they don't end up liking can be entertaining excitement for them.

Sometimes, though, People Masters are too confident. Insulated against self-doubt and the need to prove themselves, they don't always test, or even consider, their own limits or ambitions. They can slip into a pattern of endless fun and comfort-seeking, rolling their eyes at those who press themselves towards more intimidating goals. At

the other end of the spectrum, these personality types can just as easily ignore sensible caution, putting themselves in extraordinary and dangerous situations, confident they can find their way through.

Most fall somewhere in the middle, embracing healthy ambition and competition so long as they play a meaningful part in social circles and leadership. Social interaction plays a big part in People Masters' happiness. While not dependent on people's approval for emotional security, they appreciate acclaim for their accomplishments and bright personalities, and can be a touch showy from time to time. These types are self-confident, but they are often lost without people to lead, laugh with, and love.

Their charisma, self-assurance and boisterousness can sometimes be trying qualities. People Masters prefer cooperation, but have few qualms about dominating their opposition to achieve their goals, boldly promoting themselves and using their social skills to get ahead. This Strategy understands people's needs, but can just as easily use this as a weapon rather than a tool of compassion if they have their sights set on something big.

People Masters can compromise when needed, but these personality types tend to be better talkers than listeners. They can be very demanding, criticizing people's performance regardless of their feelings because they expect no less of themselves. That said, these types are moderate in their disagreements because their ego and confidence aren't at stake the way they often are for Turbulent Strategies. People Masters are not fond of grudges, content to let bygones be bygones. They are more likely to be socially idealistic, with the intent of bringing people together to make things happen – petty grievances just get in the way.

People Masters' charismatic virtues shine in social contexts, and these types have little fear of rejection and a passion for inclusion. They prefer to take the lead, but sharing the journey through other people's eyes enhances their own enjoyment as well. People Masters share in all aspects of people's lives, making these personalities strong, honest friends, parents, spouses, and colleagues, serving as wellsprings of energy, joy, and mutual success.

Constant Improvement

Shared traits: *Introverted* and *Turbulent*

Constant Improvers are sensitive and contemplative individuals who enjoy having their own space and freedom. They are often deep and creative individuals, though often tense and more comfortable on their own than mixed up in the judgment of the real world. With the two personality traits most representative of a sensitivity to their environment – Introversion and Turbulence – they are reserved when dealing with strangers or new situations, often turning inwards or focusing on peacekeeping instead.

These personalities' caution in the face of unfamiliar challenges can sometimes look like a lack of motivation, but this is usually just self-doubt – Constant Improvers have a strong drive, but it comes paired with a strong fear of failure. They invest a great deal of their identity in their successes, and even a minor misstep or embarrassment can be crushing.

The vigilance learned from a lifetime of ups and downs gives these personality types a knack for sensing trouble. This is a strategic wariness that can be quite useful in situations that need to balance risk and reward, whether a financial investment or a romantic opportunity. Though they can seem frustratingly over-cautious to others,

Constant Improvers would rather not face calamity, so they excel at avoiding it with preventive insights.

Since they aren't always comfortable with energetic exchanges with other people, Constant Improvers often direct their attention elsewhere, striving to master hobbies, careers, bodies of knowledge, or new means of self-expression. Their restless drive, self-doubt, and solitary mentality can combine to create impressive, beautiful results.

High-achieving and perfectionistic, Constant Improvers generally try to do their best in their endeavors, dedicating tremendous time and energy. These personalities can put so much pressure on themselves that they diminish their own impressive accomplishments by fixating on the slightest flaws or dismissing successes as luck rather than skill or dedication.

Taken too far, this perfectionism can also drive endless rumination – an unhealthy obsession with perfection will reveal flaws in the best plans, and Constant Improvers often feel forced to abandon a course of action because something doesn't line up right. Whether working feverishly or picking at the threads of an idea though, Constant Improvers can be intense about their goals, and progress towards internal balance can lead them to amazing personal accomplishments.

Alongside their personal efforts, these personality types also care a great deal what others think of them. This can be very useful, but they can take this to a fault: fixating on others' expectations can sour social efforts into awkwardness. Constant Improvers are easily thrown off-balance by conflict, and may communicate timidly, or not at all, for fear of hurting people's feelings, provoking a confrontation, or looking the fool.

Sometimes it takes peer approval and active encouragement for this Strategy group to recognize their own virtues. These personalities often benefit from friends and colleagues patient enough to get to know them and who give them a chance to speak their minds. When treated considerately, these types become devoted partners and begin to reveal their kindness, insights, heartfelt support, and the complexities of their approach to the world, from sometimes (oddly specific) plans for obscure situations to starry-eyed ambitions.

Social Engagement

Shared traits: *Extraverted* and *Turbulent*

Those with the Social Engagement Strategy are an interesting group. In some ways, Extraversion and Turbulence conflict with each other: Extraversion leads to risk-tolerance and boldness; Turbulence reflects self-doubt and sensitivity. Turbulence also contributes to impulsivity, which Extraversion makes highly visible. This means Social Engagers tend to do what comes naturally first and think about it later. In this way, they are almost an exaggeration of their underlying personality types. This isn't a bad thing.

Social Engagers enthusiastically engage the external world, not content to live in their minds, drawing emotional security from positive interactions. In business and among loved ones, these types are usually the center of attention. Social Engagers meet the needs of the crowd in social settings, but they sometimes hide their true selves to impress other people. They appreciate social status, and often portray themselves as the person they aspire to – usually a purer form of their personality type – in order to achieve it.

Social Engagers often experience stunning highs and lows as their Extraversion pushes their Turbulent need for success into overdrive and their Turbulence creates an immediate sense of regret, warranted or not. These personality types can be surprisingly competitive, measuring themselves against peers and hoping others notice their accomplishments, then retreat, suddenly becoming averse to conflict, leading them to apologize for or avoid confrontations – even those that ended in beneficial discussions.

These personalities may falter occasionally in their self-confidence, but ultimately they are driven to improve and achieve. At the end of the day, they have no trouble blowing off some steam and enjoying a much-needed break, either. Social Engagers enthusiastically pursue stimulating and exciting experiences, especially with a group of friends. They much prefer to dive into an experience than to sit down for a reserved evaluation, though many will naturally regret their hot-headed lack of planning down the road.

This push and pull between ambition and alarm, impulse and caution, highs and lows can itself be quite stressful, but it's all part of this Strategy's charm. These personality types are often restless in pursuit of their goals to improve their circumstances, but show their passion by indulging their desires through some earned fun (and maybe shopping for something impressive). Social Engagers work hard at their personal and professional development, striving to meet all manner of stringent standards, but they lead dynamic lives as well, filled with companionship, sharing adventures and accomplishments with others whenever possible. Whatever direction they pull, they are sure to pull the crowd with them.

While the Strategies are important, this series of e-books simply doesn't have the space to explore them properly. For now, we'll focus on the inner core: The four Roles.

Look to future updates to the series and our Academy to see this aspect explored more fully.

Who Is “The Protagonist?”



Throughout this book, we'll discuss how Protagonists' traits manifest themselves into a complete personality type. Every type has their own way of expressing traits, resulting in unique interplays that can be quite different from other types, even if they have many traits in common. We'll look at Protagonists' own way of living life in terms of personal growth, platonic and romantic relationships, parenting, and academic and professional development. The following paragraphs are but a brief overview of the Protagonist personality type – these areas will be explored in much greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Personal Growth

Although the art of delegation is not lost on Protagonists, few feel comfortable behind the scenes. They generally prefer to roll up their sleeves and work as hard – or harder – than anyone else to accomplish their goals. Their dedication to a cause is obvious, an inspiration that serves to rally others in the face of setbacks both great and small. People with this personality type also love to mentor and elevate others, sharing whatever knowledge and skills they have cultivated to try and move

humanity forward as a group.

Of course, being so capable and outgoing can have a downside – Protagonists often flirt with arrogance and bossiness as they encourage everyone to join them in striving to become the best possible versions of themselves. They also can be somewhat resistant to contrasting views; they adhere to a strict code, having decided on what they see as an ideal path, so they aren't often comfortable with anything that goes against that choice.

Anyone who challenges Protagonists' firm, idealistic beliefs may find themselves the subject of pressure, which is intended to be beneficial. Protagonists sometimes carry their sincere desire to help people too far, resulting in controlling behavior as they try to "fix" others. Protagonists tend to be self-righteous, especially toward those who differ from them in fundamental ways.

However, even if they can sometimes be like powerful trains, Protagonists are not immovable, as they are always seeking to improve themselves and gain knowledge. When someone gets past their willful opinions with solid facts or a truly brilliant idea, they are fully capable of reorienting themselves to a new, better track. They are determined to be right, even if it means admitting that they are wrong. This dynamic ability is one of their greatest gifts, and it helps prevent their views from becoming stale.

Friends, Family, and Relationships

Protagonists have a charismatic manner that's connected to a sincere belief in the value of people, as well as a ready willingness to give of their own energy. If they get a little bossy, it's often because they care deeply about others. The hope that Protagonists have for humanity is not simply an abstract philosophical virtue, but an

actively lived experience. Every person they meet is a delightful mystery they cannot wait to unveil. Protagonists possess a forthright compassion and scrupulousness that can disarm even the staunchest detractors, and those qualities help them win people over as friends.

Of course, their social abilities extend to romantic interests, as well. Their overt friendliness can be a bit of a shock at first, so energetic that it can make people wonder whether they are sincere. However, the emotional connections they establish eliminate such doubts, and people become smitten by not only their warm energy, but also their depth. Whether with friends or a lover, Protagonists love the feeling of being honestly connected – it's a natural and sincere process.

Their connectedness also makes Protagonists deeply caring parents, boldly determined to create well-being and growth in their children. Seeing those they care for excel and prosper are among the most rewarding things they can experience, especially when they feel as though they've had a hand in that development.

Academic and Professional Development

Their desire for positive involvement with others helps Protagonists achieve great things in the classroom and on the job, as their forthright attitude opens doors. Their bold charisma gives them confidence with social aspects of work or school, though their enthusiasm can sometimes falter without people around to energize them. Whereas many might struggle to focus on tasks due to social stress, Protagonists thrive among peers rather than in solitude.

Fervor has a downside though, and Protagonists are not without their vulnerabilities and limits. For this highly driven, idealistic type, anything less than complete success can feel like frustrating failure. In response, they may push themselves too hard.

When their own imaginative visions are simply out of the realm of possibility and they become increasingly stubborn, they can grind themselves down.

For Protagonists, no evil is too great that it cannot be overcome by vigorous and steadfast opposition, which they're eager to participate in and lead. When they find themselves disagreeing with those who believe differently, they can become embroiled in interpersonal struggles. They're just as likely to win hearts over through stepping forward to change people's minds for the better through their own inspired vision.

On That Note ...

This introduction has provided only a brief outline of Protagonists' potential strengths and weaknesses. The following chapters discuss these topics in much greater detail and provide further information as well as suggestions for improvement. Personal growth is not just a chapter in this book, it's a mission woven into every part of Protagonists' lives. Through self-understanding, people can overcome and rebalance behaviors that aren't productive – or pleasant. Delving into personality type is incredibly valuable to this end, and the following information will prove useful.

Personal Growth



Built on a Foundation

Personal development is supreme for Protagonists, as it is with all Diplomats. Their devotion to growth starts with themselves and then extends to those around them. As Intuitive Extraverts, both their internally based values and their outward sharing of those values transform them into their best selves. Their development, in many ways, rests on others. Navel-gazing alone is likely to bore these gregarious folks and leave them feeling unchallenged. However, they still need to attend to their inner lives if they are to grow.

This means that people with this personality type are both creative and reactive in their development. They form their convictions and look to the world to interpret what their ideals mean for their lives. While not natural sticklers for measurable results, they need to sense that what they do has a real impact beyond theory and beliefs, or their principles mean little. Although not necessarily tied to how others use what they bring to the table, Protagonists are, nonetheless, concerned with

others' responses. When the creative and the reactive balance, they're likely to feel fulfilled.

Their dependence on feedback means they must pay attention to their effectiveness on some level, making Protagonists more strategic and analytical than might be assumed. They employ a kind of rationality that, on the surface, mimics those with a more pronounced Thinking trait; however, they still ground their decisions in morality and harmony, and their view of growth is likely to reflect a heartfelt need to behave altruistically. When it all works together, these types exhibit true wisdom.

Message of a Mentor

People with the Protagonist personality type are warm individuals who don't have any trouble inspiring other people or getting them to listen. They're passionate and strong-willed, and they quickly grasp the big picture, which they transform into a teachable moment whenever possible. They're on a life mission to spread whichever message appeals to them both in word and deed, and they find in that mission their impetus for growth. Whether or not they formally hold a title like "leader" or "teacher," people with this personality type experience and foster their growth most when they find ways to share their wisdom with the world.

Their rare combination of intuition, sustained focus, and social skills means Protagonists may reach impressive heights in their chosen careers. Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States, exhibits Protagonist traits: Many compare his style of explaining national concerns to that of a professor lecturing to students about nuances, intricacies, and shared values that require consideration. He often closes his speeches with a call to embrace an attitude or to take an action. Not every

Protagonist is a professor or president, but they often find themselves mentoring others throughout their lives.

Although these types are mostly outgoing and enjoy leading from the front of the room, they can also play a subtler part when sharing their values. One Protagonist might be a soulful, charismatic friend whose insights on personal matters draw in advice-seekers. Another might manage a soup kitchen and provide casual yet inspirational counseling while ladling beef stew into the bowls of hungry clients. A Protagonist corporate middle manager working in commerce may establish a reputation by understanding that good customer service is a kind of ethical behavior.

People with this personality type can take countless paths and still express their basic temperament. But no matter how they choose to go through life, their sense of growth depends on actively imparting their values and ideals to others.

Motivation and Development

The following qualities describe components necessary to Protagonists' growth. The first three are motivational, reflective qualities, and fulfilling them fuels their efforts toward finding a more satisfying life by answering "why" questions. The final two are more tactical, proactive, more focused on "how."

Reflective Qualities

These qualities involve the motivational self-awareness that Protagonists must continue to nurture in order to be happy, productive, and fulfilled:

- **Self-esteem** speaks to Protagonists' sense of worth. They find their sense of worth in not only how they express compassion, but also how they spread it and recruit others to their missions in life.
- **Self-respect** speaks to how much they like themselves. Protagonists like themselves best when they do good for others.
- **Self-confidence** is the source of energy that propels Protagonists forward in life. For this type, confidence comes from knowing that their actions are products of their genuine selves.

Development Strategies

These qualities speak to Protagonists' more active aspects of personal growth:

- **Self-evolution** describes the personal growth process these types engage in to fully develop their potential. It involves methods and tactics to satisfy their self-esteem, self-respect, and self-confidence needs.
- **Self-responsibility** is Protagonists' ability to take charge of their decisions and consequences without being dependent on others or accepting all that happens as fate. When they attribute their actions honestly, they can accept credit and blame with integrity, and they know what they can control and what they can't.

To meet their self-esteem, self-respect, and self-confidence needs, Protagonists must take a responsible approach to life and develop their core strengths and interests. When they meet these needs, the result, by definition, is a significant and happy life. However, if they don't satisfy these needs, they can face overwhelming difficulty as they try to improve their self-esteem.

When Protagonists feel a lack of self-confidence, they can overcompensate with superficial behaviors that mimic real confidence, resulting in displays of bluster and pushiness – a far departure from their usual egalitarian approach. Because all the qualities discussed here are interdependent and overlap in many places, a disruption in one area easily disrupts others.

In the following sections, we will first discuss the characteristics of Protagonists in their ideal, balanced, and fully developed form. When these motivational aspects are used in a balanced way, they can help Protagonists lead fulfilling, productive, and happy lives.

Then we will describe the tendencies that emerge if these aspects become unbalanced. These represent departures from healthy, productive motivational strategies, leading to adverse effects when Protagonists are disconnected from their true selves.

Finally, we will discuss what can be done to improve balance in each of the motivational aspects and ways to address potential barriers to balance. Exercises and tips will be included to provide support, as well as concrete actions to rebalance their personal growth and development.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a sense of self-worth, and Protagonists create their sense of worth by exercising compassion. When Protagonists are nurturing their self-esteem, they deal in interpersonal relationships that are much deeper than mere social connections – some may even say they forge spiritual links with others. When assuming their

teacher or leader roles, Protagonists at their best share their compassion by inspiring people to embrace their own growth and to live better lives.

Balanced Self-Esteem

Building Connections and Seeking Purpose

Protagonists need to exercise empathy to feel they're fulfilling their purpose. These Extraverts specialize in big-picture causes that affect groups rather than individuals, but they also excel in one-on-one connections when necessary. Protagonists often work in helping or teaching professions where they can readily express their compassion and enjoy a sense of community.

Their creativity and empathy help these types put a unique, personal spin on what they share with others. Although they can build a compassionate message from straightforward facts and ideas, they're just as likely to use a compelling narrative to inspire their listeners.

For Protagonists, compassion goes beyond simply "getting the job done." When providing a solution to someone's problem, they may offer unorthodox suggestions that deeply affect the person they're helping. These types will nudge others to greater heights to revolutionize their lives. When their compassionate acts are creative and groundbreaking undertakings rather than "just helping," Protagonists feel invigorated.

Mentoring as Compassion

Protagonists can content themselves without an official leadership label, but their combination of imagination, compassionate sociability, and ability to organize often manifests as a "take-charge" attitude. Their leadership style is inspirational, and

though they're more likely to express it as a subtle influence rather than barked orders, the effect is no less compelling.

People with this personality type place tremendous value on mentoring – working closely to teach individuals gives these types a sense of value second only to their creative approach to compassion, and they intertwine compassion so tightly with leadership that they're unlikely to distinguish them as separate.

Any type can fall under the seductive allure of power. Protagonists, however, are more egalitarian than most types, and they can feel uncomfortable with too prominent a position in any hierarchy. They find peace as the head of a group only when they feel they are there to help pull others up to their level. If a position demands an authoritarian relationship to other group members, Protagonists are likely to abandon the role – or change it. Power is meaningless to them if they can't share its benefit with other people.

Unbalanced Self-Esteem

Theatrical Empathy

To compensate for a flagging sense of self-esteem, Protagonists can smother others by identifying too closely with their emotions and problems – and being too aggressive about offering solutions. Typically, they prefer to help others live their own lives and grow in their own unique ways. But if their own self-esteem is lacking, they may see the stakes as high and apply pressure rather than provide gentle guidance, in the hope of proving themselves. Rather than lending a hand, they may take over.

Those who find themselves on this wayward path may become performers on the stage of various altruistic dramas. To puff themselves up, they might insist that their way is the only way out of a shared dilemma. They may try to solve problems with cleverness alone. For a while, they may not realize that their zeal serves their own sense of importance more than it serves the needs of other people. However, when this idea eventually catches up to them – and it likely will – they may feel like a fraud, consequently experiencing a crisis of self-confidence.

The Sacrificed Leader

Protagonists' ideals can also tip them off-balance in the other direction. If they embrace their role as that of a servant, as idealistic leaders often do, they can take subservience too far. When their value and purpose need bolstering for whatever reason, they can amp up their sacrificial mindset and forget to compensate with self-care.

Healthy sacrifice as a leader doesn't mean becoming weak and exhausted. Once these types take on too much and exhaust their physical, emotional, and mental reserves, their reputation as leaders can diminish. Because signaling leadership with sacrifice can lessen their leadership capabilities, they may find that the very behavior meant to bolster their self-esteem hurts it instead.

Rebalancing Self-Esteem

Eye on the Prize

When self-esteem becomes unbalanced, Protagonists may try to cover substance with style, causing them to become something they dislike: inauthentic. To restore

self-esteem, they need to return to making heartfelt contributions instead of putting on a show to prove how compassionate they are.

The first step to rebalancing can be to refocus on that which gives Protagonists their sense of value. Although their charismatic flair can be their flashiest asset, their enthusiasm, leadership, and cleverness don't define this personality type's worth – they build their self-esteem through how they *use* these assets to change the world. Anchoring themselves to their purpose, rather than their talents, helps them restore a sense of what they're all about.

This may take some time for reflection, and they may want to step out of the spotlight for a while.

One way to do this may involve planning a private retreat to create a mission statement:

- Carve out a time and a place to simply be alone. Depending on circumstances, it can be hours or days.
- In writing, describe your purpose. It can be uncomplicated and declarative, and it requires little or no explanation – even a list of values, ideas, or important parts of life will do.
- Spend time doing something physical – paint a picture, do yoga, hike, go canoeing, play a musical instrument, shoot baskets, chop wood – anything that requires movement without a lot of complex thinking or decision-making. A lot of introspection happens when Protagonists *aren't* trying.
- Complete the retreat by spending up to 15 minutes writing a brief mission statement. An ideal mission statement is simple and coherent; someone else could casually read it and understand.

Because Protagonists continuously experience empathy and look for ways to help others, they may think there is no reason to codify their “mission.” But such a mission statement, written down and available, may be exactly what’s needed when life’s storms strike. Like a lighthouse’s beam cutting through the fog, a guiding statement can illumine the proper course for Protagonists.

Even Leaders Sleep

Protagonists who feel duty-bound to serve others can learn to both give and take without diminishing either activity. The obvious antidote to burnout from self-sacrifice is self-care: This means putting one’s own needs first, at least temporarily. Finding time to nurture the body, mind, and soul is essential for everyone, especially those who give as much as Protagonists.

Taking time away from helping others may feel selfish or callous when there are so many needs in the world and so little time, but occasional breaks are not selfish. In fact, self-nurturing and periods of restoration are essential to their future efforts. Such efforts elevate Protagonists’ effectiveness to benefit other people, which, in turn, has a strong influence on Protagonists’ self-esteem.

Self-care means getting enough sleep, eating well, cultivating personal relationships, exercising, and having fun. The following exercise starts with fun and can help Protagonists rebalance their approach to self-care:

- Take a deep breath. Breathing is always a great way to start self-care.
- Think of a fun activity from your past that you haven’t enjoyed recently. Avoid old hobbies you abandoned or lost interest in; instead, consider activities you wouldn’t normally make time for, maybe something fun you’ve never tried

before. You might consider bowling, trying karaoke, water skiing, or going to a movie.

- Set a time and date to partake in the fun activity. Plan for the best possible version of your good time: Give yourself the time and space to do things how you want. If you want, invite someone along – just remember, this is for you!
- Let the fun experience set the tone for a while afterward. Use the memory of it to lighten up when things get heavy.

Having fun is just the start, though. It's essential for Protagonists to find time for themselves, even if it means designating it on their calendars. Eating, sleeping, loving, living, and having fun contribute to a healthy lifestyle and, ultimately, a productive one.

Self-Respect

Protagonists who have self-respect are simply people who like themselves. When self-respect is healthy, they don't fear looking in the metaphorical mirror because they like what they see. People who like themselves are happier and more satisfied with their lives. They're also likely to care for themselves better and make smarter life choices. People do more for those they like and tend to treat them better; the same principle applies to liking oneself.

Balanced Self-Respect

Standing for Good

Protagonists like themselves best when they're doing good for others, but it's much more than performing simple good deeds. These types live in a world of ideas and visions that reflect their need to make the world a better place. For them, virtuous

missions rest on an ideological base, depending on circumstances in only a secondary fashion. Their principles rule. When everything comes together, and they help others according to those inner principles, Protagonists boost their positive self-regard.

People with this personality type want to be a caring, impactful force in their world, and their mental mirrors reflect something positive when they find ways to do so. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to depict Protagonists as one-dimensional – not all of them want to sacrifice everything for a cause. Some of them live quite normal lives; taking their kids to Little League, going out to dinner with friends, and enjoying other pedestrian pleasures and experiences. Some Protagonists use their altruistic impulses to change the world, and some use them to change the neighborhood.

Protagonists who balance their lives understand there is more to their existence than their work. They have other features to like about themselves – features that complement their unselfish deeds yet extend beyond them. Sometimes inspiration comes from living well. Altruism is valuable, but life gets its meaning from many places – Protagonists who live that truth set a wholesome example for the people who look to them with respect. These exemplary Protagonists have intimate relationships, find time for rest and restoration, and spend time alone with their thoughts occasionally. This balance makes Protagonists effortlessly likeable.

Standing with Charisma

When meeting their purpose in life is the basis of their self-esteem, Protagonists' outgoing nature and charisma play a big part. Protagonists can take rightful pride in their skillful ability to impress and persuade others. They can inspire and motivate

others to follow their lead toward achieving idealistic goals. Their enthusiasm is mesmerizing, and they have no problem attracting others to their cause.

Saving the world – or at least their small corner of it – isn't a lone effort, and Protagonists are more at home gathering groups than they are motivating individuals (although they do both in ample quantities). Competent recruiters and leaders need persuasive talents, and Protagonists are likely to see their effectiveness in swaying others as a primary way to enjoy self-respect.

Unbalanced Self-Respect

Identities and Expectations

Some Protagonists can take ownership of beliefs, causes, issues, or projects to the point where their identity feels dependent on them. What they like about themselves may be less about their inherent qualities and more about the pursuits to which they dedicate themselves. Committed and strong-willed, they intensely invest themselves and treat their passions as callings worthy of great time and effort. If they over-identify with their undertakings, their self-assessment can hinge on matters over which they have little control. In such cases, if outside forces hinder or challenge their pursuits, it can severely affect their self-respect, especially if the disruption feels like a failure.

Few can meet Protagonists' high expectations, including themselves at times. Some struggle to accept both their own and other people's weaknesses. They may fantasize about helping marginalized groups who are poor and oppressed but expect a lot out of everyone in the process. Inspiring and encouraging people often is easy for Protagonists, but they tend to expect a revolution overnight. They sometimes forget that their own appetite for change comes from lengthy consideration, whereas the

people they're inspiring are experiencing a new possibility. The discrepancy can make Protagonists feel like failures when success takes time, leading to wounded self-respect.

Unwanted Help

When they feel good about themselves, their good works flow naturally as they advance through their lives. However, Protagonists who depend on their deeds as fuel for self-respect can defy their natures by pushing others to receive their help. But other people must want help before interventions can be helpful; some Protagonists, especially those whose mental self-image isn't so positive, may try to boost their self-respect by forcing their help on others.

The unfortunate consequence of forcing such unwanted help is that Protagonists do the opposite of what they intend. Instead of helping others find their own path to growth, happiness, or wellness, they push them onto the potentially wrong path. Although their need to feel better about themselves may blind them at first, Protagonists' characteristic insight eventually makes itself known. They may realize they lost sight of some important personal standards, then admit that, on some level, they focused on their own needs more than on the needs of others.

Rebalancing Self-Respect

Matching Expectations to Reality

Protagonists' towering expectations can lead to constant disappointment. However, telling these idealistic types to "be realistic" or to "lower their expectations" typically fails to resonate. Putting altruistic ambitions into a more practical context may be challenging for a type that expects a lot of themselves, but it's often necessary for

rebalancing their self-respect. If every undertaking feels like a failure, it's hard to appreciate the effort. Protagonists need to recognize that sometimes their lofty visions set them up for disappointment.

Discouragement from lack of progress, as well as pushback from other people, can compound the problem for Protagonists. High expectations that aren't met can also create a need to control the uncontrollable: Rather than face the pain of more disappointment, these types may try to force success. Learning to do their best, and then let go of the rest, can help them break the cycle of harmfully blaming themselves when missions become stalled or never realized at all.

Here are some steps Protagonists can take to practice letting go of things that aren't helpful or edifying:

- Find three material things to get rid of. Perhaps they haven't been used in the past year. Perhaps they're no longer useful or interesting.
- Rid yourself of the three things in a permanent way: Give them away to a friend or neighbor, donate them, or dispose of them in the trash.
- After getting rid of the things, consider what it means to no longer have them.

The same concept applies to less material things, such as ideas, memories, or emotions, that might linger long after they serve their purpose. Considering how things help them – or don't – helps Protagonists know when they can move on without them. Learning to let go can be a cleansing experience that helps Protagonists on physical, mental, and spiritual levels.

Gaining a Clear Vision

Protagonists who force their help onto other people risk violating boundaries and upsetting relationships, so it's important for these types to uphold a clear vision of their direction and to follow it with integrity. For this personality type, that means helping other people on their *own* paths toward growth. Helping people restores self-respect for Protagonists, but only when they support the autonomy of the people they help.

Fortunately, Protagonists project their expectations on others only when they lose sight of what's important to them. Part of rebalancing their self-respect can mean sorting out the difference between their needs and the needs of others, then attending to those of others. Defining their essential intentions can help Protagonists achieve clarity in this area.

Maintaining a clear vision starts by defining core values. Core values aren't things to create; people discover them by examining what they consider important in life. The following exercise is a way that Protagonists can define their core values:

- Write a response for each of the following five prompts. Take a few minutes for each. Be as specific as possible.
 - I was most happy when ...
 - I was most satisfied when ...
 - I was most proud when ...
 - I was most angry when ...
 - If I could do anything to make the world better, I would ...

- Based on your answers, write a two-sentence value statement about what is important and serves as your motivation to act in a way that impacts the world. In the statement, describe how you can live your best life.

Keeping a clear view of their purpose and mission can help Protagonists maintain their self-respect, giving them paths that sustain their ideals and goals. A written value statement serves as a guide to help them stay in line with their basic intentions.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is the internal impetus that gives people the emotional energy needed to move forward. When Protagonists feel self-confident, it's because of an innate certainty that assures them they're on the right side of what's genuine and true according to their standards.

Balanced Self-Confidence

Intentionally Authentic

For people with this personality type, a balanced sense of self-confidence comes from feeling connected to their true selves. They loathe anything they regard as phony and always strive to be real. Masks, lies, and insincerity offend Protagonists with an intensity that can surprise even their closest friends. A sense of sureness and conviction found within themselves, as well as rejection of dishonesty, provide the motivation they need to act confidently.

To feel confident, people with this personality type must remain true to who they are. To feel confident in their relationships, they must feel others are just as honest. This need for truthfulness goes beyond simply telling the truth all the time –Protagonists

must live their truths. A profound commitment to truth lies beneath their self-reliance and their life pursuits. It affects their confidence if, for even a moment, they believe they're insincere or pretentious.

Knowing Themselves

The root of the self-confidence of Protagonists is their self-understanding. Only when they know their true selves can they behave faithfully toward themselves. These outwardly-focused individuals prefer to share their visions and beliefs with others, but self-confidence also requires introspection as its starting point. Protagonists are most confident when they give adequate attention to both the things they think and the things they do.

Protagonists may need to more deliberately follow the ancient Greek dictum to “know thyself.” This takes some introspection about ethics and beliefs. Their default setting for this task may be to look to their own behaviors. However, Protagonists base their actions on deeply held principles, and they must also decide whether they're living up to those standards. By considering both their behaviors and their principles, they frame what it means to be genuine. This allows Protagonists to live in a way that reflects their true nature. The balance of internal understanding and external meaning yields the confidence to energize their intentions into accomplishments.

Unbalanced Self-Confidence

Finding an Ever-Changing Self

Being genuine is a wholesome source of confidence. But if the sense of self isn't treated as a living, changing entity, it can be unstable. Protagonists set their goals

around growth and are likely to experience personal changes throughout their lives. “Self,” for them, isn’t fixed in time and space – it isn’t static. As a result, neither are the things that give them self-confidence.

When unconfident Protagonists experience variations in their own sense of self and purpose, they may hold on to the security of the old at the expense of the new. The obvious flaw is that, with growth, some part of them has changed. If they rely solely on what gave them confidence in the past, they can discover they no longer espouse the exact same standards or beliefs. They may see themselves as unintentional frauds, and their self-confidence may crumble. Only the words “I am no longer that person” can bring them closer to the truth.

Refusal to accept change on a less introspective level also comes into play. Protagonists can become overly invested in their causes, making it hard for them to change course once they commit. Not all those they lead may understand or accept inevitable changes, complicating matters even further. Because Protagonists’ self-confidence comes from feeling connected to their genuine selves, feeling obliged to an obsolete “self,” whether because of internal inflexibility or external resistance, can leave them feeling uncertain and drained.

Unintentionally Manipulative

On the other side of the scale, Protagonists can also suffer from an overabundance of confidence, which they may use to manipulate others. If Protagonists manipulate others, they usually do so unwittingly: empathizing with another person, understanding their concerns, coming up with a solution to their problem, and then convincing them it’s the right course of action – without fully considering what the other person needs or wants. In darker, desperate moments, they can even resort to

more conscious, Machiavellian persuasiveness if they feel it's justified – and extravagant self-confidence can seem to provide all the justification necessary.

Confidence becomes a problem for Protagonists when they project their visions over the facts, and because they're usually adept at communicating their ideas, their enthusiasm can be contagious. It's important that they recognize and understand their persuasive powers, then strive to use them wisely. Even the best intentions can produce unforeseen negative results when Protagonists fail to balance their self-confidence against others' best interests.

Rebalancing Self-Confidence

Embracing Change

Protagonists are reasonably comfortable with change, in the sense that growth is change. But they prefer change when it's manageable and predictable – something that is the product of their goals and remains in their control. If it comes too quickly, too randomly, or if they face resistance, change can make Protagonists lose confidence. This is especially true if their definition of themselves become muddled in the process, if they feel like they've lost some sense of themselves. One of the ways to manage this is to encourage flexibility and security in the face of changes, small or large.

For Protagonists, monitoring their reactions to change can be a lifelong task, and it requires vigilance. Paying attention to their reactions is likely the most basic skill when it comes to appreciating and embracing evolution. Change is famously one of the few constants in the universe, and its abundance provides ample opportunity for observation. Because change can be unpredictable in everyday life, however, here are a variety of ways Protagonists can experiment:

- Find a piece of rejected clothing in the back of your closet. Perhaps it was a gift from an older relative or an unfashionable friend. Wear it just for one day.
- Pick something that is an elective daily habit, then change it for a week. For example, if you eat lunch at the same three restaurants repeatedly, avoid eating at any of them for a week. Find entirely new restaurants.
- For a week, drive home from work using new and different routes.
- If you have the flexibility, turn the day's schedule on its head. Take the task you usually do last and put it first, and flip the rest of the schedule in the same manner.
- Notice any reaction to these artificial adjustments. Although they may not feel as permanent or as profound as other changes, they likely will reveal the way you feel about and react to change. And they may help you train yourself to handle change.

Finding a degree of comfort in the face of change can help Protagonists maintain a sense of control – central to a balanced sense of self-confidence.

About Manipulation

Everybody uses indirect methods to influence others from time to time, and the human condition involves playing both roles. Judging the malignancy of manipulation involves judging the motivating factors, the degree, and the frequency. Protagonists who manipulate are likely to do it unconsciously and for reasons they feel are benign. However, when the frequency and intensity get out of hand, they can rebalance it only if they admit they have a capacity for exploitation. The first step is accepting that all humans indirectly sway others all the time, even values-minded Protagonists.

Once they accept that some methods they use are manipulative, they can begin to examine them and decide how to be less calculating. When people manipulate, they nudge others using indirect tactics. To counter that impulse, Protagonists can ask for what they want directly and succinctly as a habit, so others are clear about their requests and informed enough to decide whether they want to acquiesce or not. This doesn't mean that Protagonists' persuasive charms can never be useful tools, but they may prefer to avoid mind games once they're aware of their capacity to harm.

The following exercises can help Protagonists develop consciousness in this area:

- Develop a list of a minimum of five things to ask other people to do. If necessary, remember past situations when such requests were not made and use those. However, the more current and relevant the requests, the more useful they're likely to be.
- Ask a trusted friend, family member, counselor, or colleague to play the role of scorekeeper.
- Going down the list, write each request in two steps.
 - Step one: Write the request in a simple, actionable sentence of fewer than 10 words. (Count them.)
 - Step two: Write an explanation of why it needs to be done in no more than two medium-length sentences.
- Ask your activity partner to read and score the requests using the following scale.
 - If both the request and the reason were not clear and direct, and/or both were too long, give it a score of one point. (Use this score if neither part of the request met the instructions perfectly.)

- If either the request or the reason was not clear or direct, or it was too long, give it a score of two points. (Use this score only if one-half of the process did not comply with the instructions.)
- Give the request three points if both parts of the request complied with the instructions.
- Together, go over the reasons for the scores, and then repeat the exercise until all the requests on the list earn a score of three points.

Self-Evolution

The term “self-evolution” describes a more purposeful effort of establishing one’s identity and direction. It involves tactics and strategies needed to fulfill self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-respect needs. Protagonists, like most Diplomats, not only enjoy the process of self-evolution, but also find meaning in the process itself; they see it as being as important as the results.

Balanced Self-Evolution

Constant Self-Improvement

Self-evolution goes beyond just self-improvement. It also involves Protagonists developing a deep personal understanding of themselves, as seen through their values, goals, and purposes. This reflection helps them define themselves.

However, understanding without any clear tactics for further growth amounts to navel-gazing, and people with this personality type are unlikely to find much satisfaction that way. Much of their value comes from how they interact with the world and contribute to it, and a plan ensures they do so with satisfaction.

Protagonists exercising this effort strive to increase their ability to help others grow and to help society, or at least their corner of it, become a better place.

Self-Development as a Sacred Duty

Protagonists are likely to see growth and development as not only thing to aspire toward, but sacred duties. Whether they stand on secular, religious, or spiritual foundations, they typically have a missionary zeal for the matters that excite them – and those matters usually involve leading people to a better place.

For Protagonists, it's an abdication of duty to undertake their missions without the right equipment. Their most important equipment includes an understanding of what other people need as well as the ability to lead and persuade. Self-improvement and greater insight are serious and constant business for this personality type.

Unbalanced Self-Evolution

Extreme Growth

Some Protagonists find it difficult to balance all the parts of their lives because they can become almost obsessively involved with their work and side projects. Self-care, self-image, relationships, and recreation can all lose priority while they try to save the world. Protagonists may become so focused on making others' lives better that they forget to take some time to really live their own. Although much of their growth happens through their interactions with others, they still need to experience the growth that comes from experiencing life.

Some Protagonists swing too far the other way, becoming so involved in self-improvement that they neglect other areas of their lives, such as social connections or basic work responsibilities. Spiritual, emotional, and ethical development in the

pursuit of their true selves or purpose can remove them from what most would call the “real world.” Even though they’re unlikely to cloister themselves in some self-made hermitage, Protagonists may be so focused on their potential that they fail to engage fully in the here and now.

Satisfaction Just Out of Reach

One of the greatest barriers that Protagonists face in their self-evolution process is unevenness in how they develop. Because of their strong desire to grow into their “true selves,” they may get caught up in the process of evolution, losing sight of who they already are.

As wonderful (and necessary) as self-evolution is, obsessing over growth can do as much harm as good. Tunnel vision can lead to constant dissatisfaction, and the resulting discontentment can cause Protagonists to burn out. Even the most selfless, humble, or confident individuals need the occasional reward of knowing they’re gaining traction. The frustration of always striving yet never experiencing the pleasure of growth can be demoralizing and demotivating. Protagonists who never enjoy rich, satisfying moments along the way may struggle to find joy or happiness in their development.

Rebalancing Self-Evolution

Embracing Growth Responsibly

Determined Protagonists can be restless and demanding when it comes to personal growth. They like to explore everything, including the secrets of human nature, principles, and causes, even the depths of their own minds.

This focus on growth is one of the essential qualities that distinguish Protagonists from many other personality types. Mature Protagonists understand that self-evolution is a progression, not an end itself. They take thoughtful, deliberate steps in development, and they balance their evolutionary path with a holistic approach. However, their focus isn't only on "becoming" – they occasionally allow themselves simply to "be" as well. They weigh spontaneity and serendipitous insights against broader, organized ideas that ensure a connection to the more mundane but necessary parts of life. Dreams and visions don't rule their growth, but rather combine with more practical considerations.

Improvisation in the arts is a metaphor for this mindset. When someone plays improvisational jazz, they're aware of how music works, and they know how to make it work. A jazz saxophone player composes music on the spot, but only because she knows the rules and has a vision for what the song is and where it's going. There are plotlines, themes, and moods to the music. It would be unbearable to listen to someone who didn't know music if they stood up and tried to do the same thing. Protagonists who balance their self-evolution learn to play their lives like smooth, improvisational jazz – with some skills, some dreams, some principles, some clear direction, some freedom, and some self-care, all combined.

Here are some things Protagonists can try to rebalance their self-development, through a study of improvisation:

- In the next week, spend some time experiencing some improvisation. Type "improv" or "improvisation" into streaming video services for a host of options.
- Watch some examples of improvisation in music, drama, visual art, and beyond.

- Once you've observed, seek out instructional material on improv. It doesn't matter which medium. Just spend some time appreciating the many facets of improvisation.
- Write down what you've observed about improvisational art. How can you use your findings to approach self-evolution?

Living life spontaneously yet staying rooted in principles and strategy creates a sublime balance in the purposeful lives of Protagonists. Those who find this balance are likely to be effective and find their paths to their best selves.

Enjoying Plateaus

In mountain climbing, a plateau is a place to stop, rest, and enjoy the view – to appreciate the terrain just traveled. Protagonists who find themselves driven by growth can look for plateaus in their journey through life. If satisfaction feels elusive, it may be that, in their intense wish to grow, they haven't taken time to notice that reasons for satisfaction and happiness abound. A lack of joy or even contentment can suggest the need for Protagonists to stop and evaluate their lives and accomplishments as the joyous moments they are.

Like most people, Protagonists need to feel some sense of success along the way. There is a reason humans celebrate, beyond a built-in desire to party – celebrations are a chance to stop and appreciate progress. Celebrations reinforce positive moments. Fêtes revel in past accomplishments and launch the participants into new ones. Protagonists who aren't experiencing satisfaction may simply need to find opportunities to celebrate.

Some ways this type can try to rebalance their sense of self-evolution:

- Gather family and friends to toast all accomplishment of the past 30 days. Make room to celebrate everyone, yourself included. (If no accomplishments come to mind, ask those attending for help coming up with ideas.)
- Write down three new goals to pursue. Plan an event to recognize their completion. It doesn't have to be extravagant. Just stop and recognize success.
- Look for ways to help others celebrate. Find one reason to congratulate one other person this month. Bring a box of donuts to work for the occasion, or bring home flowers or wine. Bring family and friends into the circle to raise a glass to growth. Just make sure the gesture is attached to the accomplishment.

Taking time to acknowledge accomplishments and celebrate progress is great way to reinforce self-evolution and to motivate greater attention to strategies for development. Milestones are important motivators. By not appreciating them, Protagonists deny themselves a fair assessment of their true progress.

Self-Responsibility

Self-responsibility is Protagonists' ability to take charge of their decisions and the consequences without being dependent on others or believing all that happens is fate. By honestly attributing their actions, they can take both credit and blame with integrity, as well as accept what is and isn't in their control.

Balanced Self-Responsibility

Independent Choices

Although they are collaborative by nature, Protagonists who practice balanced self-responsibility think independently. They decide their priorities and follow their interests, maintaining reasonable independence while also sustaining a healthy respect for others' wisdom and experience. This sense of independence allows them to enforce their personal boundaries without guilt – and lets them afford others the same right. They engage in self-care to avoid burnout and vulnerability, knowing that good stewardship of their own health and welfare is part of being responsible.

This plays out in their personal lives as well as in the leadership and mentoring roles they often occupy. Having a sense of personal responsibility, making decisions with authority, and being accountable are the marks of people who lead with integrity. U.S. President Truman had a sign on his desk reminding him: “The buck stops here.” Protagonists, when they keep these characteristics balanced, can be comfortable prominently placing that sign in full view of others. However, this doesn't mean they encourage others to surrender their own responsibility, nor do they force others to depend on them. Helping others grow means helping them come to grips with their own duties; when Protagonists are on the right course, they're strong examples of what that means.

Proactive Approach

People with the Protagonist personality type who practice balanced self-responsibility are proactive. They know their core values and use them to achieve their personal goals. Self-responsibility goes beyond self-understanding, however. It

includes carrying out plans, taking responsibility for their results – both good and bad – and recognizing that the results impact others.

Most people don't have perfect lives or meet their goals flawlessly. Growth often emerges from trial and error, and failures often contribute to learning and development. Protagonists who act of their own accord understand their responsibilities when they do so, accept the results, and learn from their experiences, and their development vigorously benefits. The essential component is accepting responsibility for the result. Only then do they realize growth.

Unbalanced Self-Responsibility

Perfectionists

Protagonists are passionate and show great determination when they care about something. Being responsible individuals, they may stall rather than do anything that can fail, because they would be accountable for the failure and accountable to the people affected by their decisions. Many suffer from logistical difficulties when trying to follow their passions and goals. Usually skillful at organization and highly proactive, some individuals with this personality type struggle with getting started. Protagonists' perfectionism can get in the way of progress when there are so many ways to achieve their goals or chase their passions. In their effort to take the perfect path forward, people with this personality type can become indecisive for weeks, months, years, or even a lifetime.

Procrastination stemming from perfectionism can be especially difficult for these outgoing people. As if their indecision isn't intimidating enough, they're also likely to grapple with it in the company of other people, making it a more public matter. In addition, they tend to take leadership positions, so their decisions affect not only

themselves, but also those they lead. If they suffer from any insecurity, they may futilely search for a perfect solution. Unfortunately, life doesn't often hand those out – there are rarely perfect solutions, only better ones.

Practical Responsibility

Ethics and moral courage are driving forces in the lives of Protagonists, and they tend to handle these areas of responsibility well. But big ideas alone don't meet goals. If people with this personality type fail to attend to details, their high-minded intentions will remain mere notions, or worse; inspiring people to undertake an arduous journey without a source of bread and water is irresponsible.

Protagonists dislike dealing with the mundane aspects that go along with achieving long-term goals. If they don't make sure that their minds stay on track, particularly during relatively dull phases, they can experience a two-fold problem. First, mundane but necessary tasks may go undone, leaving loose ends that must be tied up later (or can derail the goal completely). Secondly, Protagonists' strong sense of duty to others means they're likely to suffer guilt for neglecting important details. Self-responsibility requires taking responsibility for every aspect of life, and focus ensures they don't overlook day-to-day details.

Goal-oriented and idealistic, people with this personality type often direct all their attention to the goal, missing small yet important details in the process. It's hard to argue that someone is acting responsibly when that happens. Sometimes a great and noble project can fail because someone forgot to check the legal details, handle administrative tasks, estimate the workload, or even account for the fact that key participants didn't share the vision.

Rebalancing Self-Responsibility

Embracing Imperfection

One of this personality type's biggest challenges is learning how to consider all aspects of a situation without letting infatuation with idealism cloud their judgment. Their tactical preference for Judging pushes Protagonists to commit sooner rather than later, but learning how to exercise control over their ideas can help keep these types from stretching themselves too thin.

Nobody makes the right decision all the time or acts in a consistently perfect manner. Protagonists, with all their insight, aren't infallible. If they're to embrace their responsibilities, they also need to embrace their imperfections. Waiting for a guaranteed perfect outcome is likely to lead to paralysis more than action – and taking responsibility often means acting. Fortunately, these types are unlikely to act rashly when making decisions that affect others or themselves.

For those who bring themselves to accept the imperfections of their own lives, procrastination isn't likely to be a major stumbling block. Once they come to terms with the fact that no decision or action can be perfect, then give themselves permission to be responsibly flawed, they can lower their expectations to a reasonable level. Doing their best and accepting their part in the outcome cover any duty they have in most situations.

The following exercise can help Protagonists take the first small step toward this acceptance:

- Choose an activity that is challenging but not overwhelming. It might be participating in a sport, trying an artistic activity, or doing a small home repair

- anything moderately considered a challenge. (Make sure to pay attention to all safety issues, and keep in mind that a good challenge is one that is difficult but not impossible.)
- Engage in the activity knowing that “good enough” is sometimes good enough.
- When finished, assess the activity. Was it perfect? Even if it wasn’t, was it a worthy effort? Celebrate the flaws with a good laugh.
- Afterward, contemplate: What does this exercise reveal about being perfect?

On the surface, being perfect may sound like the most responsible path. However, in practical terms, it can lead to paralysis and indecision, so it may be the least responsible thing Protagonists can do.

Improving Focus

It doesn’t matter how high-minded the ideals – if the nuts and bolts aren’t tight enough, the whole machine may fall apart, and that’s hardly a responsible approach. Learning to keep focus and muddle through the details, especially with long-term goals and projects, reflects a responsible attitude.

For Protagonists, the trick for remaining focused, oddly, is to set aside plenty of time every day for their mind to wander. Setting breaks for a walk or meditation, for example, makes longer periods of focus easier to achieve. Bringing themselves into the here and now can improve their attention to detail and help them regulate their obsessive attention to their higher passions. Knowing when to take a break and when to focus is integral to responsible Protagonist behavior.

Embracing this personality type’s natural tendency to strategize and make plans can be useful. But relaxing their attention on “big-picture” considerations for a while can allow the smaller details to emerge from the background and take a more prominent

position in the forefront. The following exercise can help Protagonists move between the big picture and the details while giving adequate attention to both:

- Find the most beautiful object available in the vicinity.
- Take a plain piece of paper and a pencil – a regular pencil is fine, but a colored pencil may make the exercise more interesting.
- With an eye toward getting as close to photo accuracy as possible, draw the object. This isn't about talent. Nonetheless, doing the best work possible in this exercise means being as accurate as possible.
- Should the mind drift toward more symbolic or abstract considerations, return to thoughts of lines, shadows, and colors. Be a camera more than an artist. Let the smaller details emerge.
- Post the picture somewhere public or private as reminder to view the small-scale details rather than only focusing on objects in a large-scale manner.

It's fine to have lofty goals designed to address noble issues. But unless Protagonists consider the details, it may all come to nothing. Like the old saying, sometimes they "can't see the trees for the forest." Responsibility demands that people with this personality type balance attention to the individual trees as well as the forest they form.

Conclusion

Growing So Others Might Grow

The world needs Protagonists to grow so that they can use their insights and nurturing leadership to encourage growth in others. Their combination of traits allows them to fill a variety of mentoring niches, and society would be poorer without

their contributions. But their own personal growth is essential to their effectiveness. Fortunately, it's also something they highly desire for themselves.

Protagonists who exploit their strengths while expanding their comfort zones find growth by balancing integrity within themselves with adaptation toward the world around them. Understanding who they are and acting in ways that honor their values create fulfillment and a life of purpose for people with this personality type.

All Protagonists have their own spin on life, having adapted to their unique circumstances in many ways. Some skillfully navigate the process of personal growth most of the time; others, some of the time; and still others may struggle. Like all people, they fluctuate between days filled with wonderful growth and other days that lack, or even seem to undo, that growth. No one goes through life in a perfect way. Nonetheless, growth and learning are always choices for those who are willing. Hopefully, this section has provided Protagonists with some guidance and inspiration to bolster that willingness.

Friendships



Deep and Strong

People with the Protagonist personality type bring inspired energy to their friendships, as with all the other pursuits in their lives. Their enthusiasm is contagious, and these outgoing people draw their friends into exciting fun when given half a chance. When Protagonists find other people who enjoy the same kind of activities, they form warm and caring friendships. Their sincerity can create extraordinary kinship so honest and profound that it feels as strong as a family tie.

In addition to their closest friends, this type is also happy to engage a broad swathe of people. Outgoing and bold, Protagonists form casual friendships very quickly and easily. However, compromise isn't something these idealists do easily, so they weed out those who don't share the depth of their idealism, or at least relegate them to the status of "acquaintance."

Protagonists possess an aura of thoughtful support that naturally confers influence and draws other people to them. They may even become the center of their chosen social groups, reveling in the trust and admiration that their friends have for them.

In return, Protagonists offer their friends unending support and care from the heart. It's more than just noble sincerity; Protagonists are energetic and, quite simply, a lot of fun. Those lucky enough to become good friends with them find great joy and adventures in their company.

Exceptional Expectations

Although gregarious, people with this personality type can also be exacting, obsessed with their ideas, the future, and musings about what the world – and they themselves – might become. Taken to an excessive degree, this drive can take the form of stringent expectations that create an imposing social barrier to some people. If someone strays too far from Protagonists' ideal, they may try to pull the person back – and that effort is not always welcome. What Protagonists demand is exhausting for many other types, and it may clash with their friends' vision for themselves.

When Protagonists expect unrealistically perfect friendships, they run the risk of being disappointed. But when they try to force others to conform, they also risk pushing their friends away – no one likes to be judged. They may even forgo new friendships that, were it not for their extreme expectations, would have grown into mutually satisfying relationships. However, their generous hearts and unending desire to grow offer Protagonists a chance to see when their actions are interfering with positive connections.

Further Extending Compassion

Compassion is often the key to compromise, and Protagonists have an energetic, idealistic approach toward differences in others. People with this personality type think nothing of bending over backward to help their friends, and if they realize their own mistakes, they won't stop until they are fixed. Their own capacity for confident

generosity is one of the greatest tools Protagonists possess for forming a realistic picture of friendship, as it can bridge any difference.

Other personality types can be challenging for Protagonists, but extending compassion and accepting others enable connections with even with the most seemingly incompatible types. Maturity, wisdom, and mutual respect can create rewarding friendships with any combination of personalities. Protagonists, with their ability to connect emotionally and their desire for such knowledge, are well-suited to find common ground with others through conscious acts of appreciation.

Protagonists Friendships by Role

Let's examine the challenges Protagonists face and the joys they experience in friendships with those belonging to each of the Roles: Analysts, Diplomats, Sentinels, and Explorers. Any pairing can be an exciting adventure for this friendly, loving type. Knowing there may be occasional glitches in potential friendships shouldn't discourage them; awareness can help them find their way along the sometimes-difficult path to meaningful friendship.

Protagonist–Analyst Friendships



Protagonists and Analysts share a marvelous ability to not only imagine many possibilities, but also delve deeply into a subject, seeing its many facets. The angle from which they glimpse these facets can be heavily informed by their underlying differences, making for an exciting and intellectually stimulating friendship. When these friends keep an open mind, they'll find each other to be among their most respected friends, both impressed with the sincerity and depth of each other's thoughts.

Balanced Protagonist–Analyst Friendships

Complementary Imaginations

To Protagonists, having Analyst friends can feel like an extension of their own minds, but with an expanded perspective. Analysts enjoy using their rationality to play the role of creative consultant to friends – they pride themselves on their logic and impartiality. Analysts are bluntly honest, especially with their closest friends, and Protagonists may see this as a blessing and a curse. They can be irritated when

Analyst friends criticize one of their pet causes or values, but they also know that checking ideas against honest critiques has value.

Possibly because they don't always agree, Protagonist and Analyst friends make quite the team when they create fun ideas together, and they love to do so. Both types have expansive imaginations, but neither necessarily uses their imagination to realistic ends: Analysts enjoy inventing complex systems and can feel satisfied with mere thought experiments. Protagonists imagine grand outcomes with little concern for how they'll achieve them, and they're always ready to jump into action.

Fortunately for these friends, their distinct traits often balance each other out. Protagonist and Analyst friends offer each other more diverse worldviews than either has alone. When they're willing to take the best of each worldview and combine them cooperatively, the combined force of their imaginations can create amazing fun together.

Balancing Each Other's Views

These friends can also help each other on a deeply personal level. With their emotions always at the fore, Protagonists excel at seeing complex human struggles in relatable ways. Analysts take a more calculated view of things, so they can help Protagonists balance passionate idealism with a bit of hard logic – and vice versa. There's quite a difference between hope and reality, but each perspective can influence the other productively as these friends help each other understand. Protagonists appreciate the difference between beating their heads against a wall and fighting the good fight, and Analysts' impartial rationality helps them keep their energy focused where it can be effective.

Analysts sometimes lose sight of the grand possibilities in life – and they're lucky when they have Protagonists to stand as examples of how faith and passion can overcome odds that appear insurmountable. The infectious enthusiasm of Protagonists helps Analysts expand their own view of what's possible, opening opportunities for fun as well as valuable personal growth. Protagonists don't let Analyst friends hide behind facts or logic, frequently pressing them to incorporate less tangible values into their picture of reality. Each of these types has a powerful mind for learning from each other, and both are better for it.

Unbalanced Protagonist–Analyst Friendships

Soured Idealism

Tension can arise from the different filters these friends use to make decisions: humanism for Protagonists versus rationalism for Analysts. Protagonists implement solutions to address human needs, but they frequently underestimate very real limits and logistical challenges, which dismays Analysts. Analysts often see society as an almost mechanical system, focusing less on the welfare of the individual pieces than the efficient functionality of the whole – a mindset Protagonists find too cold. To Protagonists, those “pieces” are valuable human beings.

Protagonists don't appreciate challenges to their sacred values, but Analysts poke and prod instinctively in the name of exploring ideas – a recipe for arguments. When clinical rationality goes up against heartfelt passion, it can feel like a battle of morals, especially when opinions and ideas about society are the subject. Neither of these types can put their best foot forward when they dig in their heels. Instead of considering their equally valid perspectives and moving forward together with improved ideas, sometimes these types retreat into resentment.

Troubling Emotional Differences

Friendships between people of these types can also experience an empathy gap, despite their best intentions and an appreciation of each other. Protagonists are well-tuned to emotional understanding, always working to resolve upset feelings, but Analysts are rarely comfortable with showing emotions to begin with. They struggle to understand and express feelings, which often makes them seem slow, awkward, and reserved in emotional situations. When a response such as sympathy is expected by Protagonists, Analysts often flounder, leaving both friends wondering what's wrong with each other.

Protagonists may even start to resent it when Analysts try to use rationality to “fix” a situation while ignoring emotion, even viewing them as unfeeling. They may begin to pull back from their connection as friends or, worse, push more emotion on Analysts, causing them to retreat in bewilderment. If this usually innocent disconnection is not balanced with mutual understanding, it can kill any chance of deep honesty and mutual reliance in this friendship. Both friends want to care for each other, but given their differences, they might not understand how best to do so.

Rebalancing Protagonist–Analyst Friendships

Keeping an Open Mind

When clashes occur between their styles, these friends must make a concerted effort to recapture the way they inspire and respect each other. Protagonists and Analysts have a big advantage here: Their expansive imaginations help them understand alternative perspectives. Sharing their views comes naturally to these types; in fact, such conversations initially brought them closer, and discussions about their diverse perspectives can remain a source of fun and inspiration when refreshed with

genuine respect. But conversation shouldn't necessarily be the end; these friends can show each other how their different points of view work in daily life.

Protagonist and Analyst friends can also “agree to disagree” on some things, accepting that certain subjects may never be fun to talk about together. This doesn't mean they must always avoid friendly arguments, but when they repeatedly hit an immovable point of contention, wisdom demands that they just let it go. They can accept that differing approaches to life may work better for each of them as individuals.

Both types should understand that being right is not as important as respecting each other, so they can drop stubborn ego in favor of friendship itself. The good times they can share are a lot more fulfilling than winning an argument. In their efforts to be truly open to each other, these friends can practice the following tips during disagreements:

- When your friend expresses a point of view, stop and listen objectively before responding.
- As your friend speaks, consider whether they are presenting theory or their actual lifestyle choices. If the latter, consider that your disagreement could be tantamount to a personal indictment – and proceed gently.
- If something seems disagreeable, ask for more information – perhaps an example of how they make it work in their own lives.
- Before dismissing each other's views and lifestyles, try them out; ask for guidance on how.
- If, after giving something a fair shot and due consideration, you disagree with something, say so respectfully, stressing that it's just a personal choice, not a judgment.

- After a disagreement, reaffirm the friendship by diving immediately into an area of commonality, such as a favorite restaurant, game, or pastime.

Tolerance may not be easy for either Protagonists or Analysts, but willingness to at least briefly try on each other's views is the highest form of respect.

Equally Valuable Abilities

If Protagonists want emotional support from Analysts, they can just say so. If they're careful not to criticize Analysts as flawed, there's nothing wrong with asking for help and trading advice. Analysts deeply value their true friends, and they enjoy expanding their abilities, so Protagonists can help them understand the truth of how friends make each other feel through their behavior.

Protagonists tend to be up front and vocal about their needs, but they also need to be literal; that's how Analysts are, and it speaks to them. Whether asking Analysts to be less harsh in their presentation, more open with their feelings, or sympathetic in times of need, Protagonists are usually impressed at how quickly these types learn when motivated by friendship. Analysts are very capable of emotional evolution, especially with Protagonists serving as excellent examples.

But responsibility for keeping balance can't fall solely on Analysts; Protagonists can learn a lot from their friends about the value of a detached approach in certain situations. Sometimes delving fully into emotional responses is the equivalent of pouring gas on a fire; a reserved attitude can be just as beneficial in some moments as emotional openness is in others, and these friends can learn from each other's example.

And of course, when either friend tries to understand the other, positive feedback is always appropriate: for example, “I really appreciate the way you try to see my perspective.”

The following tips can help Protagonists resolve their emotional differences with Analysts:

- Ask for a moment to talk. Pick a place comfortable for both.
- Express the issue, whether personal or in the friendship.
- Practice emotional control; speak calmly and deliberately, and don’t interrupt.
- Use “me” and “I” statements, focusing on what you need rather than on any deficits you may perceive in your friend.
- Be specific about the support you need (e.g., creative ideas, sympathetic listening, reassurance).
- When your friend provides the support you were looking for, offer positive feedback and show appreciation.

Analysts have every right to make inverted requests: They may need a break from emotional connectedness. Protagonists should remain willing to dial down their own seriousness and share in some humorous, lighthearted fun.

Protagonist-Diplomat Friendships



Close Diplomat friends often closely mirror each other, as Diplomats can be just as enthusiastic, passionate, kind, and imaginative toward each other as to other people and other types. Protagonists love to meet up for active fun together, and conversations between these friends can be delightfully addictive. Because Diplomats are rare among the constellation of personality types, these friends try hard to maintain such precious friendships regardless of any difficulties they may face.

Balanced Protagonist-Diplomat Friendships

Friends at Heart

Protagonists who form true friendships with other Diplomats experience the wonder of gaining an intellectual and emotional extension of themselves. Both friends share experiences with and through each other, gaining the benefit and wisdom of each other's triumphs and trials. "I have the most amazing idea ..." is often heard between these friends. Diplomats can motivate and support each other through life with the

energy of their kindness. And in some ways, their deep communication offers them a chance to live two lives at once as they share great fun together.

Protagonist and Diplomat friends are also well-suited to care for each other in times of trouble, leaning on each other and expressing feelings freely. A deep personal knowledge of their friends' uniqueness combined with their caring nature makes them wonderful emotional resources for each other. Each knows what the other needs and when they need it. Sometimes they offer comfort and sympathy, sometimes encouragement (Protagonists may even offer a loving kick to the rear), but good Diplomat friends are always wellsprings of support.

Creativity and Excitement

The connection between these friends goes beyond emotion, encompassing realms of exciting and creative imagination as well. When Protagonists and other Diplomats share a mutual interest, they inspire each other further into it. Much of this energy comes from sharing core qualities that drive both friends in similar directions. That doesn't necessarily mean the same direction – they are, after all, unique individuals. But by weaving together harmonious but not identical paths, these friends can glimpse things from different points of view, a real gift for both.

Ideas are just the beginning of this pair's adventures. When it comes to creative pursuits, Protagonists may lead the charge, but they find that other Diplomats make helpful partners. When these types create a trusting friendship, balance arises not just from exchanging insights and dreams, but also from sharing happy experiences. Even Introverted Diplomats find themselves drawn into adventure and excitement by Protagonists, who offer a caring energy that can motivate others to jump into life.

Unbalanced Protagonist-Diplomat Friendships

Insulating Each Other

One challenge for Protagonists and their Diplomat friends comes from the same source that fuels their friendship – their similarity. When these friends give each other too much reassurance and inspiration based on their shared perspective, it can create a bubble that isolates them from different opinions and worldviews. Protagonists' Judging trait can sometimes prevent them from being open-minded, and they may find comfort in common approaches and opinions. When these friends' agreement shields them from the world's stark differences, they may also shut out the benefits of fresh perspectives.

Another downside to this pair's harmonious connection is mismatch of resolve. Protagonists love active change, but their firm vision of what must be done might miss the mark. They may simply push their views too strongly for other types to absorb, especially if those friends see a different path for themselves. The inverse is also possible; Diplomat friends can be reluctant – or not willful enough – to push Protagonists beyond their habits and views, preferring to help them feel happy rather than challenge their stability. Either scenario falls short of encouraging beneficial change.

Emotional Transfer

Similarity may also lead Protagonists and their Diplomat friends to unconsciously manipulate each other. They might not try to pull the wool over each other's eyes, but their emotional bond and personal ideals can lead to internal bias. They may confuse their own opinions for their friends' best interests, and both types project their feelings readily. Protagonists can be especially pushy, even if they don't mean

to be. When this happens, criticism or advice may become more about what they want than about what is right for those receiving it. The high level of emotional connection between these friends can make it hard to tell the difference.

Furthermore, Protagonists and Diplomats are naturally sensitive to the emotional states of their friends, so they can be more receptive than most to that kind of influence. If a friend is upset, it's contagious. The way they share emotions is one of the most beautiful, healthy parts of Protagonist–Diplomat friendships, but emotional independence is also a needed skill worth developing. Maintaining personal balance during times of misery, anger, or stress is beneficial for both friends.

Rebalancing Protagonist–Diplomat Friendships

Broadening Their Views Together

Protagonists and their Diplomat friends can break out of any ideological echo chamber by using their gift of asking, “What if ...?” out in the wider world. This may mean joining larger groups with more diverse ideas, from book clubs to classes at a community college, or they can find some other way to exit the bubbles they may inadvertently create together. Protagonists’ social natures quickly pave the way for both friends, and in their pursuit of rebalancing a special friendship with each other, these friends will find that including others can be invaluable and exciting.

All Diplomats crave authenticity, so if Protagonists catch a glimpse of worthy qualities outside their immediate realm of familiarity and acceptance, they will explore and ultimately embrace those people. However, they need that glimpse first. Someone with whom they didn’t initially feel commonality may have something of value to offer through friendship after all, so they should keep open minds, seeking balance together by widening their scope. They can use these steps to help:

- Agree together to broaden your views and seek the unknown.
- Keep an eye out for different, interesting people.
- Make their acquaintance and engage them socially.
- Discuss together anything learned from others' unfamiliar perspectives.
- Maintain the strength of your own friendship, but try to include others as well.

When both friends work together to engage unusual people who might challenge them, they can reassure each other – not to affirm their limits, but to support each other in expanding them. Who knows what fun will come with different types of friends?

Exercising Independent Thought

Protagonists and Diplomat friends can rebalance subtle manipulations by sharing their feelings and opinions consciously. These friends carry a certain gravity with each other because of the trust inherent in their relationship, but there is a difference between pressure and communication. That may be something Protagonists, who tend to be forceful, want to fine-tune, especially among Diplomat friends, where emotions abound and harmony is prized. Realizing that influence can take unconscious forms will allow them some awareness when it's happening.

Fortunately, pressure is a betrayal of trust that these sensitive friends find repugnant, and that is the key to rebalancing. Because these friends care so genuinely for each other's well-being, a mere mention of the appearance of any unfair pressure will hit home and likely halt it. When one of these friends takes the time to gently express their concerns, the other can look at their own behavior anew and do whatever it takes to restore balance. It's helpful for these friends to keep these ideas in mind:

- Express criticism as constructive concern, openly and without emotional pressure.
- Don't be afraid to respectfully consider but reject each other's advice while staying firmly on a personal path.
- Try not to get too caught up in each other's emotions. A little distance can enable better objectivity and, ultimately, better care for each other.

It's important for these friends to be supportive, not controlling. Honestly making their opinions known and offering each other help are enough – they don't need to feel responsible for each other's decisions, nor take each other's independence as rejection.

Protagonist–Sentinel Friendships



Sentinels are the most reliable and consistent of the types, and Protagonists deeply appreciate those qualities in their friends. Protagonists find their own sincerity mirrored by the scrupulous steadiness of Sentinels, and that provides a foundation for satisfying, long-term friendships. When these two find common ground, fun abounds. This pair may also discover heartfelt inspiration together, as Protagonists'

dynamic energy is just as capable of moving mountains as Sentinels' consistency and dedication.

Balanced Protagonist–Sentinel Friendships

Engaging Life Together

Protagonists explore the boundaries of the possible as a pastime, much of their attention going to hopeful ideals and grand plans that may be hard to bring to fruition. Down-to-earth Sentinels take a more conventional approach that honors the value of procedure. The practical nature of their friendship helps to stabilize Protagonists' imaginative energy. They offer Protagonists joy by bringing grand moments into focus.

Balance goes both ways: Whereas Protagonists are imaginative, their Sentinel friends may be more comfortable with the way things are. This can make them reassuringly dependable to Protagonists, but they may be more reluctant to engage in exciting opportunities. Protagonists help their Sentinel friends see the benefits of occasionally letting go of limits and exploring fun possibilities together. Both types appreciate a structured approach, so even though one may lean heavily on imagination and the other on tradition, they can plan things in a way that makes them both happy. Protagonists may naturally take the lead in suggesting adventures, but their solid sense of order can make experiences that are outside Sentinels' usual routines seem more comfortable.

Solace and Support

This pair is also well suited to support each other through darker moments. Protagonists' imaginations can be a bottomless pit of worries when negative

emotions take over, and they regularly wear themselves down with their endless drive. Sentinels are always ready to provide sensible advice; a plan; and a steady, helping hand to overcome issues real or imagined. Sentinels also sensibly see when it's time to pull Protagonists back from stress and exhaustion into relaxation and fun.

In return, Protagonists not only offer ideas when their Sentinel friends have a problem, they also offer emotional support from the heart. Protagonists can easily tune into their friends' feelings, sympathize with their woes, and respond with a care that soothes their injury and promises brighter days ahead. And of course, once they raise their friends' spirits, this type's brimming energy helps make things better. Sentinels can tap into Protagonists' forthright spirit to regain their own feet and restore happiness.

Unbalanced Protagonist–Sentinel Friendships

Disrupted Rituals

Common values and interests may unite these two initially, but they may proceed in different directions. When Protagonists try to infuse new elements into the friendship (a frequent likelihood), they may find that Sentinels are resistant, preferring to maintain their established pursuits together. This can gradually cause Protagonists to feel bored and Sentinels to be irritated. Their shared Judging trait may grant these friends some compatibility regarding how they engage experiences, but it likely won't rectify the differences between their Intuitive and Observant traits.

Protagonists are excited by possibility, always wanting to go out and grab experiences that inspire their imaginations; they seek potential around every corner. Even the most energetic Sentinels, on the other hand, find great satisfaction in happy routines they've created; they're not looking for excitement around every corner

because they find such satisfaction in the present. In everyday terms, these friends may gradually spend less time together due to their different ways of finding fun.

Revolution

Similarly, these two may not always agree on what's right to strive for in life. Protagonists are often deeply committed to fighting for their ideals against all odds, even if those ideals are quite abstract. Sentinels, by contrast, are often deeply principled but rarely see the value in producing intangible results – they want to invest in a foundation that's directly related to their daily lives. Protagonists may find it difficult to draw Sentinel friends into their more revolutionary ideas, as people with that personality type are unlikely to be interested in abstract concepts or stretched profundity. As friends, these two may simply not see eye to eye, and when their differences combine with their shared Judging trait, some truly stubborn judgment may surface.

It's not just about how they choose to live their own lives; how they engage things together can be negatively affected. Even if their personal values and culture are very similar, they may butt heads on everyday matters of idealism versus practicality, with Protagonists zealously demanding what they think is right and Sentinels insisting on what they see as realistic. Sentinels have little patience for what they see as wasted effort, and Protagonists bristle against limits – so these friends can easily frustrate each other.

Rebalancing Protagonist–Sentinel Friendships

Fun Together

One step toward closing the gap between Protagonists' conceptual focus and Sentinels' fixed, practical view is to approach that difference with a sense of acceptance and mutual respect. Sentinels and Protagonists value the well-being of other people, especially close friends. This common ground bodes well for nurturing their friendships. Sentinels can ask their Protagonist friends to take a deep breath when they're flush with a new idea or passion, and Protagonists can invite their Sentinel friends into new experiences without pushing them too hard.

Understanding is only the first step; both friends can also work to recapture and expand mutual interests. Something drew these two together in the first place, and focusing on finding similar things to do together will reaffirm the friendship. With their imaginations and bold energy, Protagonists should have little trouble thinking up new ways to approach a favorite shared subject.

Both friends can also accord each other a little leeway. Rather than holding stubbornly to personal preferences all the time, true friends find happiness by seeing each other's joy. To help resolve their different ideas into good times together, these friends can:

- Identify one area of commonality (for example, you met in art class and both love art).
- Talk about new ways to share the subject together; make a list of ideas.
- Review the ideas in terms of preference, and identify ideas with the most commonality. (Perhaps one friend wants to fly to New York and tour art galleries, and the other would rather stay home and experiment with new

sculpture techniques together, but both agree on a fun road trip to visit in-state galleries and sculpture gardens.)

- Engage the most mutual activities first, and work up to more significant compromises. Neither should feel pressured or obligated, but both can consider stepping out of their comfort zones for a friend.
- Try one of the fun activities together on a regular schedule. Once per week or once per month – it doesn't matter, if the plan works for both friends and they commit to having fun together.

Although they can be stubborn, both types also firmly believe in being caring. Compromising on their own desires sometimes is a great way to show that principle in action.

Using the Benefits of Differences

Protagonists' visionary flights of mind may not make much sense even to their closest Sentinel friends, who simply aren't prone to them. However, it's precisely this dynamic that can create a healthy counterbalance between the two. The key isn't so much in compromising their very different approaches – future versus present, imagination versus practicality – but rather offering their unique and valuable perspectives in service of each other's goals.

When Protagonists see that their Sentinel friends are trying to accomplish something, whether light or serious, they can offer their imaginative take and dauntless energy to help achieve that goal. They are powerful allies, and bending an unconventional approach to suit a conventional end – or vice versa – is a great way for these friends to appreciate each other. Sentinels can, in turn, offer their

grounded, steady efforts to help Protagonists work toward their goals, no matter how idealistic or even unrealistic they may seem.

Even if such dreams are out of reach, Protagonists will never forget that their Sentinel friends stood by them; the support affirms their bond and is deeply meaningful to Protagonists. And Sentinels may be surprised at just how attainable dreams can be, with enough hope and effort shared between good friends. Both friends can consider the following:

- Invite each other into a personal goal, whether recreational or not. (For example, a Protagonist friend may be trying to create a local disc-golf league, and a Sentinel may want to build an organic garden.)
- Spend a little time each week helping each other with whatever ideas, discussions, and direct help feel comfortable. Keep it fun and light.
- Remember that Sentinels' studious approach and Protagonists' outgoing social nature can provide balance. For example, the Sentinel might help the Protagonist tear through the tedium of creating and distributing flyers and posting on social media, and the Protagonist might provide energetic company during tours of organic agriculture facilities in the area.
- Try to be open to each other's ideas, and at least try them out.
- Contribute unique ideas and approaches freely, but respect your friend's choices about their own goals, and let them lead. If cheerful company and an extra set of hands are the only contributions, that's still a win.
- Throughout the process, be aware of the unique advantages of each other's approaches and methods. This is a chance to learn while having fun with a friend.

Even though Protagonists and Sentinels may sometimes be caught off-guard by the different ways they approach the world, helping each other with even casual goals can go a long way toward creating shared understanding and joy.

Protagonist-Explorer Friendships



Possibly one of the most interesting combinations of friends, Protagonists and Explorers can find wonderful adventures together, and they may even enlighten each other. Explorers are more adaptable than idealistic; highly pragmatic, they rarely relate to the philosophical goals typical of Protagonists. Protagonists embrace long-term dedication like a badge of honor, whereas Explorers nimbly adapt to suit circumstances, comfortable with spontaneity and often immersed in the moment to the exclusion of all else. Even though it is a seemingly odd pairing, any mutual passion can quickly kindle a dynamic and inspired friendship.

Balanced Protagonist–Explorer Friendships

Learning from Each Other's Views

Protagonist–Explorer friendships offer both people wonderful opportunities to grow. Protagonists can act as humanistic compasses for their Explorer friends by reminding them of interconnected aspects of life, offering encouraging examples of how to focus on personal goals while still considering a greater good. For novelty-seeking Explorers, exploring the altruistic stimulates their sense of adventure, which is especially fun if it involves working on a tangible project with rapid payoff.

Protagonists inspire Explorers to think more widely when they become too intent on themselves, and Explorers center Protagonists who've lost touch with themselves in their fervent pursuit of idealistic goals. Protagonists love to have fun, but they can also be very serious, perhaps excessively. Determined ideas can dominate their thinking; although laudable, their determination can bring stress, especially when it pits them against other people.

Explorers are perfectly suited to bringing Protagonists out of their heads and into the moment. The immediacy and often self-gratifying bent of Explorers' outlook can offer a needed break for Protagonists caught up in their intense thoughts. Explorers cheerfully encourage them to relax and have fun, to stop and smell the roses as they charge up the road of destiny.

Exploring the Unknown Together

In a way, both Protagonists and Explorers enjoy unconventional approaches to life: Protagonists are warriors at heart, pushing for change in line with their beliefs and always ready to challenge restrictive authority. In a similar vein, Explorers place

novelty and self-determination above all, disregarding rules and conventions in favor of their own passions, quick to defy (or ignore) anyone who tries to restrict them. Both are revolutionaries, in a way. This common ground provides opportunities for them to stretch boundaries and gain something excitingly different through their friendship.

Explorers love to take on new things by getting involved, and although Protagonists may be a little more reserved when it comes to unexpected changes, they leap into experiences that capture their interest. This is a recipe for good times and discovery together: festivals, surfing, wine tasting, camping, pottery classes – they'll happily share any enriching activities. With Explorers' openness to opportunity and Protagonists' willful imagination, these friends can share endless adventures.

Unbalanced Protagonist-Explorer Friendships

Loose Spontaneity Clashing with Firm Dedication

Unfortunately, the ability of these types to connect through exciting pursuits doesn't always extend to the fundamental ways they engage life. Protagonists are planners who follow through on their goals with lively energy. Explorers, on the other hand, find little use in confining themselves to a preconceived track; they constantly adjust not only their approach, but also their direction. When they feel uncomfortable committing, it's not because they won't follow through or don't care about a friend, but rather because formalizing things can turn joys into obligations.

In a friendship, this subtle but powerful difference can come to the fore often, whether they're going out for coffee, planning a trip, or helping each other with projects. When Protagonists place expectations of consistency on free-wheeling Explorers, they end up disappointed. In turn, Explorers get irritated when

Protagonists try to “keep them on track,” experiencing such intervention as a limitation. Without some allowance and understanding, these friends may rile each other even when attempting to carry out fun activities together.

Don't Judge Me!

Core differences can also affect how these friends gauge actions, personal interests, and values. Protagonists sometimes overreach with their principled intentions, pushing their views on others. Explorers, in contrast, maintain a “live and let live” attitude, far more tolerant of other people’s differing views – they would rather not get involved with things they don’t feel affect them. Protagonists are all about getting involved though, rarely tolerant of anything they don’t agree with. Explorers may criticize such interventions as unnecessary, foolish, even meddlesome, especially when they are aimed at them.

Explorers are often quick to act on desires without much thought for future consequences. In the grip of excitement, they tend to resent anyone who tries to make them think twice about their decisions. Undaunted when they feel they are acting on behalf of a friend, Protagonists may take their genuine concern too far, so that it comes across as sanctimonious judgment. Explorers rebel wildly against this, regardless of the intent behind it. The fastest way to lose such a friend is to try and control them, but Protagonists have a very hard time allowing what they think is wrong, especially if they feel a friend may be at risk.

Rebalancing Protagonist-Explorer Friendships

Committing to Fun

Both types can reconcile differing preferences by focusing on their appreciation for each other. Protagonists can tap into their own bright-eyed enthusiasm for the future and embrace a sense of fun as Explorers pull them out of their routine and place them in the moment, where imagination and vigorous engagement – qualities that Protagonists possess in abundance – are free to reign. Instead of resenting sudden changes, Protagonists can focus on the friend they're with, knowing that cheerfully engaging the unexpected brings rewards of kinship and fun.

In addition to practicing some flexibility, Protagonists should be clear about how much their commitments and values mean to them. Although spontaneity may be thrilling, and Protagonists can handle change, sudden shifts sometimes leave them feeling disappointed and stressed. Explorers care about their friends, so Protagonists should share such feelings to ensure a balanced friendship. The following steps can help:

- Agree whether time together will be loose or structured. A fun day of shopping is an opportunity for spontaneity, but a concert is an appropriate time for friends to stick to a plan.
- If commitment is difficult, say so up front. There's nothing wrong with respectfully keeping options open.
- Don't cancel plans with each other without notice and a good reason.
- When enjoying unstructured time together:
 - Pick a starting point together but then let things blossom as they will.
 - Go with the flow and cheerfully accept each other's spontaneous ideas.

- Focus on each other as much as the activity. Fun can be created between good friends regardless of what they're doing.
- Remember that any plan to “hang out” is still a promise to a friend.
- When enjoying a planned activity together:
 - Decide together on an activity or outing.
 - Agree on a time, then show up on schedule.
 - Stick with each other as planned.

If having something “their way” means the other friend isn’t having any fun, either person can consider relaxing their own preferences for the sake of a friend.

Respecting Each Other's Focus

Protagonists may not want to hear about the latest upgrades to an engine their Explorer friends are raving about. Explorers may want to shrug off a conversation about how producing the hamburger they're eating uses the same amount of water as a three-hour shower. However, good friends can suspend their disinterest to show appreciation for each other. Protagonists may seem to drone on about the state of the world, and Explorers just want to get their hands on that engine, but if Explorers ask questions about the water crisis and Protagonists ask for an explanation of the engine upgrades, both friends might be surprised how satisfying shared enthusiasm can be.

Protagonists and Explorers can also choose to go along for the ride occasionally, setting aside their own preferences temporarily. Friendship is a participatory sport: If friends are rigid and disinterested in what excites each other, their friendships will rest on an unstable foundation. Each friend may have to take a step outside their comfort zone to share good times together. When one friend does so, the other can

make sure they show their appreciation for the respectful gesture, which reaffirms and sustains the friendship itself. Some suggestions both friends can use:

- Ask to be invited into something your friend holds dear; it may be an explanatory conversation or an involved experience.
- Let your friend set the format for sharing their interest.
- Ask questions about what your friend gets out of it; try to understand their passion.
- Act like a polite guest, and don't criticize their interest while trying it out.
- Express bright appreciation for any little aspect that seems inspiring or laudable – play up the positives.
- Discuss the experience afterward over coffee or a meal.
- Consider inviting your friend into one of your personal interests next time.

These friends can enjoy discovering what makes each other tick without marching to the beat of the same drum. They may discover new ways to have fun together, as enthusiasm can be infectious among good friends.

Conclusion

Finding Unexpected Strength in Others

Protagonists can spread and share in great joy by offering their amazing qualities to any type through friendship. What remains for each Protagonist to decide is whether they can be equally open to finding fulfillment and rewards in friendships with different types of people. Protagonists excel at fostering positive change, and when they also master the ability to honor and appreciate others for simply being who they

are, even if it represents something that departs from their own lifestyle, they open doors to unexpected friendships that can change them for the better.

For some types, fun and laughter are enough to sustain lasting friendship. But for Protagonists, a friend is someone they can hold close to their heart, who not only offers them merriment and companionship, but also dares to inspire them beyond their own limits. For this type, friendship is about a meeting of the minds and a solid, reliable bond. As strong-willed, naturally social leaders, Protagonists benefit from friends who have an equally strong sense of self, who can stand up to their assumptions and give them guidance. Such friends become lifelong companions during happy times and fun adventures, as well as sources of support when they realize they need to lean on someone they can trust.

Romantic Relationships



Depth and Dedication

Warm, caring, and capable of unconditional love, Protagonists can reach a level of depth in their relationships most people only dream of. People with this personality type take romance seriously, approaching it with true dedication and passion. Even early in dating, Protagonists are willing to put in serious time and effort to foster their relationships. They do everything in their power to encourage their partners' growth and success, and their dream is to fall in love with someone who supports their own growth in return. Although they can be picky, Protagonists crave romantic connection, and when they find someone they truly respect, they aren't afraid to commit.

Protagonists' relationships are founded on generosity, dedication, and emotional honesty. Curious and perceptive, Protagonists can often detect subtle changes in their partners, to the extent that they might seem to read minds. That said, people of this type aren't afraid to ask outright how their partners feel about the relationship. If status checks don't become too frequent or overbearing, they can

help Protagonists and their partners identify and resolve potential issues, rather than letting them fester.

Due to this extraordinary level of emotional investment, breakups can trigger a tremendous sense of guilt and betrayal in Protagonists – even after relatively short relationships. When this happens, it's often because Protagonists have become invested in the *idea* of the relationship in addition to the reality. They may have lost sight of the person in front of them, focusing instead on their visions of how they and a partner could develop together. As they grow, people with this personality type must learn to distinguish between idealizations of their romantic future and the refuge of true love.

Going Deep

Whether early in the dating process or later in a relationship, Protagonists aren't satisfied by small talk. What interests them are ideas and beliefs, goals and dreams. When romantic partners won't communicate at that level, people with this personality type quickly lose interest.

Like many people with the Intuitive trait, Protagonists don't believe in "leaving well enough alone." Instead, they want their relationships, and the people in them, to grow. They look for ways to improve their connections and deepen their love, and they expect their partners to do the same, rather than settling for the status quo. Although this relentless desire to grow can sometimes be irritating, it motivates Protagonists to bring their best selves – sincere, earnest, and caring – to their relationships.

On a Pedestal

Ultimately, Protagonists want to find a soul mate. Whereas Analysts crave intellectual stimulation, Explorers seek fun, and Sentinels cherish stability, people with this personality type are looking for something else: a connection at the deepest level. When they feel that level of connection, Protagonists' dedication and passion are nothing short of remarkable. If left unchecked, however, their romantic idealism can go into overdrive, leading them to value a partner's *potential* – to grow into a kinder, deeper, more self-actualized person – rather than the actual person by their side.

Alas, this is rarely the recipe for an equitable relationship. Protagonists may push their partners to change, becoming frustrated when their partners don't work (or seem to work) to improve themselves. However well intended, this behavior can make their partners feel judged, pushed around, or resentful. Unless Protagonists respect their partners' willingness – or lack thereof – to change, they risk driving a wedge between themselves and the person they love.

Potential Pairings by Role

Cultivating a satisfying relationship isn't always easy, especially for a type so concerned with depth and authenticity. Whether in romantic partnerships or other aspects of their lives, Protagonists won't settle for the status quo at the expense of growth and discovery. As a result, they aren't content with partnerships that – however comfortable or convenient – don't move them at a deep level.

Fortunately, every personality type has something to contribute, and as Protagonists date and pursue long-term relationships, they find many opportunities for meaningful connection. This section explains common patterns in relationships

between Protagonists and each of the different role groups – Analysts, other Diplomats, Sentinels, and Explorers. By understanding such patterns, people with this personality type can approach their romantic lives with awareness, insight, and compassion, maximizing their chances of finding and sustaining meaningful, loving partnerships.

Protagonist–Analyst Relationships



Comfortable with ideas and abstractions, Protagonists and Analysts share a visionary, open-minded view of the world. Despite their shared interest in creativity and inspiration, they aren't identical – in this relationship, each partner offers strengths and capabilities that don't come naturally to the other. Whereas Protagonists enjoy profound human insight, Analysts excel at improving systems and assessing situations objectively. As time progresses, their differing perspectives can enable Protagonists and Analysts to balance each other's weaknesses and bring out the best in each other, creating vital bonds of mutual respect and trust.

Balanced Protagonist–Analyst Relationships

Deep Thinkers

Like Protagonists, Analysts love bold, original thinking. Neither has much patience for small talk – they want to go deep. Some people might say, “We don’t discuss religion or politics at the dinner table,” but these Intuitive types might both respond, “Then what is there to talk about?” Protagonists delve into the human side of issues, and Analysts push for thorough, logical understanding. When they value their differing perspectives as complementary rather than incompatible, the result is lively, meaningful conversation.

Given their creative, imaginative minds, these types find endless subjects to discuss. Topics that combine technology and human progress – for example, using social media to apply pressure to oppressive regimes or corrupt institutions – can keep these types talking for months, as can more personal discussions about goals and dreams. Far from fleeting chit-chat, these conversations reignite the sparks between Protagonists and Analysts, fostering respect, affection, and mutual curiosity even as the relationship progresses.

Emotion and Rationality

Protagonists bring warmth and emotion to their relationships – qualities that Analysts often struggle to show. Leading by example, Protagonists help their partners better understand not just sensitivity and romance, but also the value of human connection on a deeper level. With Protagonists’ help, Analysts reap the rewards of an emotional attunement that transcends the limitations of pure logic.

In turn, Protagonists are often amazed by their Analyst partners' ability to wrangle with big ideas in a rational way. In healthy relationships, Analysts offer reasoned, thoughtful stances on difficult, complex decisions, from which house to buy to whether to move across the world. Unlike some other types, however, Analysts can offer logical viewpoints without curtailing a shared sense of progress and possibility. The result is a beautiful counterpoint to Protagonists' idealistic – and at times unrealistic – fervor.

Unbalanced Protagonist–Analyst Relationships

Routine Roulette

Despite their facility with grand visions and big ideas, Protagonist–Analyst couples can falter in the face of everyday routines. These types encourage each other's grand aspirations, which is beautiful – unless it prevents them from managing their shared responsibilities. Such issues may not be evident early in a relationship, when these two revel in novelty and possibility. In fact, newly partnered Protagonists and Analysts might roll their eyes at couples who create chore charts or devote their weekends to running errands.

If these two move in together, however, the demands of everyday life can trigger a surprising amount of stress. Simple tasks such as taking out the trash, paying bills, and stocking the fridge create tension and disagreement if no one routinely handles them. Unless these partners temper their big-picture perspectives with a willingness to take care of necessities, the resulting accumulation of neglected chores can compromise not only their grand plans, but also their equanimity.

The Head and the Heart

Protagonists lead from the heart, and they appreciate romantic gestures – whether in the form of flowers on Valentine’s Day or long, sentimental messages in greeting cards. Alas, many Analysts see such gestures as pointless. Why spend money on a bouquet of flowers that will wither within days?

During the dating stage, Analyst partners might successfully “fake” some of the sentimental rituals of courtship. Soon enough, however, Protagonists may detect when a gesture doesn’t come from the heart, and they may feel disappointed, much to Analysts’ chagrin. When Analysts perform a romantic gesture, it is solely to make a partner happy: If they’ve gone through the motions of buying flowers, they expect their partner to feel pleased, not disappointed. This gap might seem like a superficial obstacle, but demonstrations of emotional support and connection mean a great deal to Protagonists – something that Analysts may struggle to understand.

This dynamic can manifest in many areas of life. After a hard, draining day, Protagonists want their partners to listen, validate their feelings, and empathize with them, whereas Analysts might rush in to suggest logical solutions. Faced with an onslaught of suggestions, Protagonists may feel as if they’re being invalidated or even criticized for not pursuing solutions that seem obvious to their Analyst partners. Even though Analysts are trying to help, their default is to approach issues with their heads rather than their hearts, and sensitive Protagonists may feel hurt as a result.

Rebalancing Protagonist–Analyst Relationships

The Dreaded Chore Chart

On the practical front, Protagonist–Analyst couples should address chores and responsibilities head-on. If they ignore their to-do lists for too long – or put off making to-do lists altogether – they will find themselves mired in unnecessary stress, which inevitably takes its toll on the relationship. Something as trivial as having nothing to cook for dinner can trigger an argument at the end of a long day.

Fortunately, this couple doesn't have to spend all their free time on chores, nor should they. Instead, they can create calendar reminders for recurring tasks, such as picking up groceries; establish automatic bill payments; or outsource certain tasks, such as lawn maintenance or home cleaning, if resources permit.

The couple may also want to avoid taking on too many projects or products that require routine maintenance, from “fixer-upper” houses to additional cars. Keeping life simple is the name of the game. By minimizing the number of claims on their time and attention, they free up time to learn and grow together. Some suggestions to do so:

- Set aside a time to discuss household responsibilities – an hour should suffice. (The process is more pleasant with snacks.)
- Discuss each partner's vision for a well-run, well-maintained life. How clean must the house or apartment be? How often must laundry be done?
- List every recurring chore, sorting them into the following categories: finances, cleaning and laundry, home maintenance, shopping and errands, and miscellaneous. If relevant, add child care, yard maintenance, car maintenance, and any responsibilities unique to your shared lifestyle.

- Circle every item that can be automated, such as paying bills or setting aside a certain amount of money from each paycheck for retirement. Decide which partner will set up these automations and mutually determine a deadline for doing so. If possible, tackle the tasks in the moment, while the inspiration to do so is fresh.
- Cross out sources of “chore stress” that can be eliminated, such as underused tools, unworn clothes, or unloved clutter that just fills up the cabinets and accumulates dust. Plan how to dispose of the items appropriately.
- Divide the remaining tasks, mutually agreeing on who will take care of what and how frequently. Set aside some chores to do together, and find ways to make them relatively enjoyable – such as putting on music or pairing a trip to the hardware store with a visit to a pizza parlor.
- Every week, revisit the list and decide which tasks will be prioritized for the days ahead. Schedule time to take care of them.

When dividing chores, partners can volunteer to take on more responsibility in areas that suit them. Protagonists might feel drawn to teacher conferences, whereas Analysts might enjoy tackling more technical areas such as auto or bicycle maintenance.

Getting Support

Analysts genuinely want to support their Protagonist partners. By default, they offer suggestions and solutions rather than empathy and romantic gestures. Like any type, Analysts hate to see the people they love in pain, and that feeling compels them to jump in with ideas when their partner has had a bad day. Unfortunately, Protagonists might not be able to detect the good intentions beneath Analysts’ “Why don’t you just ...” – particularly when they’re already feeling hurt or vulnerable and looking for

sympathy. The result is hurt feelings on both sides, even though Analysts might not let on that it bothers them when their well-meant suggestions are cast aside.

To bridge this divide, Protagonists may need to consciously remind themselves that their partners just want them to be happy. It's possible to misinterpret Analysts' communication style as judgmental or uncaring even when they're trying to be helpful, as these types aren't fluent in the warm expressions and compassionate gestures that come so naturally to Protagonists. When Protagonists want support, they may have to specify their exact needs rather than expect their Analyst partners to know how to soothe them. The following tips may help:

- Ask for a listening ear. Clarify your needs: "I just had the worst argument with my sister, and I need to get it off my chest." This clarifies that the goal of the conversation is an improved mental or emotional state, not a solution or an action plan.
- If your Analyst partner interrupts with suggestions, respond by saying, "I'm so grateful you want to help. I'll only feel worse if this conversation becomes a to-do list. Can we save the problem-solving for another time?" Or "Right now I just want to talk it through. Figuring out what to do can come later." Analysts respect this kind of independence.
- Offer thanks and appreciation for your Analyst partner's time and care. Analysts aren't emotional mind readers, so explain how their presence and support – and restraint – have been helpful and meaningful.

By modifying their communication style, Protagonists can create conditions that allow their Analyst partners to offer sincere care. Even when Analysts do step in with suggestions rather than empathy, Protagonists can recognize and appreciate the ways they show they care. By recognizing the loving energy that motivates Analysts'

behavior, Protagonists can find emotional healing in even their partners' most practical contributions.

Protagonist-Diplomat Relationships



Protagonists and their Diplomat partners inspire each other's imaginations. These two find common ground naturally thanks to shared values, including compassion and self-development. They are also poised to understand and appreciate each other's creative pursuits, passions, and dreams. Together, Protagonists and Diplomats can foster a beautifully supportive relationship, with each partner validating aspects of the other's personality that much of the world would dismiss as overly idealistic or impractical.

Balanced Protagonist-Diplomat Relationships

The Beauty of Their Dreams

Diplomats are exceptionally attuned to others' thoughts and emotions, which can be a blessing, but it also means that they are acutely sensitive to slights – or even perceived slights – from other people. As a result, they may hesitate to share their

innermost longings with people who seem to value efficiency, security, or adrenaline rushes over the magic of art or the thrill of true human connection.

Therefore, in the early stages of a relationship between a Protagonist and another Diplomat, the two are likely over the moon to *finally* find someone who seems to understand their life philosophy. These two understand each other's sensitivities, so they know how to encourage rather than stifle each other's seeds of dreams – whether writing a novel, founding a nonprofit, or living overseas. Sharing their desires with each other can be a cathartic, profoundly validating experience, one that transforms the bonds of attraction and affection into something more enduring.

As the relationship matures, Protagonists and Diplomats can gently encourage each other to follow through on their longings rather than doubt them or let them languish in the idea phase. Although execution may not come naturally to these two, they blossom in the presence of people who believe in them. By admiring and encouraging each other's aspirations, Protagonists and Diplomats can remind one another of the beauty of their dreams. In this way, they not only support each other's growth, but also grow closer as a couple.

Compassion and Communion

A sense of unity grows quickly in Protagonist–Diplomat relationships. Over time, unity develops into subtle intensity and loyalty that may not be visible to outsiders but is felt deeply between the partners. The source of their connection is the couple's exceptional compassion, which motivates them to understand and accommodate each other at a profound level.

Early in a relationship, this understanding may be shallower than either partner realizes. What is remarkable about this couple, however, is that as they get to know

each other better, their appreciation often increases. They see growth as a virtue, accepting their partners as nuanced human beings – beautiful as they are, and yet works in progress. By creating an environment where each partner feels seen, heard, and accepted, these two can enjoy a connection that is founded on a deep desire for understanding. This is a relationship in which each person feels free to inhabit their authentic selves – especially vital for Diplomats.

Dream It, Do It

Among Diplomats, Protagonists are relatively action oriented. Sure, they can spend hours (or weeks) dreaming up visions for a better future, but they also care about taking steps to turn their dreams into reality. This is a wonderful strength to contribute to a Diplomat-Diplomat relationship, as other Diplomats may struggle to act on their grand ideas. Together, Protagonist-Diplomat couples can look beyond the status quo and recognize potential and possibility where others don't see it. And thanks to Protagonists' influence, they can bridge the gap between dreaming and taking action.

In turn, other types of Diplomats can help Protagonists slow down and take a break. Protagonists are nothing if not driven, and although this trait makes them effective, it can also lead to exhaustion, burnout, and wasted energy. Other Diplomats offer a beautiful counterpoint, gently encouraging Protagonists to take a day off from their missions and engagements every now and again. Downtime can renew a couple's sense of connection, allowing them to set aside time and energy to deepen their intellectual, emotional, and physical intimacy.

Unbalanced Protagonist–Diplomat Relationships

Too Much

If Protagonists don't balance their individual needs with the needs of the relationship, a deep connection can be subsumed by an overwhelming sense of enmeshment. Too much togetherness with Diplomat partners can feel stifling, particularly if it prevents Protagonists from pursuing their individual interests and developing their own views and opinions. As they pursue their personal goals for self-development, Protagonists need the space and latitude to set aside others' expectations and be their true selves.

Likewise, they expect their partners to chart their own courses for self-development. When partners fail to do so – or rather, when they don't conform to Protagonists' vision of what it means to pursue self-development – Protagonists may become restless and impatient. Gradually, they can lose respect, wondering why their partners can't be more independent, autonomous, or self-possessed. Alas, Diplomats will almost certainly pick up on such judgments, reducing trust and intimacy in the relationship. This can become a vicious cycle, with sensitive Diplomat partners engaging in clingy, needy, or codependent behavior in a decidedly unproductive effort to regain Protagonists' approval.

White Knights

Protagonist–Diplomat couples may struggle with their idealistic expectations about relationships. In the dating phase, they might interpret shared interests and surprisingly honest conversations – about their lives, their hopes, and the hardships they've faced – as stand-ins for compatibility and connection. They may even place each other on pedestals, romanticizing and idealizing their relationship before it has truly begun. Alas, just as no person is perfect, no relationship is either. All couples

experience conflict, and lasting connection requires awareness, effort, and daily commitment. Most importantly, true happiness can't be found in another person.

This reality can be uncomfortable for any Protagonists and Diplomats who expect another person to “complete them” or who expect a relationship to salve their emotional wounds. In the early days of a relationship, things may indeed seem perfect. But over time, issues inevitably arise – and not just in the form of disagreements (although those are also inevitable). One person might lose a parent or experience a significant setback at work and be dismayed to find that the other partner's love and compassion can't heal their grief or relieve their stress. Protagonists in particular may feel let down if they believe their partners aren't taking clear actions to offer support. When their partner doesn't protect them from emotional or existential pain, they may call the relationship itself into question as a result.

Unfinished Business

On a more practical level, life organization may pose a problem for Protagonists with Diplomat partners, even if other aspects of their shared lives seem ideal. Thanks to their Intuitive and Feeling traits, these couples feel drawn to big ideas and dreams about the future. Paying the electric bill, maintaining a budget, or completing the final stages of a home improvement can slip right off their radar.

As a result, these two may sail along smoothly when their main worry is fostering their new relationship, but when they move in together, couple their finances, and share domestic responsibilities, the pressure can mount. Whose responsibility is it to take out the recycling? How much debt is accumulating on the credit card? When was the car supposed to get an oil change again? Faced with these common challenges,

the couple may feel overwhelmed, retreating deeper into procrastination – which only triggers more anxiety and tension in the long run.

Rebalancing Protagonist–Diplomat Relationships

Space and Time

Protagonist–Diplomat couples, with their constant focus on each other's feelings, sometimes forget that they don't need to spend every moment together, nor do they have to step in and help whenever their partner feels down. Emotions come in waves, and sometimes people do best when allowed to process and release their feelings on their own. These partners, like all couples, occasionally need to offer each other space and take time to themselves.

If two people pursue different hobbies, disagree on certain topics, or process some of their issues on their own, it doesn't mean the relationship is doomed. In fact, moments of independence foster a more sustainable bond between partners, allowing them to enjoy a meaningful connection without being subsumed by it. That said, Diplomats might (understandably) take it personally if their partner suggests spending more time apart. It's best to initiate such changes casually and agreeably, not within the context of a fight or argument. Some suggestions toward that end:

- Announce the change in a cheerful, good-natured way, taking care not to say anything that could be interpreted as critical.
- If possible, suggest a joint activity for another time: "I'm going to the park for the pickup basketball game. Want to get dinner together afterward?"
- Frame the change as an opportunity for mutual support. After all, time apart can benefit both partners: Introverted partners get the gift of alone time to

curl up with a good book or contemplate the world, and Extraverted partners can cultivate their own friendships and connections.

- If tension or resistance arises, defuse it by explaining the emotional and mental benefits of meeting new people and getting into a group. “Playing basketball used to make me feel so strong and confident, and I’d really like to make some new friends in the neighborhood.” Diplomats want to help, and if they understand the benefit of allowing their partners more space, they’ll be motivated to do it.

Both Protagonists and their Diplomat partners can find opportunities to communicate that they need their space without it feeling like a rejection. Protagonists can also temper their expectations with appreciation, recognizing how rare it is to find a partner who wants to help them as much as a Diplomat does.

No Airbrushing

Relationships may seem to be the answer to everything. Gorgeous, courageous, and smart, our partners sweep us off our feet, see the inner beauty that others missed, and make our hearts whole again. They comfort us when we’re sad, provide for us when we’re broke, and make every day into a waking adventure. It’s like that line from *Jerry Maguire*: “You complete me.”

Yes, we can roll our eyes at these over-the-top idealizations, but thanks to advertising, social media, and perhaps even the people in our lives, these dreams linger in our unconscious minds. The result is a black-and-white dynamic where either we’ve found our perfect match, or we haven’t. Protagonists and other Diplomats can be especially susceptible to this type of thinking, mentally “airbrushing” their partners and indulging in unrealistic expectations. Then, when

their partners – inevitably – let them down, these types might call an entire relationship into question.

To combat this phenomenon, Protagonists can start by acknowledging their own missteps, weaknesses, and personal difficulties in a healthy, balanced way. This fosters a sense of safety and openness in the relationship, allowing partners to cultivate true empathy and respect for each other.

- When appropriate, acknowledge mistakes and personal struggles – without fishing for validation or going overboard.
- Don't expect reciprocation (in other words, your Diplomat partner immediately acknowledging their own weaknesses). Instead, view this as an opportunity to increase the honesty, depth, and realness of the relationship – a time for both partners to release the need to be (or appear to be) perfect.
- Notice how your Diplomat partner conveys support, encouragement, and acceptance.
- In time, when your Diplomat partner expresses their own weaknesses, mirror the support they offered to you in the past.
- Remember that these areas for growth are part of the human condition; as such, they allow us to feel true empathy toward one another.

Expressions of vulnerability open a space for both partners to be honest and real rather than defensive or judgmental. No one is perfect, and by acknowledging this in a balanced, nonjudgmental way, we create relationships where empathy and authenticity can thrive.

Procrastination Begone

When this couple senses a lack of connection with each other, the issue may have surprisingly tangible roots. Even for these big-picture thinkers, heaps of unopened mail, half-finished home-improvement projects, and overflowing trash cans create stress. Add in some tension over who should do what, and there's a recipe for a frazzled, disconnected couple.

Protagonists can actively encourage their Diplomat partners – and themselves – to attend to practical matters. Deep, meaningful conversations can be immensely rewarding, but sometimes it's necessary to sit down and pay the bills. These partners may be more focused on higher personal goals than laundry, but by forming an understanding and following through, they can support each other's attention to mundane responsibilities. Here are some steps to address the issue:

- Set aside an hour or two. Sit together in a comfortable place with a notebook and pen.
- Have each partner envision and share how they would feel and what they would do without the weight of unfinished business hanging over them. Jot down notes.
 - Would they feel more inspired to create?
 - Would it be easier for them to access their craft supplies?
- Commit to tackling unfinished business as a team. Maybe even create a team name, if it's motivational.
- Create an informal accountability agreement, a promise between partners to help with chores and old to-do items so that both can enjoy a happier, more relaxing life together. Have each partner voice a promise.

- List each item of unfinished business, from washing the dirty dishes in the sink to calling the roofer for an estimate.
- Decide who will be responsible for each item and when they will take care of it. Prioritize essential tasks (paying bills) over somewhat optional ones (weeding the garden).
 - Don't over-commit.
 - Automate recurring items whenever possible.
 - Commit to revisiting this list at the same time every week and adjusting it as necessary - with practice, the process will become quicker and easier.
- Stick to the plan.
 - Thank each other for contributions.
 - Regularly revisit the notes from step two.
 - Reconnect to this spirit of working together to create a better future.
- When possible, tackle chores as a team. Doing the dishes together can transform a tedious chore to a chance to bump shoulders and laugh.

Clearing away a list of old chores can be remarkably refreshing, and this couple may find that with their kitchen clean and their bills settled, they suddenly feel freer to live the lives they want, whether planting the seeds of a new endeavor or by enjoying the fruits of their hard work.

Protagonist–Sentinel Relationships



Protagonists and Sentinels find common ground in their drive to help others. Sentinels do this by creating and preserving stability, ensuring that the ground is firm beneath their loved ones' feet. Protagonists foster values and offer emotional support, aiming to make the world beautiful and just for those they love. Together, this couple can enjoy the incredible satisfaction that comes from mutual support and wholehearted living.

Balanced Protagonist–Sentinel Relationships

Dedication and Good Sense

Although Protagonists might not always want to keep their feet on the ground, they may come to appreciate the order and structure that Sentinels bring to a relationship. Beneath their romantic longings, Protagonists crave someone dependable and steadfast, someone who can weather storms by their side. Sentinels can fit this bill beautifully; they view loyalty as essential to a balanced relationship and commit fully once they find the right person.

By drawing on each other's strengths, this couple can balance the comfort of constancy with the challenge (and delight) of necessary change. Although they value the status quo, Sentinels are hardly intent on discouraging their partners – in fact, they can serve as great sounding boards, helping Protagonists distinguish inspiration from fantasy. Whether Protagonists long to take a road trip across the United States or start an animal shelter, they can count on Sentinels' good sense and practical clarity. This couple functions best when they strive to appreciate each other's dreams and goals – they can accomplish this by looking for common ground, rather than differences, in envisioning a good life.

Inspiration and Execution

Protagonists may be pleasantly surprised to find that their imagination and idealism are attractive to pragmatic-minded Sentinels. Even Sentinels can enjoy broadening their comfort zones and discovering new delights, and Protagonists love to step in and share the things that matter to them, from music to mountain vistas. Although such gestures might seem small from the outside, they can become part of the couple's shared identity, reinforcing their appreciation for each other and renewing their curiosity about each other's opinions, ideas, and viewpoints.

When Protagonists balance their unabashed revolutionary voice with love and respect, Sentinels feel welcome to expand their thinking and consider new perspectives. Protagonists bring a breath of fresh air to the staid mentality of some Sentinels, infusing their interactions with hope, encouragement, and energy. With Protagonist partners, Sentinels think bigger than they might on their own, while bringing in the grounded attention necessary to see whether the details really can line up. Together, this couple can enjoy all the phases of life together, with Protagonists delighting in sharing new things with their partners and Sentinels

gratified by the opportunity to provide stability and continuity when it's needed the most.

Unbalanced Protagonist–Sentinel Relationships

Mistaking What's Practical

Once the novelty of inspiration wears off, Protagonists may find their Sentinel partners questioning the practicality of their ideas. When Protagonists launch into yet another notion on how to better the future or rearrange the world, their Sentinel partners might groan, “Enough already.” Sentinels may mistake Protagonists’ multitude of interests and involvements as shallowness or disorganization. This can undermine Protagonists’ vision of themselves as capable and effective.

The difference between what’s practical and what’s not is often a matter of opinion. Sentinels live by fixed rules and traditions, and they organize the world around them in common-sense, day-to-day ways. Protagonists’ creativity and lofty imagination may seem immature or impractical to them, especially when Protagonists challenge rules or goals that Sentinels see as necessary. If both partners insist on being right, their differences of opinion can trigger significant imbalances, eroding the respect and goodwill that form the bedrock of a supportive relationship.

You Want What?

Given Sentinels’ attention to detail and tradition, Protagonists may be frustrated by what seems like a lack of vision. How can their partners become so lost in the nitty-gritty of everyday life and the status quo? Protagonists become bored with conversations that are all about who did what, and when such-and-such is due, and *did you see what she wore to the wedding?* Especially restless, growth-oriented

Protagonists may start to see their romantic partners as unimaginative or somehow stunted.

Although the mismatch might not be evident in the earliest days of the partnership, Sentinels' and Protagonists' differing priorities can cause tension as the relationship matures. Just as Protagonists seek even deeper and more meaningful interactions, Sentinels are getting comfortable enough to relax into a stable routine – and expect their partners to settle down accordingly.

Sentinels often have a timeline for when they expect to move in together, get married, buy a home together, have children, and so on. When Protagonists talk about transforming the relationship or soul-searching – their own spin on routine – Sentinels may mistake that desire for disloyalty to the relationship and a violation of how things “should” progress. This dynamic causes hurt on both sides, robbing this couple of the sense that they are growing together over time.

Rebalancing Protagonist–Sentinel Relationships

Back It Up

Although they might resent or dismiss Sentinels' practical mindset at first, Protagonists can come to appreciate it. Sentinel partners offer a pragmatic counterpoint that can support Protagonists' growth toward the loftiest heights – and even better, it can enable them to grow *together*. Even with Sentinels' support, however, Protagonists might not deliver on their ideas. This creates two problems: On one hand, it bothers ever-conscientious Sentinels, and on the other, it tarnishes Protagonists' self-respect.

To bridge this divide, Protagonists may want to let their partners take the lead, at least in small ways: a weekly meal plan, for instance, or a checklist for the morning routine. With Sentinels creating stability and order, Protagonists may feel clearer-headed, more relaxed, and more capable of the follow-through that their ideas require – which, it just so happens, is also the follow-through that their Sentinel partners expect. When Protagonists deliver on their dreams, their self-image improves alongside their gratitude for their partners. When they express this appreciation, they bolster Sentinels' spirits, which strengthens the relationship. Some suggestions for Protagonists who wish to merge the two approaches:

- When expressing a far-fetched, transitory idea, clarify that it's just a thought experiment. Although Sentinels may not enjoy that kind of conversation, they appreciate knowing whether an idea is going to become a plan.
- If the idea is serious, ask for feedback: "I want to start a business, and I think I could register my trade name with the county within a week. Do you think that's reasonable?"
- Establish a timeline, and explain exactly what kind of accountability or support would be helpful. "Would you check in with me then to see if I've done it? If I fall behind, would you help me create a new schedule?"
- When things go wrong, be honest and ask for help: "I know I'm way behind, and I'm pretty sure I've lost at least half of the paperwork. What do you recommend?" Sentinels shine in such situations.
- Express appreciation and affection for the support and assistance.

Protagonists love to open hearts and minds, and Sentinels can help them be compatible with the world around them. Thanks to a combination of vision and

consistency, these couples can support each other through all kinds of endeavors, both large and small.

Gentle Reassurance

When Sentinels resist Protagonists' thirst for transformation and improvement, it's not just because they enjoy the status quo – it's also because they're afraid their partners will leave them behind. Sentinels may worry that a conversation about moving to a new city or taking up a new hobby will catalyze a chain of events that ends with their Protagonist partner falling out of love, meeting someone new, or otherwise abandoning the plans they've made together. On a smaller scale, Sentinels may feel "forgotten about" when their partner does new things without them. Sentinels crave security, which is one reason they create mental timelines of how a relationship "should" progress. If they hit each milestone, they reason, that means their life and their relationship are successful. When these types feel vulnerable – for example, when a Protagonist partner suggests a change to the relationship – they cling to their own plans and expectations more tightly.

Once Protagonists appreciate that their partners aren't just being stubborn, they can use their emotional attunement to reassure and include their Sentinel partners whenever they suggest changes. This includes speculative, idle conversations about moving, taking on a new position, or even going new places, as Sentinels might assume that Protagonists intend to follow through on their ideas. Although such conversations are exciting to Protagonists, they can trigger fear, anxiety, and uncertainty among insecure Sentinels.

When Protagonists bring change to Sentinels' doorsteps, they can reassure their partners and coax them out of their shells a little at a time by using a gentle,

understanding manner, not to mention a reasonably detailed explanation of the change's practical consequences. Just as importantly, Protagonists can involve their partners in decision-making. By asking for feedback and suggestions on how to implement an idea, Protagonists can draw on their Sentinel partners' incredible strengths – including their pragmatic mindset and their attention to detail. At the same time, this approach allows Protagonists to reassure the person they love that they won't be left behind.

Consider the following:

- Before suggesting a change or initiating a soul-searching conversation, consider whether it might be interpreted as a criticism or an invalidation of your Sentinel partner's desires, plans, and preferences. If so, reframe the conversation in a way that demonstrates commitment and supports the relationship. For example, moving can be viewed as an opportunity to establish a home together.
- If possible, suggest changes only when the environment and mood are conducive to conversation. Traffic jams, crowded places, and the harried few minutes before rushing off to work don't provide the best circumstances.
- Lead off by explaining the tangible benefits of the change: "I've been thinking about going back to school because I think it could open up some new areas for professional growth and help me advance in my career."
- Offer a plan that describes the time and resources that the change would demand – in other words, a budget and a timeline. This clarity prevents your partner from overestimating the impact of the change.
- Ask your Sentinel partner: "How do you feel about this?"

- Ask for feedback on the idea and really listen. The goal is to foster open communication and trust, not to be right (or prove the other person wrong).
- Ask for help implementing or (if appropriate) further researching the change. Emphasize a desire to move forward and develop together as a couple rather than grow apart.
- Remember that Sentinels might experience anxiety when faced with change, so remain attuned to their emotional state. If the conversation becomes too stressful, suggest adjourning it until another time.
- End the conversation by expressing gratitude and affection.

When Protagonists reassure their Sentinel partners, they initiate a virtuous cycle. As Sentinel partners come to understand that the relationship offers deep security and support, they become less rigid about their approach to life in other areas, thereby preventing future tension and unease.

Protagonist-Explorer Relationships



When Protagonists and Explorers find themselves on a date, they discover subtle and not-so-subtle differences between themselves. Explorers are curious about everything, but they become impatient when Protagonists talk about abstractions,

values, and philosophies for hours (or days). Provided they appreciate this difference, this couple can thrive on discovery, excitement, and pleasure, enjoying the very best of what life has to offer.

Balanced Protagonist-Explorer Relationships

Red Hot

In the early days of this relationship, sparks fly. Fascinated by Explorers' free spirits and their passionate authenticity, Protagonists detect – or perhaps project – an aura of romance around these adventuresome partners. Explorers come on strong, and Protagonists bask in their energy and attention, immersing themselves fully into the relationship. These two may feel drawn to see each other every day, thrumming with excitement and anticipation as the hour for their date draws near.

Over time, this initial attraction can deepen into true passion. Protagonists' warm, consistent support can help heal any wounds in Explorers' self-esteem or self-image – a dynamic that both partners find gratifying. Meanwhile, Protagonists may be truly touched by the way Explorers feel moved to share the world with them, as Explorers constantly look out for new restaurants, vacations, places, and experiences that the couple can enjoy together. When the initial sparks fade, this combination of consistent support and shared novelty can reinvigorate this relationship through every stage of life.

A Whole New World

With Explorer partners, Protagonists may start to feel their options in life opening. Explorers' spontaneity – for example, sunset dips in the ocean or spur-of-the-moment camping trips – can revive Protagonists' *joie de vivre*, helping them to release

the worries of the world and enjoy the moment. Of course, Protagonists aren't in danger of losing their conscience, but a bit of fun can be a welcome respite from the sense of responsibility that usually drives them.

This could all sound awfully superficial, but these partners can teach each other to truly enjoy life – and not because Explorers take Protagonists to hip new restaurants. By teaching Protagonists to live in the moment, their Explorer partners remind them of the fleeting nature of life and the necessity of appreciating the world as it is, even as they work to improve it.

With Explorers' support, Protagonists can step off the implacable treadmill of "I haven't done enough" that makes it so hard for them to rest and recharge. In turn, Protagonists can open Explorers' eyes to the joy of service and contribution. As anyone who volunteers on a regular basis can attest, helping others is one of the greatest happiness boosters on the planet. By expanding each other's horizons in this manner, this couple can enjoy both pleasure and purpose, delight and meaning.

Unbalanced Protagonist–Explorer Relationships

Stubbornness Ensues

As can happen to any couple over time, Protagonist–Explorer couples risk reverting to their core preferences while disregarding the other person's needs. Both types can be stubbornly dedicated to their own perspective and may suffer disconnection if they can't learn to respect each other's approaches to life. Protagonists may find themselves pushing reluctant Explorer partners to examine themselves and discover deep, meaningful change. This cerebral, future-oriented approach may leave experience-oriented Explorer partners feeling disconnected or judged.

Protagonists sometimes focus on the welfare and potential of other people in an all-too-serious way, as if they've agreed to some grim mandate. When Explorers are out with friends on the weekend, the last thing they want to discuss is the injustices committed by some corporation or government. Protagonists' inherent difficulty detaching from this serious mindset, to just have fun when they're "supposed to," can quickly try their Explorer partners' patience. Meanwhile, Protagonists may find themselves wondering just what kind of person can seemingly switch off the part of them that cares when there are more important things in the world than cutting loose.

Me Versus We

Protagonists thrive on team effort, and they view themselves and their partners as a dynamic duo. They enjoy collaborating, brainstorming, tackling problems, and generally facing the world with their partner by their side. Explorers, on the other hand – Introverted Explorers in particular – are all about being able to do their own thing. Although they appreciate their partners, they make their decisions independently and prefer not to answer to anyone but themselves.

Some Explorers may go so far as to come home with a car they hadn't consulted their partner on, but this dynamic can manifest itself in less dramatic ways as well. Protagonists may feel hurt, for example, if their partner faces a major hurdle at work and doesn't ask for their support – or even mention it to them. Protagonists want to help, and when their Explorer partner doesn't want that help, it can feel like a personal affront. It doesn't help if Protagonists offer unsolicited assistance, either, as Explorers may feel smothered, second-guessed, or castigated.

Rebalancing Protagonist–Explorer Relationships

Good Complaining

When Protagonists judge their Explorer partners as shallow or self-interested, they invoke one of the “four horsemen of the apocalypse” identified by relationships researcher John Gottman. Specifically, they criticize, which is among the most toxic communication styles in a romantic relationship. Paradoxically, if Explorers resist or ignore such judgment, Protagonists might feel more inclined to criticize their partners with greater frequency or force – and more damaging effects. They pave the way for Explorers to react defensively and volley their own recriminations, which can hit sensitive Protagonists hard.

Fortunately, this doesn’t mean the relationship is doomed. According to Gottman, the antidote to criticism is to complain without blame. For example, “You never want to talk about anything deep or meaningful,” might become, “I love to share my ideas with you because you mean so much to me. Up for talking through a big idea?” This way, the partners can still express their feelings and their frustrations without wounding each other. The other benefit of this type of communication is that it opens the door for hands-on fixes, which Explorers happily identify and implement.

Steps toward this goal:

- Consider whether the complaint is necessary. Some things simply don’t need to be said. When in doubt, wait for one minute before speaking. (Note that this is different from repression. If the frustration grows rather than diminishes with time, it probably needs to be expressed.)

- When in doubt, use a casual, good-humored tone: “Hold up, we didn’t agree on that!” Explorers are more likely to be amused by being called out than offended, if it’s done in a friendly tone.
- Make a positive request; in other words, ask for something specific in positive terms. “Can we stop talking about the party?” might become, “Could we talk about what’s on my mind for a few minutes?”
- Bear in mind that Explorers crave *doing*, not talking. When appropriate, going on a hike or taking a scenic drive can offer a better backdrop for meaningful conversation than hanging around home.

As positive conversations start to outweigh criticisms, Protagonists can reacquaint themselves with the strengths and gifts of their Explorer partners. Whatever their challenges, the immediacy and tangibility of Protagonist-Explorer relationships create deeply moving moments for these couples that can overcome challenges of all scales.

Together and Apart

Protagonists want to help, but if taken too far, this can turn into a desire to be involved in every aspect of their partner’s life. They may want to go out together whenever possible, even tagging along for errands. And they often look for opportunities to offer advice and support – whether it’s wanted. When involvement veers into over-involvement, Explorers may react by exerting their independence, shutting their Protagonist partners out of important decisions and aspects of their lives.

It’s impossible to control or change anyone. Although Protagonists absolutely have the right to object if their partner doesn’t discuss major decisions, changes, or

purchases, they can't force Explorers to give up their individualistic streaks. Instead, Protagonists can honestly assess their own behavior, looking for ways they may have been over-involved or overbearing. They can then choose their battles, distinguishing between what truly matters and what they can let go.

When they want to create more engagement between themselves and their partners, Protagonists can use the following strategies:

- Engage in your partner's interests in much the same way you'd like your partner to engage in yours. Chances are that this will entail asking questions, expressing curiosity, or (if applicable) asking to watch as they work. Chances are that it *won't* entail unsolicited advice or assistance.
 - You can't force an Explorer to express genuine interest about your passions, but you can model the type of engagement you'd like to receive.
- Look for opportunities to involve your Explorer partner in hands-on activities rather than passive ones. A pottery class or a climbing gym is probably a better destination than a poetry reading.
- Even when your Explorer partner expresses initial reluctance to participate in an activity, they may still have a good time once they're during it. Using your Intuitive and Feeling traits, you can learn to distinguish between mild reluctance and true aversion. In the former case, continue to encourage your partner to participate; in the later, recognize that it's time to back off.

If we could change our partners into whomever we wanted them to be, love would lose its meaning. At times, Explorers' individualism may clash with Protagonists' desire to act as a team. By noticing their own behavior and knowing when to back off (and when to forge onward), Protagonists can avoid being overbearing or pushy as

they invite their Explorer partners to spend more time – and emotional energy – together.

Conclusion

Loving Well

A consistent theme throughout Protagonists' lives is thoughtful intention to foster connection and progress – in themselves, in the world, and especially in their relationships with others. When it comes to romantic love, these types are wise to maintain their passion and their loyalty, but they should also look past their exacting views to embrace the varied, grand possibilities that await. With understanding and tolerance, love can be built and sustained beautifully between Protagonists and any other type. There is no perfect match between types, only wonderfully satisfying matches between people who feel drawn to each other and are willing to forgive mistakes, learn, and grow together.

The information in this chapter can help Protagonists on their journey of understanding, both of themselves and in their relationships. It's not always easy to get an accurate sense of just how differently other people think and feel, even for a type as emotionally astute as Protagonists. Learning about other types' needs helps Protagonists increase the objectivity of their own insights, enabling even deeper connections with those who occupy a special place in their hearts.

Moving Forward Together

To Protagonists, the best romantic relationships aren't passive. Shared laughs and pleasure are only part of a fulfilling relationship, particularly in the long term. Protagonists want conscious, progressive action with their partners.

When lovers happily occupy large portions of each other's lives, the less glamorous or pleasant aspects of their lives also become intertwined. Everyone has flaws and baggage, and expecting each other to handle such things alone or out of sight doesn't create the kind of interconnected relationships that Protagonists crave. Rebalancing is all about facing each other's issues with patience, love, and forgiveness, as well as taking deliberate steps together in the real world to work things out.

Protagonists love to think, dream, and understand things in their heads, but thought is only the first stage of progress – in life and in love. Finding practical ways to cooperate and compromise with romantic partners is key to moving forward together. This applies equally to achieving hopes and dreams and to maintaining personal freedom and individuality.

The rebalancing sections above give just some ideas on how Protagonists and their partners can respect each other while getting what they need to be happy. Although it's unrealistic to believe that any relationship will be all sunshine, it's fully possible to master difficult times together and walk out the other side smiling, hand in hand. Protagonists can create this happy path for themselves with those they love.

Parenthood



Ethical and Inspirational

Protagonist parents strive to impress on their children the importance of an ethical approach to the world's problems, yet there's a hopefulness to their view of life that ensures these lessons are often more uplifting than chiding. With these parents, fairy tales are used for their intended purpose – to offer lessons to their children on how to fight for what is right and stand up to injustice. As an aspirational type, they expect their children not to be perfect, but to always be on a journey to becoming something better, for themselves and all people.

At their best, Protagonist parents are warm, loving, firm, and unwavering, a combination of traits that provides their kids with the freedom and support to pursue their goals. These traits also steer them as far away as possible from the more dangerous pitfalls of youth. Protagonist parents play active roles in their children's lives, guiding them with love and support, but also with a firm refusal to enable any behavior they see as morally misguided or self-destructive.

Devoted and Open-Minded

Though Protagonists can stretch themselves thin by taking on all the world's problems at once, their attention is seldom so divided that they can't lavish a generous portion on those closest to them. Nothing inspires these types like a great cause, and shepherding their offspring can be their most important endeavor. Protagonist parents who remember their children need space, as well as intimacy, have little trouble maintaining strong bonds with their progeny for years.

Although parents with this personality type feel that no effort should be spared to ensure their children's health and well-being, they don't hesitate to voice their concerns in a respectful, age-appropriate way. They'll push their children to be moral, compassionate, and considerate of others, while also holding them accountable for their choices and behavior. Protagonists have high expectations for their kids that they don't hesitate to make known; however, they welcome discussion with their children over moral disagreements. When they're confident in their values and beliefs, Protagonist parents can support their children throughout their lives as they develop their own identities and beliefs.

Unrealistic Expectations

Despite their best intentions, all parents struggle with various aspects of parenting. It's inevitable that parents become overwhelmed and stressed at some point. Losing their temper is familiar enough, but exceptionally frustrated Protagonist parents can face a crisis. If their children commit an unexpected lapse in moral judgment (as is bound to happen sometime), these parents may let their imaginations run wild, reading sweeping moral failures in simple mistakes.

Protagonists' high moral standards also mean that things other personality types might shrug off can offend them deeply. Because they identify so strongly with the beliefs they hold, few things hurt Protagonists more than seeing their children challenge or even reject them. Protagonist parents may blame themselves for instilling the wrong values in their children, and they may try to fix that through emotionally manipulative behaviors.

Pushy Parents

As open-minded as these types can be, if their passion for a specific belief gets out of hand, they can become downright demanding. When they commit to a specific ideology and expect their kids to follow, the scales can tip from inspiring to dogmatic. Different methods work best, based on children's needs: Parents who stubbornly focus on one educational ideology risk doing more harm than good.

Forcing an uninterested preschooler to take Mandarin classes or insisting that their introverted teenager join a club or sports team for more social interaction inevitably breeds spite and bitterness. The intentions behind these efforts may be noble, but when Protagonist parents fail to share their passions, they may end up with children who automatically reject their ideas and beliefs.

Practicing Forgiveness

Parents with this personality type may have a hard time aligning their expectations with reality, especially when it comes to moral and ethical scenarios. When they feel as though they've violated their moral code, perhaps by yelling at their toddlers or giving their teenagers unreasonable punishments, Protagonist parents can be exceptionally tough on themselves. They often find it difficult to forgive themselves for failing to uphold their high standards.

There's nothing wrong with high personal expectations, but an inability to forgive themselves – or others – for failures can ultimately result in bitter, unhappy parents. Parenting is hard, and all parents, no matter how noble and moral, make mistakes – a *lot* of mistakes. The key to happy, balanced parenting is finding ways to forgive mistakes and look, instead, for signs of growth and improvement. Focusing on what they've done right – like figuring out effective ways to calm their toddlers' tantrums – instead of their mistakes can lead to more contentment and fulfillment in their relationships with both themselves and their children.

Inspiring Independence

As much as they may believe they're encouraging their children by helping them solve all their problems, Protagonist parents who don't allow their kids to struggle and learn from their mistakes are doing them a disservice. Fortunately, they can easily transform that same passion they have for encouraging their children into a passion for promoting their growth and development. Many Protagonists consider themselves aficionados in personal development, as they seek and engage in growth opportunities themselves. Their drive to constantly improve and evolve is inspirational and can help them serve as mentors to their children.

The key to inspiring healthy independence is to provide the proper balance of challenge and support to children throughout their lives. Kids shouldn't wallow in confusion, but parents shouldn't be too quick to jump in and solve their problems, either. Allowing children to experience failure is just as important as supporting them during their greatest trials. Kids who "forget" to study for their history test must accept the consequences of their behavior (i.e., not paying attention, being disorganized). Instead of swooping in to "save" them, Protagonist parents should help them cope with these consequences and learn from them.

Parenting for Each Stage of Development

Each stage of children's growth presents both unique challenges and exciting milestones. Learning how to navigate these stages can seem daunting, but the opportunity to build healthy attachments and create meaningful memories makes it worth the struggle.

Renowned psychologist Erik Erikson proposed a theory of psychosocial development that identified eight stages, five of which take place between birth and 18 years of age. It's important to remember that these stages aren't set in stone, and the ages listed for each stage are approximate. Children develop at their own pace and meet each milestone in their own time, often even skipping stages, achieving them in an unexpected order or trying one milestone out and falling back to an old one – this is especially common with learning to walk. This is often normal, but it's worth developing a relationship with a pediatric physician to check in with any questions and concerns.

The following paragraphs discuss what to expect at each stage of development, as well as how the strengths and weaknesses of the Protagonist personality type affect their parenting at each stage.

Building Bonds (from Birth to Approximately 1½ Years)

According to Erikson, the stages of infancy and early childhood last from birth until approximately three years of age. Children in these stages are very dependent on their parents to meet their needs. This is also when the bonds of attachment are created as parents meet children's needs, develop trusting relationships, and promote autonomy.

The main priority for infants on the journey to attachment is having their basic needs met. From being fed to receiving affection, infants either learn to trust that their Protagonist parents provide for them or suffer from a sense of mistrust in all their subsequent relationships. If parents are inconsistent or neglectful in providing for their children, their infants have difficulty creating a positive, trusting attachment with them.

On the other hand, attentive and affectionate parents, especially those who engage in consistent physical contact – such as snuggling or transporting their children in baby carriers on their bodies – encourage trusting, hopeful relationships with their infants and are likely to have minimal difficulty building comfortable attachments.

Balanced Infant Bonding

Building Loving Bonds

Few things in life are as exciting as bringing home a new baby, and Protagonists, with their desire to connect with others, find this stage particularly satisfying. Protagonists who tap into their empathy and sensitivity when their children are born have no trouble giving their infants the attention and affection needed to build loving bonds. Infants need affection that goes beyond just daily care. They crave the physical connection their parents provide through cuddling, rocking, speaking softly, and making eye contact. Parents' loving smiles do more than just entertain their infants; they create a primal connection that inspires the trust they need to develop positive relationships.

As parents, Protagonists thrive on feeling needed and enjoy being their children's primary caretakers. This is vital, as it can motivate them during the extraordinarily draining infant stage. Some parents may struggle with maintaining energy during this

phase, thus creating mood swings or other inconsistent behaviors, but Protagonists' seemingly ceaseless energy and their reliability allow them to not only survive this stage but even relish it.

Motivated Caretakers

Loving bonds, as discussed previously, are important. Even more so, motivated Protagonists truly excel at being eager to alter their lives to meet their infants' needs. The moment their children are born, the first time they smile, and when they say "momma" or "dada" – these are all meaningful, motivating experiences. Protagonist parents live for these simple moments, from cuddling with their sleepy, satiated babies in their rocking chairs to making silly faces at them while changing their diapers. Few parents are as attuned to, and appreciative of, the meaningful moments that build loving bonds with their children as Protagonists are.

One of the greatest Protagonist strengths is their selfless concern for others. Caring for infants, who are utterly reliant on others to meet their needs, may drain parents of other personality types. Protagonist parents, however, truly thrive on what most would consider an exhausting mission, where they're required to put their personal needs on hold to care for a completely dependent child. Protagonists view building empathic, emotional bonds with their children as their number one priority throughout the lifespan. The infancy stage, for these parents, is one of the most rewarding times to interact and bond with their children.

Unbalanced Infant Bonding

Taking on Too Much

Many new parents experience a great deal of pressure to maintain their pre-infant lifestyles after their children are born. When Protagonist parents become too focused on living up to unrealistic expectations placed by either themselves or others, they may find themselves taking on more than they can handle. People with this personality type often manage a full plate of obligations even before they have children, and both new parents and veterans alike may attempt to play the role of “super parents” by jumping back into work right away or obsessing about keeping up with a busy social calendar. When Protagonists insist on returning to their pre-parenthood (or pre-new child) grind before they’re ready, they end up overtaxing themselves physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally.

To further complicate matters, Protagonists, with their innate leadership abilities, often feel it’s their role to help others. Asking for help, even when they truly need it, can be extraordinarily difficult for those who identify as the “helper.” The infant and toddler years are some of the most challenging that parents face, and an unwillingness to seek or accept help from others dramatically increases the possibility that Protagonist parents will experience frustration, exhaustion, and even an uncharacteristic lack of motivation.

Struggling with Expectations

In addition to struggling with taking on too much, Protagonists may have unrealistic expectations of what they can teach their children at this stage. They may believe that their infants should be able to achieve certain milestones more quickly than is necessary or fret that their children aren’t hitting milestones “on time.” Anxious

Protagonist parents may be more concerned about teaching their children to sit up, roll over, feed themselves, or walk before they're truly ready, rather than appreciating their children's current abilities and engaging with them at their level.

It's certainly exciting to see their babies roll over for the first time or sit up on their own, but pushing children to achieve these milestones causes frustration for both parties involved. Just because their brilliant infants aren't saying their first words at the same time as their friends' children doesn't mean that they aren't on track developmentally. Development isn't a measure of parental ability, and both Protagonist parents and their infants end up much happier and more relaxed if they're allowed to mature at their own pace.

Rebalancing Infant Bonding

Seeking Support

Learning to balance their needs with their children's needs is one of the most important things Protagonists can do. To do this, they need to take time to understand and accept their own limits. It's not unreasonable for new parents to request the maximum time off after the birth of a child, or to let people know they'll just be stopping by this year's fundraiser rather than organizing it. Being healthy parents is more important than being "super parents," and it is much more realistic as well.

Although Protagonists tend to feel guilty (and even self-indulgent) when they put their needs ahead of the needs of others, they will find that doing so makes them happier, healthier parents. There are many ways to take quality time, but not everyone has the time (or resources) to take a weekend retreat, get weekly massages,

or even take a daily 15-minute nap. The following suggestions can be effective ways for busy, burned-out Protagonist parents to recharge in just a few minutes:

- Enjoy a 30-minute bath while a partner or friend puts the kids to bed.
- Take a relative up on their offer to babysit.
- Meet with friends for coffee at home or a coffee shop once a week.
- Engage in a deep breathing exercise or yoga stretches for five minutes.
- Join a club or group such as a book club, sports team, parent support group, or any other “adults-only” activity that allows for time to interact with others without being distracted by children (even if it’s only for a brief amount of time).
- Regularly share thoughts or feelings with a friend or partner.

Prioritizing Attachment

Protagonists prepare themselves to be extraordinary teachers, but when it comes to promoting their infants’ development, they may be more pushy than helpful. Offering their children unconditional love and support, especially at such a young age, is much more important than cultivating genius. When they’re intent on seeing their infants “make progress” in their growth and development, even the most well-meaning Protagonist parents may sacrifice some of the beauty of a loving parent-child bond.

The most important development that needs to take place during this stage is a loving attachment between parent and child. Such a bond can create the foundation for the rest of the child’s development. Learning to crawl is important, but having parents who love and support them unconditionally, regardless of their abilities, is

much more important. The following activities can help Protagonist parents bond with and appreciate their infants *right now*:

- Read out loud. Children's stories are ideal but not necessary, as small babies gain a lot just by hearing their parents speak.
- Practice baby wearing. Parents can do many chores and activities (like sweeping or shopping) while babies are in wearable carriers. This contact promotes bonding and helps even the fussiest babies fall asleep – bonus!
- Engage in skin-to-skin contact as often as possible, especially with young infants.
- Write down infants' milestones (first smile, first tooth, and so on) to keep track of their progress.

Testing Boundaries (from Approximately 1½ to 3 Years)

Once they're mobile, young children become very interested in exploring their environment with their senses. Crawling, walking, grabbing items, putting things in their mouths, and communicating verbally are just a few of the ways that toddlers learn about the world around them.

During this stage, Protagonist parents must provide a safe harbor for their children while still allowing them to experience and explore their surroundings. Children who can test boundaries yet still receive parental support and encouragement develop a sense of autonomy. Toddlers who are overly restricted, criticized, or made to feel guilty for testing boundaries ultimately experience shame and may suffer from feelings of incompetence or low self-worth. These feelings can last throughout their

lives, perhaps jeopardizing their ability to achieve goals and develop positive character traits such as reliability or confidence.

Balanced Toddler Bonding

Compassionate and Engaged

Extremely supportive, Protagonists make an ideal “home base” for their children during this stage. Their focus on meaningful engagement with their children, combined with a sincere determination to meet their needs, ensures that their toddlers never feel abandoned, ignored, or unloved. Even though children at this age are incredibly independent, they still crave (and need) trustworthy caregivers, and Protagonists don't disappoint.

Protagonists' compassion is especially useful during the trying toddler years. This stage can certainly be challenging, but confident parents with this personality type enjoy promoting their children's curiosity and independence while still maintaining a safe environment. They take pleasure in helping their children learn how to pick out their own clothes and dress themselves while also promoting their toddlers' natural creativity and self-expression. Helping their kids learn to become creative, self-reliant, and competent are among Protagonist parents' greatest joys.

Nurturing Creative Connections

As far as parent-child activities are concerned, these parents prioritize open-minded, active engagement as a means of emotional bonding. People with this personality type enjoy things that excite their visionary spirit, and they rarely have difficulty coming up with thoughtful, unique ideas. Providing opportunities for their children to learn and experience new and different things is especially important to

Protagonist parents, who thrive on pursuing such opportunities for themselves as well.

The toddler stage is devoted to exploration of all kinds, from trying different foods to discovering new places. These parents are more than happy to provide opportunities for their children to experience the world around them. Many Protagonists love nature and believe in respect for all living things. They encourage their toddlers to experience and enjoy nature as well, whether it means taking day trips or weekend outings to parks and reserves or stopping to take a closer look at flowers, birds, and insects. These activities offer parents an excellent opportunity to teach their children the importance of empathy, kindness, and the world around them.

Unbalanced Toddler Bonding

Difficulty with Defiance

If they take their toddlers' willful or defiant behavior personally, Protagonist parents will find this stage especially challenging. It can be both frustrating and discouraging when their lovingly raised children begin using their newly acquired favorite word, "No!" in response to their questions. From throwing a fit every evening at bedtime to refusing to eat any form of fresh produce (or any healthy food for that matter), toddlers often seem intent on challenging their parents at every turn. As much as they want to foster their children's independence, Protagonists who believe "the parent always knows what's best" undoubtedly struggle when their children ignore their wisdom.

The toddler stage is when identity development begins, so children don't always behave in ways that fit their parents' molds. Behaviors such as hitting their siblings

or yelling at their parents – which are, although not desirable, normal for this stage – can be especially demoralizing for Protagonists who feel that their children’s moral development should be further along at this point. When these parents are more focused on idealized versions of their children, they may miss opportunities to support what’s unique about their toddlers.

Overly Involved

Protagonist parents may believe they’re supportive, engaging parents, but a misguided tendency to provide too many structured activities can stunt their toddlers’ development. Structured or educational games may seem to promote learning when, in reality, children need to learn how to generate their own ideas and solve real-world problems.

Similarly, if Protagonists step in every time their child argues with another, it impedes social development by preventing the child from learning on their own to resolve conflict. Constant interventions at the toddler stage can result in children who expect that every issue will be solved for them, which can result in a failure to take responsibility for their own behavior. Despite their best intentions, overly involved Protagonists run the risk of limiting their toddlers’ ability to deal with the challenges they face as they grow older.

Rebalancing Toddler Bonding

Modeling Respectful Behavior

As much as Protagonists love to promote their children’s growth, it can be disheartening to watch their formerly cuddly and relatively docile infants transform into defiant, raging “No” machines. Although they may wonder what happened to

their sweet babies, Protagonist parents can take heart: The toddler stage is just that, a *stage*. Wild mood swings and forceful gestures of independence – like screaming and running through the grocery store when they don’t get the cereal they want – should balance out once they’re school-aged.

It’s especially important for Protagonist parents to understand that their children are establishing their autonomy. Children this age aren’t intentionally rejecting their parents: Much like college students who party when they’re supposed to be studying, toddlers are pushing boundaries as part of finding their own way. Just because children are becoming more independent, however, doesn’t mean that parents should allow them to get away with demanding behavior. Protagonist parents still need to redirect their children and model the appropriate ways to behave. Some ways to do this:

- Teach toddlers to raise their hands or place their hands on a parent’s arm if they need to speak instead of interrupting – their parents will know they have something to say and still get to finish their sentences.
- Use techniques such as laughing or clapping loudly rather than shouting, “No!” when children are engaging in undesirable behaviors.
- Practice labeling emotions using pictures (smiley face, sad face, angry face) and have toddlers point to the faces that match their emotions. This should eventually help them feel understood rather than feeling as though they must act on their emotions.
- Read stories where problems are solved with good behavior and emotional control, such as *Little Blue Truck*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, and *The Runaway Bunny*.

Focusing on Appropriate Growth

Doing too much for their children can be just as damaging as inconsistent discipline, but with some of their own personal discipline and development, Protagonist parents can prevent or undo any negative consequences of their constant interventions. The most effective way to do this is to tap into their natural desire to encourage their children and their ability to persuade others.

Protagonist parents can encourage their toddlers' development by regularly looking for opportunities to promote growth, problem-solving skills, and autonomy. Their focus should be on fostering age-appropriate development and encouraging kids to practice certain skills, including gross motor skills (such as walking, jumping, and running) and fine motor skills (such as stacking blocks and putting together simple puzzles). The following actions can allow Protagonists to support their children while also inspiring independence:

- Give toddlers a few clothing options (two or three) to pick out when they get dressed, have them try pouring their own cereal, and encourage them to wash their own hands and face after mealtime.
- Make time for play and allow the children to lead the way with participatory imaginative play.
- Encourage them to resolve conflicts through sharing and using kind words – and resist the temptation to solve the issue for them.

Thirst for Knowledge (from Approximately 3 to 5 Years)

The preschool years, from approximately three to five years of age, are a prime time for brain development, and children at this stage accumulate knowledge at an extraordinary rate. Preschoolers absorb information constantly, through restless activity and a seemingly unending stream of questions. Learning at this stage takes place through play, especially the unstructured and imaginary kind, and through social interaction with family and peers. They also exercise creativity through make-believe games and stories.

If children don't have the opportunity to set the agenda occasionally, or if their constant questions or childish make-believe games are received with annoyance, kids can experience feelings of guilt, frustration, and incompetence. Consequently, they may suffer from poor self-control or a lack of initiative. Parents who wish to navigate this stage successfully must give their children the opportunity to make some of their own decisions, initiate activities, ask questions, receive answers, and lead others in exploratory play.

Balanced Preschool Relationships

Excellent Teachers

As proponents of lifelong learning, Protagonist parents genuinely want to inspire their children to enjoy learning. People with this personality type happily answer their preschool children's stream of questions and take great pleasure in creatively engaging them in learning opportunities. From trips to the library to impromptu

nature “classes” while walking to the park, Protagonists take any chance they can to engage and educate their preschoolers.

Seeking out educational opportunities isn’t the only form of teaching that these parents engage in – modeling morals and values for their children from a young age is as important to them as other forms of learning. Protagonist parents teach their preschoolers to respect others and appreciate their differences. They insist on integrity: If their children dig up a neighbor’s flowers, these parents would encourage their little ones to apologize to neighbor, then help them understand why digging up those flowers was wrong. Protagonists feel it’s their moral obligation to instill these important values through modeling and consistent encouragement.

Emotionally Intelligent

Emotional engagement is a high priority – both in terms of building strong bonds with their children and teaching them how to develop their emotional intelligence. Kids at this stage are learning the importance of self-control, empathy, and interpersonal relationships (especially with peers) and need guidance to properly develop these skills.

Children best learn emotional intelligence through modeling, and this is where Protagonist parents can truly shine. Those who have developed their own self-control and can engage in genuine, thoughtful ways can lovingly communicate these concepts to their children. Imaginary play is an especially useful outlet for practicing these skills. Something as simple as playing a game of “house” with their children can be a perfect opportunity for these parents to both model healthy relationships and lovingly correct inappropriate behavior. Parents who engage in this type of play with their preschoolers pass along wisdom and enhance their emotional bonds as well.

Unbalanced Preschool Relationships

Exceedingly Ambitious

Protagonists rarely struggle to maintain the energy necessary to keep up with their children. However, they tend to overestimate how much they themselves and their preschoolers can accomplish in a single day. Busyness may energize these parents, but their young children may not benefit from a packed schedule of playdates, art classes, and errands with little time for rest or free play. This incessant action and limited opportunities to exercise their free will plant the seeds of future resentment and rebellion.

There's also a danger that Protagonist parents who fall into the "overachiever" trap can become overworked and overwhelmed during this stage. Just keeping up with housework, a career, and the myriad needs of an entire household can exhaust anyone. Life at this stage becomes even more challenging when parents must now also run their children from preschool to playdates to swimming lessons and karate class. Parents in today's digital society can also feel burdened by the need to make every birthday party and family vacation worthy of posting on social media. Attempting to achieve "perfect parent" status can quickly take a toll on Protagonists, who would prefer to focus on more meaningful aspects of life.

Overestimating Abilities

During the preschool years, children are transitioning from completely dependent infants to increasingly independent individuals. As their little ones grow more competent and communicative, these parents risk overestimating their preschoolers' capabilities. Their desire to one day view their kids as equals can result in early unrealistic expectations that frustrate both parents and children.

Protagonists, as morally focused individuals, may assume that their preschoolers can easily grasp any ideas or moral constructs. This is especially true when the information they provide is hypothetical. Saying, “You shouldn’t hit people. How would you feel if someone hit you?” seems like a perfectly reasonable question. However, children at this stage are incapable of putting themselves in other people’s shoes. They may respond, “I would feel bad,” but what they’re really thinking is, “I would feel bad if someone hit me, but what I really feel bad about right now is getting in trouble.” Empathy and moral reasoning are still undeveloped at this stage, and Protagonist parents who expect their children to be proficient in these skills struggle to communicate effectively (and appropriately) with their preschoolers.

Rebalancing Preschool Relationships

Adjusting Expectations

Rather than letting their ambition drive both themselves and their children to the brink of burnout, Protagonist parents must learn to say, “No,” to endless playdates and nature classes, and say, “Yes,” to a much-needed break when necessary. Children benefit more from getting rest and having freedom than from attending every class, sport, and extracurricular activity possible. Unstructured playtime provides preschoolers with a creative outlet and encourages self-initiation – both necessities for successfully navigating this stage.

Although Protagonist parents may initially feel some guilt for not meeting societal expectations – or their own overly ambitious ones – they ultimately feel will liberated from unnecessary obligations. Their natural tendency is to live life based on their values, not social dictates, and they must find their way back to those values as they raise their children. It’s also important for people with this personality type to find

ways to take care of themselves while parenting their preschoolers. Here are some ideas that can help bring balance to this busy stage:

- Limit activities such as playdates, sports, art classes, etc., to just a couple of times per week rather than every other day.
- Resist the temptation to make sure that every event or activity is social media worthy.
- Schedule regular breaks such as parent date nights, drinks with friends, or solo walks in nature – anything that’s recharging and refreshing.
- Spend quality time with preschoolers with no agenda or expectations.

Protagonist parents who provide a primarily peaceful, relaxed environment will experience happier, healthier relationships with their children.

Accepting Age-Appropriate Abilities

The preschool stage is one of the most delightful, as children at this age can communicate with and understand their parents far more effectively than they could in earlier years. Parents who can focus on the progress that children have made are more successful in their interactions than those who dwell on their undeveloped skills.

From silly jokes to profound questions, preschoolers often display a type of genius that’s truly inspiring. Additionally, their authenticity is unparalleled at this stage, making them capable of sincere, compassionate interactions with others. Despite their undeveloped moral reasoning and empathy, preschoolers are capable of affection and kindness, traits that endear them to even the most frustrated or flabbergasted parents. Protagonists who recognize their preschoolers’ strengths find it easier to remain optimistic when they’re faced with their shortcomings. The

following brief exercise can help Protagonist parents appreciate their children exactly as they are:

- Sit down at a table with your preschooler, a box of crayons, and several blank pieces of paper.
- Have the child tell stories and illustrate them by drawing pictures (help by drawing and writing the stories down).
- Collect the drawings and make them into a book by binding them with staples or string.
- Sit back and admire the genius and creativity that your preschooler is capable of.

Creating Competence (from Approximately 5 to 12 Years)

The early school years are an important period of skill development for young children. They're still constantly absorbing new information, and they're also developing proficiency in increasingly complex areas, from relationships to mathematics to athletics. Children who are challenged and supported in these areas flourish in both their abilities and self-confidence.

If they don't receive consistent support, kids at this stage can begin to feel inferior to their peers, and they will be less likely to develop or work toward long-term goals. On the other hand, if they aren't sufficiently challenged, they can begin to feel overly confident in themselves and their abilities, and they may come to lack modesty and compassion toward others.

Balanced School-Age Relationships

Passionate and Encouraging

Protagonists are disproportionately drawn to working in education, and they are ardent supporters of lifelong learning. However, passing spelling tests and memorizing multiplication tables aren't as important to Protagonists as having children who are creative and compassionate in their success. If they feel their kids aren't receiving a truly holistic education, Protagonist parents can explore alternative options such as tutoring, charter schools, or even homeschooling to fill in the gaps.

Even the compassionate parents, these types provide both support and encouragement to children who are struggling. They're careful to ensure that their high expectations don't prevent them from being understanding and empathetic. Children are expected to put effort into gaining knowledge and developing their skills, but Protagonist parents won't hesitate to come to the aid of those who are struggling with a certain class or the school bully. At the same time, they encourage their children to work toward finding solutions to problems themselves, which helps children achieve a sense of balanced competence that's necessary at this stage of development.

Excellent Mentors

The school years are a time of intense learning, and Protagonists are natural mentors who can model the skills needed for success in academics. These parents eagerly teach their children the value of hard work and stress the importance of traits such as innovation and creativity. Few types understand the necessity of these traits the way Protagonists do.

At a stage in life when kids are constantly being told what to do and conforming to strict schedules, innovation and creativity often become neglected or viewed as unnecessary. Imaginative Protagonist parents understand the importance of these traits in an ever-changing world and encourage their children to incorporate their unique ideas and perspectives into both their academic and personal lives. They may also encourage their children to explore the arts – visual, performing, or literary – whether attending a performance of *The Nutcracker* together or enrolling their would-be ballerinas in dancing lessons. For Protagonist parents, creative expression is much more vital than financial success or the status of a profession or title.

Unbalanced School-Age Relationships

Passionately Out of Touch

Protagonists' passion for a cause can create issues for their children at this stage if it isn't properly balanced with their children's needs and abilities. School-aged children certainly benefit from volunteering and standing up for their beliefs. However, they also need parents who can help them address the issues they face in day-to-day life. From a school crush that isn't reciprocated to the trauma of being picked last for the kickball team, children at this age need parents who can help them deal with personal issues that deeply affect them.

Always focused on saving the world, Protagonist parents may fail to validate their children's feelings on these "smaller issues," perhaps finding that their kids are less likely to seek their help or support in the future. Sure, the world isn't going to end if their sons or daughters don't make the basketball team, but it can feel catastrophic. To children at this age, everything that happens to them is a big deal. Protagonist

parents who don't help their children deal with their issues in balanced and effective ways often struggle to maintain close relationships.

Pretentiously Idealistic

Although they may not concern themselves with typical achievements and awards, Protagonists can be rather demanding parents when it comes to measuring up to their ideals. When their expectations are more idealistic than realistic, they may become paranoid that their children won't live up to the values and principles they've outlined. Having their children turn out to be cynical, irresponsible, or apathetic is among Protagonist parents' greatest fears.

One of the greatest demands these parents make stems from a fear of something less sinister, however – being ordinary. They set ambitious life targets for themselves and stand up against evil in the name of high moral goals, through acts big and small. They may never be able to declare victory, but they know in their hearts that they fight the good fight. They expect the same of their children – with freedom, strength of will, and dreams, their children could change the world!

But their kids may want a simple, stable life. Rather than declaring war on the injustice in the world, they may just want happy lives being moderately popular and maintaining decent grades. Overly idealistic Protagonists can struggle to understand that this is as valid and desirable as any other path because it's what their children feel is right for *them*.

Rebalancing School-Age Relationships

Meeting Them Where They Are

Well-meaning Protagonists place high expectations on their children, hoping that it encourages them to make a difference in the world. Unfortunately, when the focus is constantly on what is expected – especially when the expectations are extraordinary – these parents are apt to miss out on what their children really need. What kids need most from their parents is unconditional love and acceptance, combined with mutual goals and reasonable boundaries, and Protagonist parents are more than capable of providing them.

Those who are prone to fixating on the “big picture” can benefit from focusing on what their children are dealing with now – this the big picture, for them. Rather than trying to hammer a square peg (Protagonist parents’ idea of what is important) into a round hole (what their children think is important), these parents should make a point to engage with their children in the “here and now.” Some ideas that can help:

- Start a gratitude practice where both parents and children state three things they’re grateful for that day and one thing that’s bothering them.
- Incorporate a mindfulness practice into your routine, perhaps with the gratitude practice, where parents and children spend five minutes focusing on deep, focused breathing.
- Set aside time weekly where parents and children can engage in activities together, such as hitting up an arcade, taking a hike, or checking out a museum.

Children face significant challenges as they navigate this stage, and support from their parents is necessary for them to not only achieve competence but also learn how to interact with others in a compassionate and understanding way.

Embracing Individual Perspectives

As much as Protagonist parents may want their children to focus on vanquishing all the evils of the world, it's more important that they focus on promoting their overall well-being. They're very devoted to their values, especially reliability, integrity, and social justice, as well as their children. Using their devotion, Protagonists can create definitions of personal success that embrace the individual perspectives their children possess.

Protagonists should encourage their children to develop their own values and pursue their own definitions of a successful life, which can undoubtedly go through multiple iterations as they grow, learn, and evolve. This can be done by looking at the institutions that have played an important part in their lives, such as their faith, their family, or clubs in which they're involved. Although Protagonists' values may be noble, their children's confidence and sense of identity depend on their abilities to determine their own values without judgment, even if their idea of a meaningful life doesn't match that of their parents. The following exercise can help Protagonist parents practice accepting and encouraging their children's dreams and ideas while withholding their tendency to judge them:

- Write down one important value. Include at least two reasons why it's important.
- Imagine a friend or loved one criticizing that value, and write down the feelings that would trigger.

- Use this information to consider how judgmental behavior toward the values of others, especially children, can make them feel.

Find Thyself (from Approximately 12 to 18 Years)

Adolescence is the transition from childhood to adulthood, when children focus on developing their own distinct identities. This transitional period centers around their individual sense of what their roles are in their relationships with themselves, others, and society in general. To determine their roles, adolescents at this stage begin the all-important process of identifying their personal values and beliefs. They make educational and future career goals and develop relationships based on how they align with their values and beliefs, making this a pivotal, foundational stage for the rest of their lives.

Balanced Adolescent Relationships

Promoting Positive Values

During this stage of identity development, older children need the support and understanding of their parents more than ever. Protagonist parents encourage their adolescents' growth by promoting positive values, such as respect, compassion, and integrity, while also providing them with freedom to explore other values that inspire them. Mature Protagonists understand the importance of allowing their teens to go through the difficult yet necessary process of personal development with the proper balance of support and stepping back.

Regardless of the struggles Protagonists may face during this tumultuous time, they remain steadfast in their devotion to their children. Their dedication, both to their kids and to the promotion of positive values, provides a solid foundation that allows

identity-seeking children to venture further into self-discovery while still feeling a sense of support and love.

Unconditional Love and Commitment

People often make personal identity discoveries through trial and error, which often translates into mistakes. Protagonist parents' unconditional love and support are indispensable as they help their teens cope with the many challenges they face. An adolescent who skips class needs to know that there are consequences to their behavior but also that their parents still love them regardless of their mistakes. Children at this stage are more likely to communicate with their parents if they're confident that they won't be judged and aren't at risk of having their parents' love and acceptance revoked.

This is especially true when they're dealing with something truly serious: a pregnancy, suspension or expulsion, or even painful milestones like a rough breakup. Protagonist parents who stay loving toward their children during these dilemmas can establish themselves as true sources of empathy and wisdom when their children need it most. As overwhelming and terrifying as some of these situations are, Protagonists who can tap into their compassion and forward-thinking natures can confront these situations from places of wisdom rather than of panic. Beyond treating their adolescents with respect, Protagonists can strive to be the wise, understanding adults in the room.

Unbalanced Adolescent Relationships

Imposing Ideals

Like the issues they faced during their children's school-aged years, Protagonists who have unrealistic expectations of their adolescents' identity development struggle with their ever-expanding independence. People with this personality type are very accepting of the pursuit of personal development, but they may have their own ideas about what this process should look like and what values their children should espouse. Protagonists with passionate political or religious views may find their children's desire to explore seemingly "oppositional" beliefs insulting, even worth undoing based on principle alone.

Protagonist parents who believe that personal development can be accomplished only within specific, approved parameters – regardless of where those boundaries fall on any scale – may inadvertently prevent their adolescents from going through the self-discovery process. Adolescents are unlikely to respond well to this type of parental control and may act out in rebellious ways or shut down and stop communicating with their parents altogether.

Overly Sensitive

Because of their sensitivity and focus on morality, Protagonists are hurt deeply by things other personality types might shrug off. Few things are more hurtful to them than seeing their deeply held morals and beliefs flaunted, especially by their children. When they're feeling insecure about their parenting, they may blame themselves for being unable to instill the right values in their children, and they may try to fix the problem by resorting to increasingly intense moral and emotional appeals.

Teenagers often rebel against their parents' authority by actively exploring new and often contrary ideas. But parents shouldn't immediately assume that their teens are sincerely opposed to their beliefs or that all their teachings have been ignored. Whether such assumptions are grounded in truth or not, they can feel deeply hurt. If they then focus on mitigating damage and strengthening their relationships in cloying or manipulative ways, Protagonists may create even stronger pushback. If they let their sensitivity get the best of them, they can forget that they, too, once craved freedom and independence when they were teens, especially when it came to the pursuit of ideas and ideals. Their children are likely to recognize and appreciate this, which should help make adolescence less chaotic.

Rebalancing Adolescent Relationships

Celebrating Individual Ideals

Discovering ideals that are personally meaningful is one of the most important aspects of identity development for Protagonists. Rather than being offended or insulted if their children's ideals don't match their own, mature parents with this personality type can celebrate the fact that their adolescents have gone through this same process of self-discovery. If their children understand right and wrong and have well-developed moral compasses, Protagonists can take a step back and appreciate a parenting job well done.

The best way for parents to encourage their teens to develop their own personal ideals is to encourage them to privately focus on embracing values that are meaningful to their individual journeys. Although they can be encouraged to draw from family values during this process, it's important for Protagonist parents to avoid pressuring or trying to "guilt" their adolescents into agreeing with their own values

and beliefs. The following exercise can help Protagonist parents guide their teenagers through this process. Protagonists can have their teenagers answer the following questions to get them started:

- Think about the times in your life when you have felt the happiest and most successful. What did they have in common?
- Keeping those moments in mind, use a list or a mind map and write down the words that remind you of those times. If getting a high school diploma was something that made you feel successful, writing the values, “love of learning” or “perseverance” would be appropriate.
- Choose five to 10 values from the list or mind map.
- Figure out a way to implement those values. Make sure to start with one at a time. If “love of learning” is one of your values, consider signing up for an online course, or try learning a new language.

Improving Understanding of Themselves and Others

One of the best ways to counter a tendency to be overly sensitive is for teens to improve their understanding of themselves and others. If Protagonist parents are unaware of their own triggers that make them feel insecure or offended, it's easy for them to get carried away with any perceived slights. Likewise, if they fail to understand that their children have their own unique values and personality traits, they may assume that they're defiant or difficult. Despite the amount of influence that these parents have over their teens, it's important to both respect and support their differences. They may not choose to be vegans like their parents, but that doesn't mean that they don't value life or love the environment any less.

Parenthood provides the opportunity for Protagonists to learn from their children and grow as human beings. Sometimes parenting can bring out the worst – like yelling at a teenager who has failed to clean up their room *again* – but it also brings out the best and most authentic parts of their personalities. Protagonists are especially selfless parents, and their self-sacrifice and compassion won't go unnoticed, even though adolescents might take it for granted for some time. Reflecting on areas of parenthood that are especially hard, like dealing with rebellious teenagers, can allow people with this personality type to see what aspects of themselves they need to improve or balance.

The following brief exercise can help Protagonist parents take negative interactions with their teens and turn them into learning experiences:

- Think of a recent argument or misunderstanding with your adolescent.
- Imagine how the teen felt, then write down how they may have felt during this disagreement (frustrated, angry, misunderstood, hurt).
- Write down any reactions (or expectations) that may have been unreasonable.
- Consider how these unreasonable reactions or expectations may have exacerbated frustrations during this disagreement.
- Finally, take a moment to consider what type of response would respectfully get the point across while also maintaining an understanding of the teen's opinions.

Conclusion

Parenting is one of the most challenging experiences that anyone can face, regardless of their personality type. Protagonists have their own unique strengths, such as inspiration, altruism, leadership, and integrity, that they can leverage, as well

as weaknesses they can try to understand and overcome to build positive, proactive relationships with their children. Parents have tremendous potential for personal development, and Protagonists can gain a much deeper understanding of themselves and others if they use this opportunity to do so.

Every child is different, and parents are the best judge of what their children need. The advice provided above is based on general growth stages for children and basic strengths and weaknesses that many Protagonists share. Use this information however it works best; if any of the advice or guidance adds additional stress, frustration, or burden, set it aside. For special situations, such as behavioral or medical issues, it's best to consult with a professional pediatrician or pediatric psychologist to come up with a plan that works best for everyone involved.

Academic Path



Better Self, Better World

Unlike some idealists who simply dream of a better and more just world, Protagonists work tirelessly to spread their message. War, poverty, racism: These are some the most fundamental problems we face as a species. Many see these ills as unfortunate but ultimately the way of the world, therefore trying to change them would be futile. Protagonists, however, balk at this apathy and instead dedicate their lives to eradicating one or more of society's ills through action and community involvement.

Once Protagonists have a goal in mind, their motivation is nearly unparalleled among the types. Their urge to learn and improve themselves doesn't come from a desire to simply be better, but rather to be better for those around them. As summed up in a quotation from author Joseph Campbell: "We're not on our journey to save the world, but to save ourselves. But in doing that, you save the world. The influence of a vital person vitalizes."

Protagonists take the moral obligation to better themselves for the sake of others and apply it to their studies. They don't learn just to learn, they learn with a purpose. Every book read, every essay written, and every debate they engage contribute to a well-rounded education that will aid them – and others – in the future.

Honing a Vision

Protagonists are beyond diligent when it comes to their studies. People of this type are famous throughout history for their extraordinary impact on the world: Consider the likes of Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey. Protagonists' campaigns often begin with learning, then are seen through with dedication and hard-honed vision. They have the rare ability to focus on both breadth and depth. Their missions have the capacity to change things, but they are general enough to be broadly applied. Whatever their mission, they will discover it through studies of both subjects and people, then apply all their focus. This can be anything from ending poverty to creating a comic that gives representation to the underrepresented. For Protagonists, the possibilities are endless.

From the time they're young, Protagonists have acute emotional ties to those around them. Their motivation comes from wanting to create a better world for people, and they create plans in which they are the catalysts that launch revolution. For young Protagonists, when their teacher asks what they want to be when they grow up, they often have a clear idea in mind, as well as sustained intent that follows them well into their adult lives.

This may manifest itself as joining the newspaper staff in high school, then majoring in journalism at college, with the eventual goal of winning a Peabody Award for investigative journalism examining the government of a far-off, neglected,

impoverished country. They begin with emotion, then develop a vision, and then begin to map the steps from point A to point B.

How Protagonists Learn

There is no right way to learn, and every single type has their own unique style of processing information. Protagonists' style of learning is heavily influenced by those around them, and often, it is a powerful tool that fuels the machine. By developing and balancing their natural style, Protagonists can optimize and enjoy the process of learning.

Balanced Learning Habits

Considering Impact

In addition to being attentive listeners and careful thinkers, Protagonists possess an insatiable curiosity, directed particularly at humanistic enterprises, whether directly or indirectly, such as engineering. For Protagonists, such activities represent the very essence of humanity at its best. They are likely to agree with the following quote from the film "Dead Poets Society":

"We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering – these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love – these are what we stay alive for."

Protagonists are more than just motivated by creative and artistic endeavors – it is often one of the reasons they love life. Although they certainly make themselves knowledgeable in many fields, from the physical sciences to math, economics, business, and beyond, they always feel most at home being of service to the heart and soul of human expression, using those many subjects to that end.

That's why when it comes to school, Protagonists are often concerned with what their work portrays. It's about more than needing to please the public; they strive to fulfill a need in the people whom they're trying to help. Although they value their original goals, Protagonists may pivot if they see a certain direction being more beneficial to their intended audience. It's less about *"How do I feel about this?"* and more about *"How can this best help others?"*

Trying the Mundane

Although Protagonists prefer and specialize in subjects that have great meaning to them, they also understand the need to learn "mundane" skills. In day-to-day life, examples include filing taxes, filling out a check, and changing a tire. In an academic context, this could mean taking time to develop long-term study habits for classes they don't enjoy. They do so because they understand that such skills, though not dreamy and inspiring, are necessary to managing everyday life and advancing their inspirations.

Rather than shrugging off the things they aren't inherently interested in, Protagonists dig in their heels and commit to at least attempting to master the material in front of them. They are propelled forward by the sense that the march through the swamp of mundanity is only temporary, and that the skills they're learning will soon support the work they consider meaningful.

Unbalanced Learning Habits

Tied to Others

Protagonists are so intertwined with the emotions and needs of others that they run the risk of being held back by them. For example, while learning, they may slow their own learning pace to match that of their self-designated pack. Protagonists push hard to raise others during their own rise. If others can't rise, they gladly take the time needed until even the last member can cross the finish line. No matter how noble that may seem, Protagonists ultimately starve their own academic ambitions to satiate another's.

In group work, Protagonists often get hung up trying to help everyone succeed. They are susceptible to getting caught up in their emotions: They want to "give voice" to others, but they ultimately risk undermining their own confidence – and grades.

Obsessing about Impact

Solving the unsolvable can take a toll on even the hardest individuals, and Protagonists can exaggerate this tendency. They shoulder the burdens of the world and are at risk of being crushed beneath the weight. Feeling that they personally can't be at peace until they help everyone, Protagonists can become obsessive in their learning behaviors, leaving little time in their schedules for relaxation and self-care. In extreme cases, Protagonists may even skip meals or lose sleep as they study through their lunch breaks or read late into the night.

These workaholic tendencies, though intense, have limits to their scope. When left alone too long with their thoughts, Protagonists may develop "tunnel vision," relentlessly pursuing areas of study that seem most relevant. They may even

temporarily eliminate all forms of enjoyment and relaxation to reach their goals more quickly. However, this can put their bodies and mental well-being under immense stress, as well as diminish the quality of their work.

Rebalancing Learning Habits

Making Themselves Equal

Protagonists go out of their way to meet the needs of those around them and ignore their own desires in the process (in extreme cases, they may be completely unaware of their own needs and desires), which leads to an unbalanced approach to learning. To rebalance this, they should develop a valuable skill: giving their personal priorities the same importance they give to others' needs.

Doing so may feel selfish for these dutiful types, but learning this skill leads to a more fulfilling life. Protagonists can start by first acknowledging their desires, even while considering another person's perspective. Some steps to get there:

- Listen to the other person's perspective.
- Write down the pros and cons of that perspective.
- Write down the pros and cons of your own approach.
- Take points from both to create the most evolved approach.

Protagonists can listen to others while also giving their own ideas equal weight, allowing both parties to have an enjoyable and enlightening learning experience.

Combining Rest and Impact

Food, sleep, and even leisure time are all necessities, not luxuries – a fact that Protagonists are much quicker to remind others of than to accept themselves. When

people with this personality type make personal sacrifice a routine, they soon find that they have nothing left to give. It's important for Protagonists to make these necessities a priority, not an afterthought.

Protagonists may need to purposefully schedule time for meals, rest, and relaxation. Using an alarm can be a good reminder to take a break. And quality can be as crucial as quantity. A series of two- to three-hour naps interspersed throughout the day don't equal eight hours of uninterrupted rest, though a 20-minute nap in addition to nightly rest makes a tremendous difference. Also, a fast-food burrito gobbled down during a commute may provide needed calories, but it can't compare to a balanced breakfast. Protagonists can use the following considerations to determine their needs and then meet them:

- Consider how you're currently spending your time. Are your primary needs being met? Before answering, consider what you would expect to be enough for any of your loved ones. Would you chastise a friend for taking a small nap after a heavy study session or encourage self-care?
- If your primary needs are not being met, ask yourself: How can you meet your needs in short increments? 10 minutes for a nap? An hour to cook a good meal? 30 minutes of cuddling with your significant other?
- Schedule in your calendar some time every day, at the same time, to fulfill one need. Such moments, no matter how small, are important to rebooting the brain and body. A 20-minute nap helps people focus, a healthy meal fuels the body, and time with a loved one provides inspiration.

Protagonists in High School

In high school, Protagonists are likely to establish their vision then make an effort to do what needs to be done to achieve it (e.g., extracurricular activities, concurrent jobs, volunteering, community-oriented decisions). This may include taking action to support any goals they may have for higher education.

This behavior can be a balanced approach, where they strive to get what they can from the opportunities of high school. But they can become unbalanced if they burn themselves out by taking on too much or if they get discouraged by the scope of their vision.

Selectively Brilliant

When discussing an individual Protagonist high school student, teachers of differing subjects may feel like they're talking about completely different people. Some teachers may see the Protagonist student as bright, focused, and driven, but others may wonder why they don't consistently see those traits when the student is in *their* class. For example, one project may be inspired while another is clearly a generic "get the grade and move on" piece of work.

When Protagonists connect with a subject, they may appear to be brilliant and forward-thinking in the essays they write, whether in response to the deeply moral themes of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* or the stirring history of the American Civil Rights movement. Although their classmates may see such work as a tedious but necessary hurdle to overcome on the path to graduation, Protagonists may experience the kindling of a passion that holds through their adult lives.

Learning for Authenticity

The humanities and social sciences strike a natural chord within young Protagonists' hearts, but they often experience dissonance when they are exposed to less soulful studies. No topic is beyond Protagonists' grasp, but without some means of putting rote facts, figures, and seemingly arbitrary calculations into a broader human context, Protagonists may perform poorly, or only just well enough to move forward. Their lack of interest in such classes may frustrate teachers and parents alike, both of whom may struggle to comprehend how academic passions could be distributed so unevenly.

Protagonists' curious behavior is a consequence of their steady inner compass, lending them a warm and fierce integrity that makes them mature beyond their years. At a time when their peers' identities are malleable as clay, Protagonists are stubborn marble. Others' approval matters to Protagonists, but remaining in sync with their ideals always matters more. They hold themselves to a very high moral standard, and they don't need to fit in if it means going against their ideals.

Balanced High School Learning

Remaining Open to Possibilities

A fortunate few Protagonists may encounter teachers who supply inspirational context for every stray fact or theorem, who discuss topics more deeply than the facts that will be on the test, who explore why the information taught matters. Most of the time, however, Protagonists need to sharpen their contextualization skills on their own to excel in subjects that don't come easily to them. Protagonists with a balanced point of view put into context even those subjects they don't naturally embrace. They can see each topic as a necessary component of their broader goal

and recognize that every vision comes with sometimes unpleasant tasks along the way. For example, sketching the chemical structure of a hydrocarbon may seem like busywork – until Protagonists begin to ruminate on the possibilities of chemistry to solve world hunger or cure devastating diseases. The motivating potential of Protagonists' passion cannot be understated.

Protagonists who take a balanced approach to high school learning open themselves up to alternatives. They may look to the Socratic paradox for inspiration: "I know one thing: that I know nothing." Such Protagonists recognize that hard and sometimes unforgiving work is needed to make their visions a reality, and that they *always* need to expand their knowledge base. They gather their well-rounded insights and take meaningful steps toward realizing a better world.

Realistic Standards

Protagonists subscribe to a work ethic that correlates directly with their passion, and they tend to keep working without breaks when their passions are ignited. They dislike the idea of leaving their commitments and moral obligations unfulfilled. That said, Protagonists who approach their studies with a balanced mindset aren't keen on sacrificing their health to meet a goal, nor are they overly perfectionistic. They do what they can to turn in quality work but avoid agonizing over the details when there's little to gain. They schedule time to commit the effort needed to succeed, but they set realistic expectations.

Protagonists also aren't completely against letting loose every occasionally. They take their interests very seriously, yes, but they aren't completely against hanging out with friends on a school night – taking time to remember that they're just teenagers. They don't expect to have everything figured out; much of their joy is in the discovery.

Unbalanced High School Learning

Dismissing Details

Protagonists who spend math class doing work for a more interesting course or more pressing project aren't demonstrating traditional teenage rebellion, but their grades can plummet as surely as if they spent their time shooting spitballs or sending secret texts. In a larger sense, Protagonists who pursue their narrow scholarly obsessions with no concern for the broader curriculum may discover that their knowledge gaps limit them in unforeseeable ways. Budding environmentalists with a tenuous grasp of the underpinnings of climate science will find that their convictions only convince the already-converted.

Protagonists who indulge only in their interests may establish the troublesome habit of ignoring finer details, hindering their progress even in classes that interest them. Young Protagonists with a passion for history intuitively understand the importance of individual events without feeling the need to memorize actual dates for a test, but that can affect their grades. Students with a more literary bent might have points deducted from even the most articulate essay due to a failure to properly cite their sources. Protagonists' refusal to meet the demands of a rigid curriculum can hold them back, both short and long term. A few such bad experiences may cause them to drift away from an academic path that previously felt like destiny, in which they could have done lots of good.

Impossible Standards

Other hurdles for Protagonists to overcome in high school are their relentless and uncompromising vision and ambition, which all too often manifest as work that is turned in late or not at all. Unbalanced Protagonists tend to bite off more than they

can chew, sometimes refusing to be compassionate to themselves by taking paths that aren't as stressful. Protagonists may discover they can't possibly get done what they set out to achieve in the time allotted, leading to stress and rushed work. They may even believe that it isn't worth it to "settle," deciding not to complete a project at all if it isn't the absolute best work possible.

High school students are faced with frequent, non-negotiable deadlines. Unbalanced Protagonists, with their Judging trait, are likely to work for 48 hours straight to try to hit the target, often leading to burnout and incomplete work. Then, even with their effort, they'll be exceptionally hard on themselves for their perceived failure, judging themselves for not being a good enough student to do things properly.

Rebalancing High School Learning

Forming a Connection

Learning about details, no matter how mundane, is an important part of life. Ask any student who has graduated high school – only to wonder how to apply for financial aid for college, how to interview properly for a job, or how to keep track of future deadlines. Protagonists try not to neglect their work, but they may feel reluctant to lend the same passion to everyday details as they do to their visions. To rebalance, they must choose to have faith that routine, technical, day-to-day information will prove its value.

When Protagonists have trouble in a course, here are some suggestions:

- Remind yourself that just showing up counts for something.
- Approach the instructor and ask for guidance.

- Develop a mentorship relationship with the instructor (or teacher's assistant or fellow student who is excelling in the course).
- Focus on the that person's point of view, filtering the course through their perspective – it's no longer just geology, it's "Ms. Smith's passion for the Earth expressed through teaching, a childhood dream that found a way into the real world."
- Take any information gained and apply it to the course with new insight.

When coursework becomes more personal, Protagonists can look at some of the details – cited sources, dates memorized – as a favor to the teacher, something they are geared toward naturally. It's not the teacher's fault they have to hand out tests, so it's not fair to the teacher (or to Protagonists themselves) to punish them with poor performance.

Protagonists are perfectly capable of dealing with mundane tasks if they find a way to make them personally relevant. By creating a relationship with someone else involved in a task, the topic and its specifics become more relevant, boosting Protagonists' motivation and attention.

Tempering Unrealistic Expectations

High school can be difficult. With the added pressures of the future, parents, peers, and extracurricular activities, it can be exhausting, perhaps downright back-breaking to expectation-laden Protagonists. When they commit, they always try to do their best; if something has to give, they often sacrifice themselves to sustain their other obligations.

Protagonists who learn to take a kinder, more measured view of themselves may find that their accomplishments and efforts, even if short of an idealized vision, are still

worth taking pride in. Sacrificing themselves under the weight of idealized expectations is not the way to go. In an academic context, young Protagonists can develop healthy school-life balance by creating a schedule. This will not only boost their productivity, but also allow them time to hang out with friends, be alone and relax, and enjoy their lives as teenagers, rather than burning out trying to meet unrealistic expectations. Some suggestions:

- **Create a fixed schedule.** Work when you need to work, and rest when you need to rest. Dedicate time to study, then *stop* when that time is over. Setting a schedule allows Protagonists to have an “off” button they usually deny themselves, making it a personal act of kindness, as well as a sanity saver. An example: one hour of dedicated studying time during school hours (study hall, perhaps) and two hours after school.
- **When it is time to study,** focus on the most important or time-sensitive tasks first – an essay due tomorrow, followed by 50 math equations due by the end of the week, followed by 30 minutes of reading to finish an assigned novel by the end of the month.
- **Limit distractions to only what’s relevant.** Turn off your phone, log out of social media, and remove yourself from social situations that could keep you from doing your work.
- **Relax after time is up.** When the designated study time is over, stop and do something relaxing and rewarding, maybe finally sit down to finish the TV show you’ve been missing for two months.

By tempering unrealistic expectations, Protagonists will find themselves in a more balanced state of mind. With this mindset, they’re better able to achieve their goals and enjoy their time as a teenager.

Deciding Whether and When to Attend College

Though Protagonists are by many measures an uncommon personality type, they face a common dilemma when leaving high school: Should they immediately go into the world of work, or should they continue their studies?

Choosing College

For some Protagonists, the choice is moot: Academic certification is required in many fields they might be drawn to, including education, psychotherapy, health care, and law. Without a college education, they will find that those doors remain locked. Such Protagonists have a non-negotiable stopover on their journey to becoming whom they wish to be.

For those who choose college, the experience doesn't have to be a chore. Many Protagonists find their crusade to improve humanity to be an integral part of the curriculum, as well as an important part of their extracurricular activities. Through the simple camaraderie of so many like-minded people – finally! – their flower of rebellion has space to bloom.

Choosing Work

Some Protagonists choose work over college, whether they cannot bear the costs of college (personal, financial, practical, or principled) or their zeal for change is so potent that it just can't be deferred any longer. No longer guided by the educational system and having less and less parental oversight, such Protagonists need time to define themselves and their goals. It's reasonable to work in entry-level positions, such as waiting tables or doing physical work, while continuing a path of self-

discovery. Working to explore interests and perhaps save money for future schooling is a balanced reason to delay school in favor of work.

Others know full well what they want and find rewarding careers or work for themselves. They might also take paths somewhere in between, for instance, using recognition for their community service to secure a role in a not-for-profit organization, or using their passion for writing to sell freelance articles while still dealing with the reality of paying the bills.

It's important for Protagonists to realize that many roads can be rewarding. If they truly wish to build a better world, they'll find a way to do so, even if their role is different than they or others had originally anticipated.

Balanced Decision-Making

Embracing Honesty

The important thing is for Protagonists to consider their options with unwavering honesty. The difficulty of this task shouldn't be underestimated. Protagonists know perhaps better than anyone how good people are at deceiving themselves, but even though they see it in others, they are not immune to it themselves. Protagonists who recognize this very human tendency within ask themselves questions, consult with friends and mentors, and do other reality checks that help them gather a range of opinions and information to help orient and clarify their worldviews.

Any option can be either just the challenge Protagonists need to move their visions forward or a means of escape from the weight of responsibility. It can be all too easy to convince themselves that one is the other. Protagonists, when honest and patient

with themselves, distinguish between an obstacle and an excuse, then make progress.

Following Through

Protagonists leaning toward college understand that it's a long commitment, though following through on a conviction is hardly a challenge for people with this personality type. They recognize that time spent toward self-improvement isn't an exercise in narcissism, especially if it provides them with the credentials necessary for entering a helping profession that delivers good to humanity, or a complex intellectual and moral framework for handling the personal or global problems they long to solve.

When taking a balanced approach, Protagonists embrace the idea that college isn't an abdication of responsibility but an acceptance of it – if time there is used effectively. On the opposite side, Protagonists who don't seek out college can still find ways to advance their goals. Even a humble job in the service industry can be meaningful if they find satisfaction in a community of coworkers and customers. It can also support them financially while they volunteer for a social cause as their “true” career, especially if the skills developed during their volunteer work make them more viable candidates for positions in the nonprofit sector.

With this acceptance, Protagonists dedicate themselves to challenging but necessary coursework while maintaining themselves with much-needed relaxation. They balance their time and energy between the self-respect gleaned from a powerful mission and what's needed to make them happy in the moment.

Unbalanced Decision-Making

Eternal Waiting

Protagonists can develop the unhealthy habit of spending their whole lives waiting for the perfect opportunity to arrive. The period after high school is a time of exceptional personal consequence, and younger Protagonists can allow the weightiness of decisions to become unbalanced, exaggerate it in their minds, and sink to inaction. There's something better right around the corner, they may think, while letting opportunity after opportunity pass them by. Their intuition, though a powerful tool, can work against them as they imagine a perfectly formed solution falling into their lap.

This combination of imagination and rumination manifests itself in Protagonists' inaction. They may wait for signs from the great unknown to dictate their next course of action – something that feels like the universe is specifically telling them to become an author or to go to XYZ University. They may spend more time trying to decide whether something *feels* right rather than taking the action needed to *make* it feel right. Protagonists who spend years agonizing over a course of study or path to employment eventually see that little was gained from the excessive deliberation, and perhaps much was lost.

Haunted Rumination

Choices that are later seen as “wrong” have a way of haunting people with this personality type. Living with choices is as necessary as making choices in the first place, but when Protagonists overanalyze not only future decisions but also decisions they've already made, this unbalanced view gives them little chance to develop the self-confidence or self-forgiveness to see them through.

What they may not realize is that rumination is a decision. It's a decision *not* to act and *not* to progress, which can cost far more time than school or a more intentional push into the professional world. Protagonists may be so afraid of making the wrong choice that they make no choice, instead falling onto a path that doesn't align with their personal values. Ten years hence, their regret is likely to be that they are no closer to their goals because they never acted.

Rebalancing Decision-Making

Adjusting Course

There is a fine line between deliberation and procrastination, and Protagonists need to work harder than most at distinguishing between the two. Once committed, they might refuse to modify a decision despite mounting evidence that it's just not right for them, whatever their expectations may have been. This tendency toward delay stems from Protagonists' need to commit once they have chosen a course of action. But when nothing can be undone, the only choice is a well-considered decision. However, what counts as "well-considered" can be stretched to infinity. The question is whether this deliberation arises out of sensible caution or a fear of the unknown and a lack of the self-confidence needed to step into that abyss.

Protagonists should try to understand that few decisions are permanent. Changing their mind based on new information isn't only their prerogative, but a sign of maturity. Snap decision-making feels unnatural to Protagonists, but those who err a bit more on the side of rashness – at least compared to their usual resolution – may find that even when they make a wrong choice, the consequences are not nearly as irreversible as they had feared.

Here are some tips for Protagonists adjusting their educational course, as it's never too late to act:

- Request a tour of a local university.
- Visit an organization's or campus's website to look at the events calendar.
- Attend an orientation of a university or local college.
- Request an informational interview at an interesting company or non-governmental organization.

These actions require no commitment – and that's a good thing. Protagonists should feel no pressure to sign up for anything they don't find compelling. Hopefully, though, they will feel the rush of inspiration again and be off on another life chapter.

When Protagonists Choose College

Higher Education with Higher Purpose

Younger Protagonists who chafed against the curricula of high school will be pleased by the more diverse and inspired university environment. However, although the liberty of higher learning can be a boon to budding Protagonists, college can have its challenges. Protagonists who are lulled by the siren song of endless electives and roving Socratic discussions may be rudely awakened by far steeper expectations and workloads inherent in university endeavors. Not to say their expectations of college are illusory – Protagonists are likely to bloom into creative thought leaders. But first, they must conquer their expectations.

Nevertheless, bridging this gap propels Protagonists through life, and college can be an amenable staging ground for the battles to come. Their guiding spirit of principled rebellion, though misunderstood in the more rigid environs of high school, may serve

them well in college, where they are likely to encounter professors and classmates who encourage precisely this type of pushback.

Balanced Approach to College

Understands Others

Protagonists may struggle to reconcile the utopian ideal of a university with the realities of campus life. Things that may disappoint and perhaps even confuse them are other people's general apathy toward learning and their emphasis on simply getting a good career. However, Protagonists make it a point to try to understand others through communication and an open mind.

Protagonists who wish to understand others must remember that compromise is essential, even if it sometimes feels like politics. They needn't compromise their values, however. After all, the changes they strive for are usually social ones, and no movement for social evolution has rested entirely on the back of one person, no quest for equity on unilateral action. Forging alliances to broaden acceptance is an essential skill for Protagonists to master. Fortunately, they're excellent listeners, and if they learn to incorporate what they hear into what they say, they can build support for their ideas.

Learning Beyond Coursework

Protagonists enjoy classes within their discipline, but the same general education courses that left them cold in high school are no more compelling in their college incarnations, and they are just as much a requirement. Protagonists who summoned the discipline to conquer these obstacles during high school may have less trouble doing so now that they have at least the semblance of choice in the matter. They can

intersperse less desirable courses throughout their degree program, pairing them with courses they enjoy to balance their course load.

Protagonists realize that the necessary and the desirable go together. They may roll their eyes at basic prerequisites like introductory composition, perhaps marveling at their peers' poor writing or shallow thinking, but what they must learn isn't determined by those peers. Protagonists recognize the value of their time and commit to learning what they can from basic and advanced studies alike by pushing themselves and being creative with opportunities, not by taking a syllabus at face value. They know that in every course, their education is in their own hands.

Unbalanced Approach to College

Weight of the World

Protagonists, when taking an unhealthy approach, pursue their studies with the weight of the world on their minds, an all-or-nothing attitude that often exacerbates the pressures of mere academic performance. Such high expectations may press Protagonists to go beyond healthy means to succeed.

Aside from the financial burden that a lengthy college career can exact on Protagonists – whose academic debts might later force them into a profession that fulfills their fiscal needs while robbing them of their spirit – the mental toll shouldn't be underestimated, either. Even in the absence of family or work responsibilities (and students often have either or both), Protagonists in college who burn too brightly risk flaming out far too soon.

Focused Elsewhere

Protagonists may have several missions and responsibilities, and they are likely to devote their attention to areas where they're impassioned, even if it doesn't involve their coursework (especially less interesting coursework). People with this personality type may instead focus their attention exclusively on a charity they're volunteering for or a student organization they aim to lead one day. Although they still care about their coursework, it ranks low on their list of priorities and, at times, may be completely abandoned.

Such hyper-focus leads to a situation where they don't have the time to fulfill any of their responsibilities particularly well. They may spend so much time gathering information, campaigning, attending meetings or socials, or working on one thing that they leave no time for their higher education.

Rebalancing Their Approach to College

Balancing the Burden

For Protagonists who feel restless in a purely academic environment, internships and volunteer work may bridge the gap, not only giving them the sense that they are already "being the change they wish to see in the world," but perhaps also shortening their post-college transition into that world. Protagonists can overburden themselves, though. A full course load is often more than enough to handle on its own, and although unpaid work may eventually lead to a more suitable career, Protagonists who are simultaneously supporting themselves with a part-time (or full-time) job may not have the luxury of devoting their attention to anything more than what is already on their plate.

Though college should be taken seriously, Protagonists need not see everything they do as a matter of apocalyptic concern. Even they need to blow off steam, because refusing to make time for less mentally and emotionally taxing pursuits is a recipe for burnout. Aside from making sure they get out into nature or to a festival or fair from time to time, Protagonists may want to ensure that their course schedules always include a “fun” class, whether it directly relates to their chosen major or not. Here are steps for Protagonists who want to let loose without any guilt:

- Ask yourself, “Would I advise my friend to take a break every so often?”
- Set aside an hour every day that is dedicated solely to self-care.
 - This time should have nothing to do with personal development – no learning a new language, trying out computer programming, or volunteering for a cause. This time should be focused exclusively on relaxing your mind and body.
 - Don’t do anything with this time that stresses you out.
 - Do something you wholeheartedly enjoy that doesn’t feel like work (e.g., watching a guilty-pleasure TV show, taking a long and luxurious bubble bath).
- Schedule the rest of your time around that daily hour of self-care. Map out the rest of your schedule to distribute your work equally throughout the week so your self-care won’t be eclipsed by cramming for a test the next morning.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning goes beyond the rigors of school, though a return to academia is certainly an option. Older Protagonists who have embraced themselves fully are

better able to give the benefit of the doubt to areas of study or schools of thought that might have struck them as irrelevant or worse in their younger years.

Forever Learning

Of all the personality types, Protagonists are among those who feel most comfortable with the prospect of lifelong learning, the notion that education isn't a thing one may possess, nor something one must get from some institution, but that it is instead a never-ending journey into the unknown. They know that their hunger for knowledge can never be truly fulfilled, just as their yen for justice can never be sated, and they find joy in that quest.

Balanced Lifelong Learning

Finding Joy in Learning

Understanding the beauty in a clumsy first effort – like the beauty in a child's excitement when they first learn that red and yellow make orange – Protagonists pursue many things that too many people attempt only in childhood. They can do so because they grant themselves permission to find joy in their learning – a new instrument, art medium, or dance style, an unfamiliar sport or game, a distant campsite, or explorations in nature.

Many Protagonists, when content, continue to learn throughout their lives, not to prove something to someone, least of all themselves, but for the joy of trying something and getting better at it. They do something because it's fun, not because it serves some greater altruistic purpose (though that is by no means off-limits). Engaging the world around them with no agenda but curiosity and a light heart

resonates with Protagonists' deeply cherished authenticity and is perhaps the greatest expression of what makes these individuals the people they are.

Enjoying Learning Over Improvement

Self-improvement is important, but enjoying oneself in the process is even more vital. Protagonists who decide to take a more balanced approach to lifelong learning attempt to appreciate the life they've developed for themselves, as well as praise themselves for the skills they have learned. By taking time to practice appreciation, Protagonists gain a certain self-awareness that lessens the fear that they're not learning anything at all, or that they're "stuck in the mud." They also cultivate the ability to separate learning a new skill from needing to perform that skill *well* the first time around.

In fact, balanced Protagonists may separate learning new skills from their self-image completely. They feel accomplished when they succeed at something, but they don't base their self-worth upon what they have learned (or failed to learn). These Protagonists accept themselves as they are but also strive to learn when they can.

Unbalanced Lifelong Learning

Stubborn Worldviews

From an early age, Protagonists tend to formulate a cohesive set of opinions about the world. Those who refuse to adjust their ideas when appropriate find themselves lacking. They focus on subjects they already have an affinity for, rather than diversifying their learning, often pursuing knowledge that only supports their fundamental views. This limits their growth, perhaps even solidifies their ignorance, as they focus on one thing without truly having an open mind.

Some Protagonists recognize and compensate for their certitude, knowing that different perspectives bring forward different and equal truths about the world; unfortunately, others just allow their beliefs to congeal into an impenetrable ideological mass. This can conflict with their perception of themselves as fundamentally correct in their view of the world. While the world changes around them, these Protagonists may be reluctant to learn about new technologies, philosophies, or methods, always considering their own to be better than the rest.

Making the Magnificent the Mundane

Aside from the diminishing returns of a too-narrow focus, Protagonists who refuse to work at diversifying their learning and self-exploration risk growing weary of the very obsessions that once inflamed them. Their over-serious approach to knowledge robs them of the joy of learning and discovery. When they are unable to divert any attention from their mission, whether fixing the world's suffering or exercising their moral purity, the pure pleasure of a day off to learn a light-hearted skill becomes perverse and selfish in their eyes.

This unrelenting, adamant nature can hold Protagonists back as powerfully as it once propelled them forth. Once just one strong argument away from changing the world, those suffering a severe case of burnout may be equally certain that no such argument exists – or if one does, it's everyone else who's too stubborn and apathetic to make it. Early cynicism has its disadvantages, but late-blooming cynicism that grips the heart of an older Protagonist can be particularly devastating. With nothing to replace their former passion, they can quickly become despondent, so certain are they that every alternative course was ruled out in their youth.

Rebalancing Lifelong Learning

Broadening Scope

The goals that Protagonists pursue are often so grand that they can consume their lives – and many see little reason to avoid that. Any sacrifice in the service of such ideals seems a small price to pay for the good they can do. As discussed earlier, this point of view can easily grow exaggerated and often unhealthy.

Protagonists spend their formative years becoming an authority in their chosen ideal, but as they mature, they might find at least some of their time better spent attaining a greater breadth of knowledge. A seemingly unrelated topic could yield fresh insight into their principal area of concern.

Being “set in your ways” isn’t inherently bad. However, there’s always room to improve upon an existing routine. Protagonists can begin by exploring the merits of a contrary opinion rather than sticking to what they already know. Here are some steps they can follow:

- Rather than immediately dismissing an argument, choose to take time to understand the other side. Consider:
 - How your own stance may appear to others
 - Some benefits of what the other side is proposing
- “Try on” the contrary opinion for a few minutes; during a debate or discussion, try switching roles with a person who holds an opposing view.
- Based on what you learn, adjust your opinion or viewpoint.

There are always new experiences to have and new things to learn. They don’t have to be disruptive or life-changing. Once they rediscover joy in learning something new,

they might choose to stretch their experiences even more. They may find that the benefit of continued learning far outweighs any risk.

Connecting the Mundane to the Magnificent

Protagonists' greatest peril is that learning can become a joyless process, because they have a tendency to get carried away with the scope of learning new things. If they are practicing the violin, for example, they may wonder, "How can I possibly compare to a master violinist? There's just so far to go." Learning stops being fun and seems burdensome.

To rebalance, however, Protagonists can connect the mundane to make it magnificent once more. Rather than being something they ruminate upon, learning can become an opportunity to reconnect with friends, family, and community. Such reconnections are what make humanity beautiful, and that upwelling of pure positive emotion can breathe new life into the darkest struggles. Simple mindfulness exercises are a good way to do this:

- Find an object to focus on (a plant, a cup, a body of water).
- Take a few minutes to focus on the object's simplest aspects: its colors, textures, scents, physical features.

This simple exercise takes only about five minutes, but it can pull Protagonists out of a bad head space and into the reality around them as they focus on what's in front of them in the moment.

Conclusion

Life Is Learning

Education means a lot of different things to a lot of people. For Protagonists, it's a way to advance their goals in life to help protect and serve others. But it can be so much more if given a chance. Protagonists' challenge is not so much in the hard work of learning. It's more about managing expectations and finding a reasonable pace so that learning does not become a soulless drudgery or an overwhelming burden, but a rewarding experience that adds to life. For Protagonists, balance involves blending their determination and heart with pragmatism and realistic expectations – a balance that is quite achievable.

They can achieve balance by taking time to meet their own needs, setting plausible expectations for themselves, focusing on finding meaning and merit in the mundane, understanding that an A+ doesn't equate self-worth, and allowing themselves room to fail and to be wrong, celebrating failures right alongside their accomplishments as learning opportunities.

People are never solely balanced or unbalanced. All of us go back and forth, evolving and devolving. Balance is more akin to seasons as they come and go but always repeat. The trees become taller, people become wiser, all of us advancing in our way. Progress comes when we learn how to deal with the seasons, and it is an extension of the personal growth journey.

Professional Development



Because Protagonists are such a driven personality type, one of their primary challenges is finding a career that's in line with their ideals in a world that may not often share them. Although many careers are well-suited for this type, analyzing the different aspects of any job can help them find a professional role that speaks to their personal values, strengths, and goals.

Throughout this section, we will discuss how understanding their traits can help Protagonists excel in their professional development. We will examine what may frustrate them or create imbalance, as well as how they can use their strengths to regain balance and thrive in their careers. We hope this guide will give Protagonists the understanding and perspective needed to use their abilities to forge a fulfilling career path.

Jobs and General Skills

Career Options

We're talking about professional development to help Protagonists gain a deeper understanding of the role their personality type plays in finding and excelling in their chosen careers. Vocational and personal growth are interwoven, and they take place across all stages of life, from early education through retirement. Gaining increased self-understanding – by discovering values, goals, strengths, and weaknesses – is an important consideration for Protagonists and helps them decide on a career path and the best means of following it.

People with this personality type do their best work when their jobs combine creativity, compassion, and opportunities to take on challenges. Teaching, psychology, and social work are a few examples of careers that combine these traits, but Protagonists can shine in many fields. They are unlikely to feel comfortable in strictly impersonal roles or those with extensive rules.

With freedom comes responsibility, but Protagonists shouldn't be afraid to explore all their choices. It's unlikely that someone with this type will have difficulty coping with obligations – Protagonists' tactical preference for Judging keeps them on track, and their Extraversion helps them face the unknown with relish.

The Career Search

In the following sections, we will discuss how Protagonists can make the best use of their assets to find a suitable career and succeed in it. This includes ways they can excel in their job search, how to understand and develop their workplace habits, and tips for communicating effectively with managers and coworkers based on their

personality types. We will also outline some specific professions Protagonists might consider. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but it provides some insight about the role that personality type plays in choosing an ideal career.

Suitable Career Options for Protagonists

Let's look at some fields that are likely to align with Protagonists' ideals and strengths. We won't offer a full list of professions, as too many choices would make our coverage both unwieldy and inadequate, and the list would grow longer daily. Instead, we will offer a sampling consistent with Protagonists' personality traits, with explanations about what makes them suitable.

Keep in mind that this isn't a firm prescription of what Protagonists must do to find success or happiness. Rather, we hope it provides some insight as they decide on their own. For Protagonists already employed, this may serve as an explanation of why they're happy or unhappy where they are. "What do I want to do for a living?" is a good starting point for many types – but for Protagonists trying to forge their future, important questions when searching for a career include, "What can give me meaning, purpose, and joy?" "What do I want to be?" and "What problems do I want to solve?"

Careers with Meaning

Protagonists love to find meaning in their work through connections with people, inspiring others and helping them grow. This need to nurture others makes careers in health care rewarding for them. However, what counts as "meaningful work" is subjective, and individual Protagonists may be able to blend their principles into almost any honest job. Although some careers well-suited to typical Protagonist traits are listed in the following sections, it's by no means a restrictive list.

Protagonists can satisfy their nurturing impulses in many ways outside the helping and educational professions. While working as grocers, for example, they can help direct customers toward healthy, delicious food, changing their lives for the better. For Protagonists, meaning comes from engaging challenges head-on with bold idealism and connecting to people with energetic, considerate care. They can do this anywhere they wish.

Utilize Creativity and Insight

Not only do Protagonists need their careers to provide meaning, but they also yearn to express themselves creatively. They may have difficulty in jobs where they aren't allowed to let their ingenuity blossom. Jobs where they can use their insights to effect real change in others' lives bring them the most satisfaction. For Protagonists, money and Employee of the Month awards can't compare to a life of values and principles brought into reality through creative and fearless action.

Therefore, Protagonists may find it hard to meet their needs in corporate environments that force them to manage practical policies that favor profits over ethics or human cost. Management does not always recognize or reward creativity in places where paperwork and handbooks overshadow personal expression. So, people with the Protagonist personality type often express independence by finding flexible leadership positions or starting their own businesses.

Combining Personal and Professional Growth

Using their drive for personal growth to advance their professional lives – and, in turn, their professional lives to develop their personal growth – is often the most rewarding part of Protagonists' careers. They're drawn to positions where they can make a significant difference, and they aren't afraid of competition, pressure, or

responsibility. Many other types strive for materialistic or egoistic career goals such as an enviable salary, an impressive title, or a specific number of subordinates. These goals alone aren't enough for Protagonists.

For people with this personality type, professional growth is about cultivating skills and understanding – within themselves and their teams. Even if they try to convince themselves that they should aim for more typical rewards, deep down they'll always sense that they can do better. This makes it difficult for Protagonists to fall into a rut – and that's great news for everyone. People with this personality type have the capacity to achieve great things when they put their determined idealism to work.

Recognized as elegant communicators, Protagonists often aim for expressive careers in creative areas like writing blogs, stories, and screenplays. Music, photography, design, and art are reasonable alternatives, as well. They allow Protagonists to focus on deeper themes of personal growth, morality, and spirituality. By developing their craft with new approaches and perspectives, Protagonists often shine a light on society's flaws and expose their own for all to see.

Health Care

Counseling, psychology, and medicine speak to two of Protagonists' key motivators: compassion and a sense of purpose. People with this personality type gravitate toward growth and self-development, which are the hallmarks of those fields. Protagonists also enjoy helping others gain insight into and control over their lives, and positions in these disciplines offer these Extraverted types opportunities to use their social skills while working with their clients or patients.

Protagonists' impressive charisma and strong sense of purpose often make them inspiring figures to those in need of mental, physical, or spiritual healing. With their

dedication and personal convictions, they are very well-suited to positions where they care for and guide others, and they revel in such work, treating it as a sacred duty. When Protagonists can lead others into a better life, they feel rewarded and their value confirmed.

Some job examples include:

- Alcohol- and drug-addiction counselor
- Marriage counselor
- Psychiatrist (with an emphasis on psychotherapy)
- Psychologist
- Social worker
- Physician
- Nurse practitioner
- Physician's assistant
- Career counselor
- Religious worker
- Healthcare administrator (if allowed to pursue a vision)

Education

Growth and learning are central to Protagonists' approach to the world, so teaching and working with students suit them well. Imaginative Protagonists connect with younger students using their energy and empathy. With older students, they provide an idealistic perspective and present their subject with passion and creativity, especially if they teach the humanities. With adult learners, Protagonists are inspirational, connecting to their students with respect and wisdom.

Regardless of who they teach, Protagonists are keen on treating their students as individuals with distinct traits and needs. As Extraverts, they find constant contact with students and colleagues throughout the day energizing, enjoying both the social give-and-take as well as the sense that they're changing lives for the better.

Protagonists' interest is in the uniqueness of their students as people, though they may regard standardized tests and other tools as having some potential. They do well as administrators or in other leadership roles as well, bringing their determined vision to the overarching structure of their institutions. As with health care, they do better as visionary, creative leaders rather than strictly practical ones. Such jobs can include:

- Preschool, elementary, or high school teacher
- College lecturer (especially in religion, philosophy, or literature)
- Adult-education teacher
- School principal (but mostly as a visionary)
- Guidance counselor
- School psychologist
- Religious educator

Public and Social Work

Protagonists thrive on values-based causes and the pursuit of justice in the purest sense. They're at their best when chasing some larger truth. Other types might choose a career in law for the challenge of winning, the thrill of finding solutions, the rush of making a great argument, the drama, the power, the fame, and the fortune. However, those enticements alone don't seduce Protagonists. Although they may

appreciate exciting legal challenges, Protagonists are more likely to practice law to ensure that values are upheld, and society becomes a bit fairer.

Law is not the only profession that helps them pursue such goals. Any chance to create a better, more equitable world gives Protagonists professional meaning. Protagonists' ideals are their underlying motivation, but their understanding of how people work and fit into a larger context, not to mention their steady determination, makes them potent agents of change. Combining well-organized thoughts with a broad vision often creates arguments so robust that all but the most unreasonable opponents end up agreeing with them.

This way of thinking helps in several jobs well-suited to people with this personality type:

- Lawyer (especially at not-for-profit firms)
- Diplomat or liaison
- Local political representative
- Investigative journalist
- Novelist or blogger

Challenging Career Paths

Exploring personality types is helpful in steering people in the right career directions, but this is by no means prescriptive. There are likely hundreds of examples of individuals who don't fit the mold and are happy in jobs conventional wisdom would suggest otherwise. "Challenging" here refers to typically not compatible, but of course some can find fulfillment in jobs that are unusual for their type. It's rare for people to get everything they want out of their work lives, and trade-offs often come

into play. The following describes typical challenges for Protagonists in the job market.

Disheartened by Routine and Pressure

Protagonists fall flat in work that focuses on impersonal concerns, is mundane, or involves heartless conflict. Accounting, auditing, data analysis, and similarly grinding, data-heavy work easily leaves Protagonists fidgety and unfulfilled. They need “warm-blooded” work, filled with humans and human potential.

The core problem that Protagonists face is that the knowledge underpinning the passion takes time to build. Likely, their first few professional roles will involve a fair amount of mundane, uninspiring work. Ideas, cues, meaning, and self-realization are supreme for Protagonists on the job. Unfortunately, finding them in the soulless grind of grunt work is difficult at best. In such situations, Protagonists can still benefit by building inspiring and useful human connections.

Difficulty Choosing a Career

Protagonists find that many corporate career paths aren’t designed for them, but rather those motivated by status and financial gain. Not that making a healthy living and receiving respect are somehow wrong, but such rewards are often compensation for a lack of more fulfilling work. Protagonists need something more than a paycheck and prestige.

This doesn’t mean that Protagonists have difficulty seeing choices. In fact, they’re likely to face the opposite problem – many Protagonists struggle to begin a career early on because they see 10 wildly different paths forward, each with its own

intrinsic rewards. Such choices are alluring, but they can also be heartbreaking because each decision means abandoning many other possibilities.

Cold, Repetitive, or Data-Driven Work

Protagonists need their positions to have a personal touch and prefer to focus on the human (or the humane). Factory or data-entry jobs are not a good fit, as work revolving around *something* rather than *someone* just leaves Protagonists unfulfilled. They need work that has “soul.” Their work must feel purposeful and creative, so repetitive tasks, in general, are unappealing to Protagonists, and social isolation leaves them bored at best.

It’s important to point out here, however, that some fields – among them, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – have a reputation as coldly rational and excessively data-driven. Although they’re technical and data focused, many careers in these fields also require creativity and insight, and their goal often is to make the world a better place.

Protagonists can bring a compassionate approach to some of the global issues that these fields address. Their Intuitive trait can prove valuable when they are forming ideas and engaging in expansive problem-solving, and their Extraversion can enable them to share a group’s vision in compelling and effective ways.

Loose Principles or Unclear Values

Protagonists struggle in any industry that doesn’t have clear social responsibilities, even more so if they believe the work might be doing harm to others. Businesses revolving around vices, such as casinos, can leave many Protagonists feeling guilty. Seemingly neutral work like investing or managing money may feel shady to

Protagonists if they sense the business somehow takes advantage of others or is part of some greater systemic problem.

Even in otherwise ideal roles like mentorship or charitable outreach, Protagonists feel uncomfortable if the company they work for has earned a bad reputation with its behavior, such as misuse of funds. Protagonists need to consider whether management's values align with their own. They need a company culture that values integrity and reliability in the service of something they support before they can settle into a job, regardless of the position.

No Social Time

It's important that Protagonists have many opportunities to engage with others. Their Extraverted and Feeling natures create a deep need to interact with others to feel fulfilled, in both their personal and professional lives. Work that separates Protagonists from other people leaves them feeling starved, though they may continue such a job anyway if it serves their ideals.

Although they have the discipline to excel anywhere they choose, Protagonists' greatest ideas and accomplishments often occur when they can put a human face on their motivation. Roles that allow them to feel as though their work will positively affect other people can help them continue their effort even when they are working alone. Nonetheless, they'll have far greater energy when social contact is a part of the job.

Career Alternatives

The traditional path is not for everyone. With their resourcefulness and ingenuity, many Protagonists often wander into unexpected career directions. In this section, we'll explore alternatives to the conventional job market.

Self-Employment

People don't need regular jobs to live comfortably. We live in an age of possibilities, and selling one's time to a corporation isn't the only way to earn money. The working world has changed radically, and spending multiple decades at the same job is no longer the norm. Outside a few specialized fields such as medicine and the military, long-term employment contracts with retirement benefits are atypical.

So, working independently may be a better choice for some Protagonists. Self-employment has many benefits, such as the ability to plan one's own time, the tangible results of one's work, and, of course, self-direction. Protagonists value autonomy and creative freedom; being their own boss gives them such opportunities. Furthermore, self-employment solves one of the major hurdles that Protagonists are likely to face in a corporate environment – forced loyalty to questionable practices and ideals.

Many creative fields allow self-employed Protagonists to make a living, such as photography, graphic design, interior design, freelance writing, information technology, website design, and translation services. Hobbies and pastimes often translate into self-employment opportunities.

Professional Volunteer

A daring and inspiring alternate career choice for Protagonists is that of professional volunteer – making income second to the larger goals of changing the world. Although unlikely to lead to financial prosperity, this path offers unparalleled personal satisfaction. If supported by income from other sources (perhaps part-time work, family, a partner, or a spouse), Protagonists who devote themselves to matters of conscience and human development can move mountains. In addition, this is an option they can transition into later in life, bringing skills from previous occupations into the nonprofit world.

If Protagonists want to offer such help, the least developed countries are hungry for compassion, dedication, and helping hands, and any skills and knowledge can be of use. A résumé of abilities with a passionate cover letter may allow Protagonists to enter many different organizations as volunteers. If they can accept a potentially austere material life, the rewards to the soul are endless.

However, foreign aid work and a monastic lifestyle aren't mandatory – many volunteer opportunities are available closer to home. Administrative and fund-raising roles abound at the headquarters of any idealistic organization, from grassroots political groups to religious and secular charities. They appreciate the willing minds, hearts, and voices of enthusiastic Protagonists who want to pitch in.

Getting on the Career Ladder

Now that we've discussed many career paths that may be suitable for Protagonists, we will look at how people with this personality type can approach their job search.

In this section, we will touch on contacting prospective employers, making a résumé stand out, and preparing for an interview.

Although applying to and interviewing for jobs can be stressful, Protagonists' excellent communication skills and ability to approach subjects they care about with clear dedication and passion tend to make them appealing candidates. Their charm and social skills are likely to be an asset.

Making Contact

Thanks to their inherent ability to connect with others and the natural influence that arises from it, Protagonists usually have a good idea of how to approach prospective employers in the right way. Their intuition is a powerful tool. Mapping out potential networks, crafting introductory emails, and presenting themselves in a positive light – these come naturally to Protagonists, and they shouldn't hesitate to use such strengths.

Protagonists are convincing and have the strategic thinking and imagination necessary to develop a very personal approach. One compelling email sent to the right person is often much more impactful than hundreds of random, cookie-cutter applications. When Protagonists take the time to research the companies they're applying to, they begin to imagine themselves in those positions. When they start drafting their cover letters, it's as though they already belong, and it shows.

Of course, Protagonists need to be able to present their skills in the right way to distinguish themselves from other candidates – these types shine in creative, collaborative work. The buzzwords “excellent people skills” have become such an inseparable part of job requirements that stressing such competencies in interviews is a must. Protagonists thrive in bustling groups that are trying to make important

things happen. Being able to express this skill honestly, rather than using buzzwords for their own sake, makes an impression in the organizations Protagonists appreciate most.

Relating Outside Interests

Not all companies think to ask, but organizations rarely want employees with no life outside work. Protagonists can take some time to think about what hobbies could be somewhat applicable to prospective employers and then find a way to turn those ideas into real-life projects. Opportunities abound – they can engage in competitions or volunteer projects, build an online presence (e.g., a blog), or travel. Such activities appeal to Protagonists anyway, and if becoming a more appealing candidate is part of the inspiration to do something exciting and worthwhile, so be it.

The projects don't necessarily have to involve the same skills that potential jobs would. In whatever way Protagonists can show that they're able creators, they can refer to those successes on their résumés. Not only does this make Protagonists more attractive and versatile candidates, but it gives them breathing space in their interviews. Answering certain interview questions such as, "Describe a situation where you used your problem-solving skills," is much easier with a list of successful projects ready to be cited.

Protagonists are often eloquent speakers and presenters, and they can develop an online profile to make the job hunt easier. Employers often Google prospective candidates or check out links included in résumés. An applicant may get some bonus points if their résumé highlights a hobby such as writing a blog about a specific field.

Preparing for the Interview

Protagonists' enthusiasm and dedication are usually clearly visible when they are competing for a job they're passionate about. In an interview, Protagonists can focus on discussing the prospective job as an intensely personal interest and highlight the role they want to play in it. People with this personality type become even more diplomatic and charming as time goes by, so they don't have any difficulties moving such conversations along.

Despite their inherent communication skills, Protagonists may want to spend some time preparing their presentations. Even their excellent natural abilities can be "tuned up." Before an interview, they might find themselves daydreaming about the implications of the work they'll do once they get the job, while forgetting to prepare for the nuts and bolts of the interview itself. This is a trap people with the Intuitive trait can fall into.

Protagonists need to be aware of the most common interview techniques and questions, so they aren't caught off-guard by something like, "What's your biggest weakness?" Answering with "perfectionism" and "I work too hard" may be honest responses, but they're also familiar enough to be clichés. When interviewers are looking for self-awareness and introspection, these responses cut off any opportunities to offer deeper answers.

Protagonists should prepare to answer many templated questions, especially in the early stages of a job search, with something approaching enthusiasm. Sometimes recruiters don't even know much about the positions themselves and are simply going through a checklist. If Protagonists go in expecting that, they can be ready to put unique and memorable spins on even the most routine questions.

Protagonists in the Workplace



After the contracts are signed, after Protagonists settle into their jobs and serve as exemplary employees – then what? How can they progress in their careers while staying true to themselves, and what difficulties are they likely to face? In the following paragraphs, we'll discuss Protagonists' possible paths forward.

Balanced Workplace Habits

Practicing Leadership

Protagonists can be excellent team managers who bring people together. They instinctively know how to promote goals and motivate colleagues, defusing conflicts and building group cohesion. Individuals with this personality type care about the feelings of those in the workplace, and they try to get to know everyone, seeking to understand what drives and inspires their coworkers.

With Protagonists' outgoing nature and their ability to grasp the big picture, they can layer inspiration on top of any other practical skills they may have. Willing to take the lead, they go beyond simple tasks, preferring instead to conduct missions of a

grander scale, and they usually don't need to hold a formal leadership title to influence those around them. Their friendly enthusiasm, vision, and charisma put them out front regardless of job title.

Authentic Creators

Protagonists are likely to find innovative ways to look at their work and authentically creative paths to succeeding in their jobs. Even though they are too interested in harmony and the welfare of others to be very rebellious, they are, nonetheless, always thinking about doing a better job. They are willing to try more unorthodox means, and they think doing so is in everyone's best interest. They are not necessarily rule-breakers, but they are creative enough that they might find themselves challenging the status quo or at least suggesting many improvements to it.

If Protagonists are asked to follow a script or procedure manual without adding their own spin, they are likely to feel unfulfilled. All roads lead to growth for Protagonists; for them, that means developing their creative influence and being able to add it to any endeavor. Anything less feels like drudgery and a rejection of the potential they believe is within them. Fortunately, innovative thinking is likely to be an attractive quality in the modern job market.

Unbalanced Workplace Habits

The Problem of the Compassionate Worker

Protagonists avoid the allure of power and rarely strive for leadership roles, but their charisma, organizational skills, and vision often place them there. They may not be comfortable in a hierarchal position or may even reject a formal title. But they commonly lead anyway. Sometimes their leadership is from a lateral position rather

than from a higher, formal one. And when they lead, their approach to life can cause them difficulties as they balance the objectivity an influencer needs against their appreciation for compassion.

Protagonists are prone to getting emotionally involved. They find it difficult to be impersonal and detached, and the emotional troubles of coworkers or subordinates affect Protagonists deeply, without some healthy shielding of their emotions. Empathy, in its raw form, is positive; but empathy without acknowledging the bigger picture can be difficult in the workplace.

In a broader way, Protagonists focus on the greater good but also struggle to tolerate an “ends justify the means” attitude. Though productive, they usually dislike an impersonal, results-oriented approach. Nonetheless, “results” are a business reality, so they may always struggle to balance their ideologies against productivity. This can create a series of tensions that Protagonists may need to directly address. However, they also dislike conflict, believing there is always a way to keep all parties happy through understanding, compromise, and integrity. Their efforts to strive for such harmony further complicate any efforts toward evening out the demands of leadership, productivity, and the Protagonist heart.

Stubbornly Creative

Protagonists excel in roles where they can help other people grow and develop, both within and outside their organization, while still staying faithful to their principles. This ideological stance demands a degree of independent and creative thought, but when Protagonists lose perspective, they may protect their own ideas too vigorously. Their normal tolerance toward the opinions and standards of others may suffer during such times.

Although Protagonists suppress negative feelings almost by instinct, when they are insecure, they can be quick to show displeasure, with a black-and-white approach to their passions. If the organization they're working in helps them manage these traits, Protagonists have no difficulties progressing in their career. If the company has a less-than-ideal mission statement or a purely dog-eat-dog culture, however, Protagonists struggle to square their ideals with such thinking and may need to find another position.

Rebalancing Workplace Habits

Learning to Compartmentalize

To prevent focus on the wrong issues, Protagonists may want to fine-tune their need to be involved with others. Constant conflict with managers, who will likely become more resistant to that conflict over time, can make further moves in their career difficult. People with this personality type often sacrifice their needs, wishes, or workplace accomplishments to help others, but moderation is key if they want to succeed. Protagonists set themselves up to do more good for those they care about if they can prioritize business only when it's truly necessary.

Learning to fit different work roles at different times and in different situations is a skill that leads to professional success. If people limit themselves to one role, the powers-that-be may even consider them limited in a more general way and doubt their usefulness. Protagonists will likely never lose their compassionate cores. Without fear of becoming something they don't want to become, they can confidently try out other roles, in effect complementing their central personality traits. They can be both a caring person and a results-oriented worker without inner conflict.

The follow exercise may help Protagonists get a better sense of what it means to enjoy varied roles while remaining true to their values and core characteristics:

- On an index card or small piece of paper, list across the top all the roles you play in an average day. For example: student, parent, employee, manager, housekeeper, family finance manager, driver, lawn maintenance person. Include at least five.
- Draw a column under each role. For an entire day, each time you play one of the roles on the card, put a tick mark in the column.
- At the end of the day, review the tick marks. How many different roles did you play in a day? At the end of the day, did it make you a different person?

Learning to compartmentalize and vary their roles and views of themselves can help Protagonists more fully grasp that sometimes empathy is the key to effectiveness, but other times a more objective style is needed. Sometimes a job might call for a compassionate leader. Other times, it might call for a practical money manager. Appreciating the flexibility needed to move among various roles can help Protagonists better navigate the workplace.

Restoring Openness

Secure people usually don't spend much time defending themselves and their own ways. When Protagonists are stubbornly creative, it is likely that they feel a threat to some or all their three core growth motivators: self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem.

Protagonists' natural inclination is to be open to and encouraging of others. Oppositional behavior tends to make them uncomfortable, and that discomfort can signal a need for self-evaluation – typically a loud signal. When these types resist

someone else's suggestions, they may have to review their motivations: Do they oppose the ideas because they believe they are right? Or are they defiant to protect the things that give them value and assurance? If the latter, is there a real assault they need to protect themselves from? Or do they, perhaps, need to build themselves up in other ways? An exercise to test their thinking:

- Watch or listen to a news program and list 10 or more things you can disagree with while watching.
- Make three columns on a piece of paper. Label them:
 1. "I disagree because they are wrong, and I can prove it."
 2. "I disagree on some gut level that I can't explain."
 3. "I disagree because of my basic values, which I can explain."
- Place the items you disagree with in the appropriate columns. Highlight those you perceive as threatening to your values or your beliefs in any way.
- Simply making yourself aware of the reasons you might disagree with something can be enlightening.

Workplace Cooperation Between Types

Much of who people are at work is revealed through how they interact with others. This section explores professional pairings between Protagonists and each of the four type groups. It includes brief reviews of collaborative traits and potential obstacles, as well as some tips that may help them navigate the tricky waters their similarities or differences may create. Efforts are inevitably more productive when members of a staff recognize the many gifts various personality types offer one another, and they find positive ways to thrive together in the workplace.

Protagonist–Analyst Cooperation



Balanced Protagonist–Analyst Cooperation

Big Ideas

Neither Analysts nor Protagonists like to deal with details, though Analysts like the *idea* of details. Both prefer to deal with the big picture instead, absorbing knowledge almost subconsciously and then incorporating it into a larger constellation of Intuitive understanding. They're both imaginative and creative, connecting the dots in often deep ways. This compatibility and love for the more abstract give them plenty of common ground.

Protagonists and Analysts both like to work with ideas. Their imaginations manipulate their ideas into models. They differ in their area of interest: Protagonists create ideal designs for a perfect society or the perfect workforce, whereas Analysts create excellent schemes for a system. Analysts show interest in efficiency, whereas Protagonists show interest in humanity. When balanced, they recognize and accept each other's focus while sharing their contributions freely with an organization, and they can achieve much together.

Compassion and Efficiency

Protagonists live in a world of values, ideals, and compassion. Analysts are more comfortable with structures and puzzles. Both share strong views.

Analysts often allow efficiency to outweigh empathy. Protagonists add to Analysts' offerings by bringing humanity to the forefront. Protagonists understand and even share strict standards, but they also provide "soul" to any system that Analysts devise or innovate. However, an organization only about love, peace, and harmony can get a little mushy around the edges. Rational analysis is an essential ingredient for an organization to grow and prosper. This is where Analysts contribute most.

Unbalanced Protagonist–Analyst Cooperation

Consumed by Debate

Although Protagonists and Analysts can use their different foci in complementary ways, their differences can create conflict. Analysts can be critical of Protagonists' views and consider them too soft, whereas Protagonists might regard Analysts' views as insensitive and without concern for higher values. Agree or disagree, they can end up on opinionated tangents together, effectively shutting out more level and practical types like Sentinels and Explorers, who are more interested in getting the job done.

Protagonists and Analysts working together may spend significant time debating their different approaches in the workplace. Analyst managers might argue that it would be more efficient to replace the receptionist at the front desk with a touch-screen computer, highlighting the time and money saved. Protagonist managers in the same office would probably bemoan the sterile approach and the disregard for

the employee. They may wonder about the welfare of the receptionist, criticize the lack of human warmth involved in greeting visitors with a machine, or go further by rejecting any steps toward a society in which human effort is expendable.

Shared Impatience

Analysts can be blunt and impatient with people who don't see certain points their way. Protagonists can be similar, if for different reasons. Protagonists' idealism may cause them to become combative as well, if Analysts come on too strong and won't give ground.

Perhaps most damaging, Protagonists might not let disagreements go if they see Analysts' attitudes as habitual tyranny. Analysts, on the other hand, may be dismissive of the "soft" approach, possibly further infuriating sincere Protagonists. Protagonists might then extend the conflict for lengthy periods of time, stubbornly seeking justice.

Rebalancing Protagonist–Analyst Cooperation

Speaking Analysts' Language

Protagonists find willing conversation partners and allies when they begin to ask Analysts "why" questions and maintain a willingness to explore their views on issues such as workplace organization. Perhaps most importantly, Protagonists can shed (or at least set aside) their fear of asking their Analyst coworkers for clarification when they're confused by an idea or comment. This also gives Protagonists a chance to make a counterargument. It's not that Analysts disdain the human side of things – sometimes they just forget to consider it.

Analysts are pleasantly surprised by individuals who are interested enough in furthering their understanding by asking them to explain their opinions or comments. They even like when someone challenges them – but only if it grows the discussion and is not too excessive.

Conversely, Protagonists respect and appreciate coworkers who understand the noble intentions beneath their calculated efforts. When it comes to occupational issues, they're more interested in getting their thoughts and ideas across than making friends; ironically, they often make friends with those who are receptive to that approach, such as Analysts.

A quick guide to what Protagonists need to know to communicate better with Analysts:

- Recognize your differences. Although you have much in common, your perspectives can be markedly dissimilar.
- Adopt a “why” rather than “who” approach. That doesn't mean Analysts totally disregard the “who.” It just falls a little lower on their list of primary concerns.
- Ask for further explanations to reveal an Analyst's rational framework. Don't be afraid to challenge them a little when it's appropriate.
- The lack of a warm demeanor does not necessarily mean a lack of respect or a lack of appreciation. Don't assume a contentious relationship exists simply based on an emotionally cold presentation.

Protagonists are not enemies of Analysts' rationality. Powerful results are possible when Protagonists choose to focus on shared interests rather than differences.

Speaking Protagonists' Language

Protagonists can help Analysts understand how to communicate with them by promoting questions and statements that include “who,” rather than just “why” or “how.” The more time they take to understand their Protagonist coworkers, the more likely Analysts are to learn what ideals and values propel people with this personality type. In doing so, they can gain a more nuanced understanding of how Protagonists approach work.

Protagonists can also moderate their reactions when confronted with challenging opinions from Analysts. Two sharp minds with different perspectives can combine their ideas in productive ways and develop collaborative results. Protagonists may come to understand the value of a purely tactical approach, and Analysts may eventually see the energetic efficiency created when people work in harmony together.

A quick guide to help Protagonists and Analysts speak the same language:

- While being sensitive to each other's differences, remember that neither approach is superior to the other. Proper balance requires both parties to be sensitive to the basic traits of the other while being assertive (not aggressive) in presenting ideas.
- A “yes, and ...” approach sometimes helps. “Yes, I understand the need to increase daily productivity, *and* we need to make sure that our coworkers have enough breaks and balance in their day, so they can give their best.” Try not to directly oppose ideas; instead, *add* information and alternate perspectives.

- Show Analysts how your goals are the same (for example, caring for clients and employees can help a company meet its objectives and result in more profits).
- Gently remind Analyst coworkers that emotional expression and influences are not necessarily vacuous. Emotions carry their own rationality, and Analysts are likely to respect that if they understand how the two go together.

Protagonists are usually not shy about presenting their ideas. However, anybody can be intimidated by approaches that are not their own. When working with Analysts, they should remember that their point of view is as valid as the rational ideas Analysts present. Respectful assertion can make such relationships more productive.

Protagonist-Diplomat Cooperation



Balanced Protagonist-Diplomat Cooperation

Sharing the Same Language

Two Diplomats have the advantage of speaking the same language. Diplomats, including Protagonists, are visionaries who focus on growth and humanity. When

they talk, their discussions sometimes wander into areas others might see as impractical, but they usually have a significant purpose despite their sometimes-sparse attention to necessary details. Facts are essential, but they play a supporting role to the grander ideas so important to Diplomats.

Protagonists find ready conversation partners in other Diplomats, as they all enjoy discussing matters of principle. Other coworkers may discuss the nuts and bolts of an organization. Protagonists and Diplomats talk to each other about creating harmony and growth within a company, and they define success as individuals increasing their potential by committing to ambitions that exceed self-serving interests.

Idealistically Driven

Although they can appear excessively idealistic, Diplomats agree that a better way and better world are possible. Their values are important to them, driving their decisions and attitudes. Protagonists and their Diplomat colleagues can transform their transcendent discussions into action, but not all Diplomats are as action oriented as Protagonists. If Protagonists exercise their influence and natural leadership qualities, then they can help balance out the dreamy inaction of those who are less hands-on.

Such action, when shared by Diplomates, targets injustice or unfairness in a business, and Diplomat colleagues may form strong alliances around such matters. They're cause driven, and they understand each other when such problems arise. Protagonists and their Diplomat coworkers agree that a cold and calculating business that's willing to sacrifice or mistreat people to meet its goals needs fixing.

Unbalanced Protagonist–Diplomat Cooperation

An Overabundance of Guiding Principles

The problems Protagonists and other Diplomats may have when working with one another have nothing to do with understanding. However, they may have trouble if they become stuck in their style of thinking, inadvertently excluding the insights of those who think differently – especially if they've labeled certain types as thinking “conventionally.”

In business and life, it's good to have varied personality types around to provide balance. Too many Diplomats brainstorming in one room may produce a great many guiding principles but few details that involve turning a profit in the process (which, regardless of appeal, is usually necessary to keep things running). They do well when it comes to mission statements or other visionary materials, but precise tactical planning may not be their strong point when their synergy is unbalanced.

Diplomats may even fall into the deeper trap of dismissing others' attempts to apply some practical realism to the process as merely “negative,” regardless of the intent of such efforts. Although many consider inspirational goals an important launching pad toward the future, without a concrete “how-to” strategy, even willful Protagonists can find themselves struggling to move forward with their big ideas. Endless discussions about such matters can do more harm than good, and Diplomats may need perspective and a dose of reality from other personality groups.

When Ideas Dominate

Another issue for Protagonists and Diplomats is inaction. Because outgoing Protagonists usually choose to act on their ideas, they may become frustrated with

other Diplomats, especially those who are strongly Introverted. Although empathetic, they can lose patience with those who merely talk about their feelings and ideas without applying bold action.

Protagonists are initially supportive of the imagination of other Diplomats, even sharing in it, but they naturally expect to subsequently externalize those ideas with hard work and dedication. “All talk and no action” is likely to try Protagonists’ patience.

Rebalancing Protagonist-Diplomat Cooperation

Bring Details on Board

Learning to tap into other Diplomats’ imagination and creativity is mutually rewarding. When Protagonists and their Diplomat coworkers dig deeply into each other’s reservoirs of ideas and dreams, they can move idealistic mountains.

However, the Diplomat group contains many of the rarest personality types, often with outsider perspectives on the world. Voluntary committees can easily become cliques, and they may struggle to put ideas into real action. To avoid this:

- Consider inviting more practical types from other personality groups to the discussion. Perhaps a Sentinel (_SP_) can aid with logistics or an Analyst (_NT_) can put a more rational spin on the discussion.
- Set agendas for meetings with specific topics and time allotted for each topic to avoid meandering conversations. Agendas might include “old business” as well as “new business” to clear any distractions and establish continuity. Someone taking the role of secretary can be helpful.

- Implement a rule that each thing discussed must lead to a measurable action. For example, if the topic is worker morale, perhaps start by implementing an anonymous survey measuring employee satisfaction. Appoint a “sergeant-at-arms” to monitor and stress that measurable actions are required during meetings.

Although the exercise describes formal meetings, informal discussions can borrow from it. The more structured Protagonists and the Diplomat colleagues make any of their conversations, the more likely they are to lead to results.

Time to Think

Protagonists must give other Diplomats space to process material on their own. Diplomats must understand an idea before they’re comfortable moving forward with it, especially when dealing with sensitive subjects or information. When they finally move forward, they thrive on appreciation.

Protagonists rarely have trouble here, but if they’re frustrated or impassioned, they may let niceties fall by the wayside. And speaking up and sharing information do not come naturally to the Introverts in the group. Here are some suggestions to shift everyone’s thinking in a more results-driven direction and to help preserve healthy conversation:

- Set deadlines. It’s fine to take time to think, but too much time becomes an excuse for inaction. Make sure to cap the time for pondering ideas.
- Stay on task. Motivate each other so as not to get too lost in thought.
- Provide gentle encouragement to inspire each other to continue providing valuable contributions.

- Start with the end in mind: What do you hope your meeting or conversations might accomplish? Continually remind yourself of the goal to stay on track.

Taking time to map out thoughts on an issue is prudent. But like anything, balance is vital. Protagonists can shine here and help other Diplomats who engage in lengthy rumination move forward.

Protagonist–Sentinel Cooperation



Balanced Protagonist–Sentinel Cooperation

Standing for Others

Protagonists focus on ideological matters, whereas Sentinels concentrate on practical matters. But both find their joy in supporting others and protecting their welfare, leaving the two types much to talk about.

Sentinels might focus on completing the payroll and guaranteeing all receive their salaries, whereas Protagonists might work to ensure salaries are on par with the needs and efforts of the staff. Both derive energy and self-respect from contributing

to the happiness and security of others. As a team, they address both the material and emotional needs of those affected by their work.

Spanning the Spectrum

For Protagonists, the big ideas are the most important. They're interested in growth. Anything that comes across as a "minor detail" may feel unimportant to them, so they sometimes miss small but essential items. Sentinels don't, and organizations need their diligence to run smoothly. However, Sentinels can get so caught up in details and procedures that they lose the larger purpose of what they're doing.

Partnerships between Protagonists and Sentinels help them hold onto the greater vision of their organizations. This is especially true when it comes to issues like finding practical ways to support human capital. If both respect each other's strengths, they can form powerful teams, combining idealism with the know-how that makes it all work.

Unbalanced Protagonist-Sentinel Cooperation

Concrete and Abstract Perspectives

Protagonists' worldview comes from an almost subconscious linking of information and feelings, and they are always imagining something better. However, their ideas can be hard to convey in concrete, realistic terms. Sentinels protect efficiency and order by using accepted standards and methods. To have value to them, things must be proved. In a way, they try to connect working practices from the past with the needs of the present and future, hoping that will guarantee similar results.

Protagonists and Sentinels apply those same standards to their coworkers as well. Protagonists appreciate less tangible qualities like thoughtfulness and vision,

regardless of proven skill, whereas Sentinels look to previous work performance – loyalty, seniority, and proven results are critical considerations for them in any workplace relationship. This can leave either or both feeling too judgmental to connect on a meaningful level, leading to a sense of non-cooperation in a workplace.

Judge Not

Sentinels might judge Protagonists as too ensconced in impractical ideas without concrete outcomes. Protagonists might judge Sentinels as too pedestrian or as lacking imagination. Treating Sentinels as somehow “generic” cuts Protagonists off from their practical experience and hands-on perspective.

Each could be complementing the other, but their judgments might set them in opposing corners. Companies lose resources when divergent personality styles fail to appreciate each other’s value, and stubbornly insisting that one style is superior to the other limits the contributions of the person doing the insisting.

Rebalancing Protagonist–Sentinel Cooperation

Finding Commonality

Protagonists may be tempted to view Sentinels as unimaginative or rigid, but the efficiency and stability they offer are necessary to any organization – when they commit, they get things done. Keeping that in mind when trying to communicate can help. When Protagonists minimize abstract terms, and focus on concrete steps, not only can they cooperate more efficiently with Sentinels, but the approach also helps them tame their more abstract ideas so that they become part of concrete solutions.

For example, Sentinels can feel lost when faced with some vague but impassioned notions, such as the importance of stable work schedules to human dignity. To them,

it just sounds like anger untethered from practical results. To help resolve such miscommunication, Protagonists might try the following:

- Present information in practical terms.
 - In relation to the above example: An employee has eight hours between shifts, but it takes one hour for the round-trip commute to work. People need eight hours of sleep, but this employee is only able to get seven, if that. By breaking down this problem in concrete terms, Sentinels and Protagonists can work together to come up with a solution for this employee. Sentinels care about people, too. They just need things to be constructed differently.
- Avoid expressing things in terms of ideal and abstract notions.
- Consider asking Sentinels for direction. Although Protagonists have plenty of organizational skills, details are not always part of their big-picture approach. Working side-by-side with a Sentinel is likely to put you in touch with those details.
- Set clear, incremental targets when working with Sentinels. They're not slow, but when they commit, they put considerable time and energy into getting things done. They want to know they're using that focus effectively.
- Show appreciation for what they do, rather than pointing out what they could do differently; it can go a long way in improving cooperation.

For Protagonists working with Sentinels, focus is best placed on turning the abstract into the concrete, the broader perspective into the more specific. This doesn't mean Protagonists have to abandon their ideals or points of view; adding a practical dimension will help.

A Single Perspective Isn't Enough

These two personality types can resolve their problems by understanding that both worldviews have something to offer. Practicing patience in the face of pronounced differences is good advice that both can embrace. Both Protagonists and Sentinels should be careful not to judge their coworkers' approaches to their jobs as wrong merely because they're unfamiliar.

Phrases like "That's the way we've always done it" or "That's what you're supposed to do" hold little weight for Protagonists. Lots of things used to be done certain ways before they were improved upon, and Sentinels themselves often embrace past improvements. Taking a step back to reflect on this (patience and thoughtfulness tend to go together) can go a long way toward moving things along.

Protagonists who hope to help Sentinels work more effectively with them might try some of the following strategies:

- Highlight similar goals. They likely exist, even if they are seen from two very distinct perspectives.
- Think in terms of results.
- Include optimism in the mix. Both want things to be better and for all to benefit from their work. That point of common interest may help Sentinels buy into Protagonists' dreams and Protagonists accept Sentinels' hands-on approach.
- To build rapport, talk about rules and established structures with Sentinels.
- Be true to your interest in transformative ideas and methods. However, in consideration of more traditional Sentinel coworkers, take a gentle approach to introducing new ideas.

Protagonists should show Sentinels the value they bring to the table. Fortunately, Protagonists are perhaps the most organized and action-oriented Diplomats, so there is plenty to show. However, both types should be careful to avoid being too dogmatic about their own approaches if they are to make a successful team.

Protagonist-Explorer Cooperation



Balanced Protagonist-Explorer Cooperation

Action-Oriented Partnership

Protagonists and Explorers both enjoy moving forward with tasks and finding better ways of doing things. Finding novel, compelling solutions to practical and concrete problems stimulates Explorers. They can take a tangled mess of a situation and figure out how to make it work, often in unique and exciting ways – so long as they're allowed to do it their way. For Protagonists, work is more broadly about personal vision, development, and well-being: problem-solving on a grand scale. They can flip a fixed idea on its head, creating a whole new perspective.

Despite their different perspectives, both types respect flexibility, and rules and traditions don't bind either type too tightly. Explorers are much more utilitarian compared to Protagonists' idealistic pursuit of values, but they share a common appreciation for innovation and constructive change.

Ideas and Techniques

Partnerships between these two types can offer a lot to the workplace if they can make it work. Protagonists are great at grasping, creating, and transforming ideas, but they're theoretical and thought based, and they often struggle to fit such big ideas into such a small world. Explorers excel at hands-on activity. They relish mastery of people, things, and skills within their physical environment. To see Protagonists' visions realized, call on Explorers. They can do much together if they decide to collaborate on a task or project.

Imagine the mood in an organization has grown glum. Protagonists might use their visionary approach to realize there's no real sense of community. They can sense that communication is poor, and they can detect a lack of connection with their clients and among coworkers. If Protagonists bring this concern and their vision for a cohesive group to Explorers' attention, they might create an email newsletter, a phone chain, a podcast, or a monthly coffee "date" for coworkers to get people together and build a sense of community. They might generate a brand for the organization that says, "Community" and, in doing so, also fashion a morale-raising team of Protagonists and Explorers. These two different pieces of the puzzle have much potential to fit together.

Unbalanced Protagonist–Explorer Cooperation

Heavy and Light Standards

Although established standards don't bind either Explorers or Protagonists as tightly as they might Sentinels, Protagonists do live by a firm code. Their values, usually connected to their thoughtfulness and ethics, are strong forces in their lives. Explorers aren't necessarily amoral, but broad values aren't always as prominent as a desire for results in the way they handle business.

Extraverted Explorers enjoy people and are often friendly, outgoing, and fun, building vast networks of friends and clients – often with little distinction between the two. In business, the goal is to make money, so they may happily use their personal networks to sell themselves or their goods. This mixture would almost certainly offend Protagonists' sense of authenticity, but to Explorers, it's just people helping each other out by making an exchange. To their minds, if everyone involved is happy, who cares?

Deep and Spontaneous

When Protagonists' values are dismissed, if they are insecure, they tend to respond poorly. Differences in opinion may lead to biased, negative outlooks, with Protagonists seeing Explorers as shallow or selfish; conversely, intolerant Explorers may, in turn, regard Protagonists as “uptight dreamers” disconnected from reality. Explorers live in the here and now, but Protagonists freely revel in imagination and thought – it's the classic conflict between immediate results and long-term ideals. The answer to this difference is for each to recognize what the other brings to the table.

Consider this hospital metaphor. Protagonists would be the case managers, equipped to handle the long-term well-being and treatment of patients in a holistic way. Meanwhile, Explorers would be down in the emergency room, doing triage and reattaching limbs – they don’t have a month to see how things go. Both have different attitudes about what it means to save a life – *but they’re both saving lives*. The two roles require pronounced differences in approach, plans of action, and styles of communication, but both are needed to run a hospital.

The potential problem is obvious. Those doing triage may see themselves as the real heroes, and case managers may believe they make it possible for “real” long-term healing to occur. This less than cooperative regard – maybe even disdain – for the value of the other’s style can lead to disharmony and perhaps even harmful competition.

Rebalancing Protagonist-Explorer Cooperation

Keeping It Real

Improving working relationships with Explorers requires Protagonists to make a bit of adjustment to their natural approach to dealing with others. Focusing on how to make an issue actionable is often vital for effective communication with Explorers. Protagonists certainly love new ideas, but they can lose them if they get mired in lofty philosophical theories that are well beyond what’s needed to act. Explorers are usually more interested in how an idea can be put into practice.

Protagonists have a lot to learn here. They have a clear idea of what the big picture looks like, but it’s helpful to see details and processes in action as well. Protagonists can ask questions and participate with their two hands, experiencing the moment one step at a time. As action-oriented individuals, Protagonists can easily fall into

productive harmony with Explorers, once they move past theory and the work commences.

Protagonists can facilitate communication with Explorers if they keep the following in mind:

- Avoid the theoretical. Focus on that which can be manipulated physically. The more kinetic the better.
- Look for the action-oriented common ground. It's there, but sometimes it's hidden under Protagonists' broader idealism. Ask, "What is it we want to *do* together?" Think concrete and measurable.
- Look for what excites the other person and try to join them in that excitement – or at least appreciate that they are excited. Both types are passionate, although for different reasons and in different ways.

Nobody is so complete that they can't benefit from the gifts diverse types bring to the workplace. In many ways, Explorers are vastly different from Protagonists, and therein lies their value to each other.

The Power of a Notion

Protagonists tend to extend their values and ideals into their work life as much as they can, knowing that what drives them will improve communication and motivation. Explorers looking to cooperate more closely with Protagonist coworkers can start by asking about their values and connecting those values to real examples.

Protagonists also tend to think big, looking at the broad picture rather than the specifics or details. A little enthusiasm for an idea with potential goes a long way.

When Explorers can help them turn it into something real, they can be a powerful team.

Protagonists who hope to help Explorers work more effectively with them might try some of the following strategies:

- Be assertive (not aggressive) in advocating for the things that are important to you. Just because Explorers are less interested in values and abstract ideas doesn't mean you have to surrender that part of yourself to work with them. However, do so in a diplomatic fashion that sets boundaries while avoiding rigidity or hostility.
- Show interest in Explorers' projects. Let them know that, even though you both may have obvious differences in your approaches, you respect them for what they do best.
- As with all Observant types, focus on outcomes. Find common interests there. Shared goals can bind workers to each other and build cohesiveness.

These two action-oriented types can be a dynamic force in the workplace if they decide to shed concerns about differences and embrace them instead. Explorers can help Protagonists not wander too far into conceptual weeds, and Protagonists can provide solid ground for Explorers, who often end up on unsteady, shifting sands if left to their own devices.

Conclusion

Is it a job or is it a mission? Protagonists are likely to say "both." Protagonists don't accept work as a mere job – yet they are not likely to exalt themselves above their fellow employees who simply want to make a buck. For them, their work life is a

hybrid of a calling and a need for survival like everyone else. When they balance the two, their enthusiasm and dedication give them an edge. Their charisma, persuasiveness, and other leadership abilities allow them to impact their workplaces in impressive ways, and others tend to value their contributions.

Obviously, there is no perfect Protagonist specimen. Despite a common core of traits, each Protagonist adapts and translates their shared traits into their own unique expression. And there is no perfect job for any type, nor one that is totally unsuitable. However, some positions may be more aligned Protagonists' traits and some less aligned. Hopefully, this guide can help any who read it find the path that suits them most, according to their own mission, goals, and values. For Protagonists, that path is filled with meaning and humanity.

Final Words



Creating a Balanced Path Forward

At their best, Protagonists are noble warriors, working tirelessly to better themselves and the entire world by bringing their principled yet compassionate approach to everything they do. The information in this book can help these dauntless souls on their journey, not just by granting insight into the application of their virtues, but also by highlighting areas where personal growth can become a pointed focus.

Protagonists can find objectivity and humility difficult, but their strong sense of connection to others can help them find balance as they learn to welcome the input, contrasting views, and even criticism of others. They make excellent leaders, but wise Protagonists are also perpetual students, understanding the benefits of listening to the people they respect.

Protagonists who seek to achieve their own greatest potential are never afraid to turn their exacting gaze inward, asking not only whether they are meeting their own standards, but also whether their standards could use some updating. For people who derive much of their strength from consistency and structure, change can be

difficult, but learning to adapt their methods and views whenever beneficial is one of the greatest tools for advancement they can practice.

Improvement is, by definition, a form of change, and flexibility enables Protagonists to recognize opportunities when they present themselves. Even this visionary type cannot predict all the wonderful things that might happen, so open-mindedness is key to reaping the best of what life has to offer. Protagonists' charisma creates tremendous potential for bonding with people, and accepting diversity in others ultimately cements relationships that can last a lifetime.

Although Protagonists may see nearly unlimited potential in life, they can nonetheless accept limits on how far they can push others to change and respect others' right to be themselves. Luckily, Protagonists have hearts as big as their high-minded vision, so appreciating others for who they are becomes a reward. As they practice this virtue of tolerance, Protagonists will see their lives grow in ways they could not have imagined.

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thoughts about this profile or the website in general. We would love to hear from you.

Best of luck on your path, Protagonist. It may not be easy, but few things worth doing are. Ultimately, what matters most is that your path reflects who you really are, deep within. Our lives are often too full of troubles, conflicts, and worries that lie beyond our control or matter little in the grand scheme of things. But if you remember to take a break from time to time and think about your values, dreams, and ideals, the right path will become just a little clearer of superficial distractions. We modestly hope that we have lighted a few lanterns along the way too.

Until next time.

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