

Bo Miller

THE **INFJ**

PERSONALITY GUIDE

UNDERSTAND YOURSELF

REACH YOUR POTENTIAL

and

**LIVE A LIFE
OF PURPOSE**

The INFJ Personality Guide: Understand yourself, reach your potential, and live a life of purpose.

By Bo Miller

<https://ispeakpeople.com/>

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to...

Kandra, my wife, for always encouraging me and being willing to learn about my personality

Burnie, my son, for teaching me as you learn and grow

Dad, for taking the time to understand me better and for the days you've spent editing my books

Mom, for pouring hours into my Pinterest profile and helping me fine-tune my personality coaching sessions

Barb, my mother-in-law, for introducing me to Myers-Briggs personalities, encouraging me as a fellow INFJ, and watching Burnie on Mondays and Fridays

Dave, my father-in-law, for helping me with houses, cars, and repairs

Jonathan Milligan, my blogging mentor, for showing me a way to make a living using my INFJ gifts

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The Rarest Personality Type

The INFJ personality type is the rarest, comprising only one-and-a-half percent of the population. INFJs may never meet another person like themselves in their lifetime, and as an intuitives, they're numbered among the outliers since sensors make up 70 percent of the population.

In America, the preferred personality type is the ESTJ - the polar opposite of the INFJ. With the INFJ personality type being so rare and the culture at large favoring your opposite, it can be easy to feel left out, broken, misunderstood, and unappreciated. Complicating matters, INFJs possess a powerful desire to make a difference with their lives, fulfill their potential, do meaningful work, and live a life congruent with their high personal standards. INFJs put a great deal of pressure on themselves and expect that the ideal futures they vividly envision will become reality, but most people have a hard time understanding this desire.

For these reasons and more, it's vital that people with the INFJ personality type understand themselves. They need to grasp who they are, understand their strengths, gain an appreciation of what makes them different from other types, and realize that they *are* normal - just different. When an INFJ learns these things, he or she can be more confident and plan a better, more productive path into the future.

My Story

Since I discovered that I'm an INFJ, my life has made so much more sense. I read a headline recently where the author said [finding out she was an INFJ was an awakening](#). I echo that sentiment.

I've known that I'm *different* for quite some time. For most of my life, I've felt accepted and normal, but my thought processes and standards have always contrasted with the people around me. When I was in school, I felt compelled to follow the rules and do what was right. I tried to treat other people with kindness because I thought that's how everyone, even the people I didn't like being around, should be treated.

In college and later as I started working, I really noticed how different I was. I enjoyed getting lost in textbooks and completing assignments but stayed away from parties. I felt a strong compulsion to follow the rules and do

what was right, but I also felt a strong pull away from doing what society *expected* me to do. I had little desire to follow the traditional path of getting a job, buying a house, and taking care of a lawn. That seemed both ephemeral and meaningless to me.

I often wrestled with purpose and meaning. For instance, I had a hard time feeling happy in my teaching job. I kept asking myself, “Is this it? Is this all that life has to offer? How am I making a difference?” I also longed to find a creative outlet where I could work by myself for hours at a time but, in the end, still help people.

I had an ideal vision of how things could be and several ideas of how to make it happen, but I had a hard time finding other people who thought like me. I shared my feeling with family members who patiently listened to me, but they just couldn’t relate.

Then, I started reading about Myers-Briggs personality types. I couldn’t get enough of it. Sites like personalityjunkie.com kept pulling me back like a magnet. When I eventually discovered that I was an INFJ, everything started to click. I felt understood and validated all at once. There was nothing wrong with me!

I also remember how good it felt to figure out what was motivating me and understand why I do the things I do and desire the things I desire. As I started to understand myself better, I began to move in a direction better suited for me. Now, for the first time, I feel like I’m living a life that’s in closer alignment with who I really am, and I’m ecstatic.

The Goal

I want this book to give you the gift of self-understanding. I want you to feel the freedom I felt when I finally realized that there’s nothing wrong with me and that my gifts are valuable. Furthermore, I want you to be able to explain to others why you do what you do and appreciate what you appreciate and to chart a course for your life that makes sense for you.

I know this book won’t answer all of your questions, but I hope that it sheds more light on your incredible INFJ gifts and strengths. I’ve written it to inform, encourage, and guide you.

This book differs from other INFJ personality titles in that it’s written by

an INFJ (and a male INFJ at that!). To illustrate certain aspects of INFJ thought and life, I draw on my personal life experience and share vignettes about other people I know. I intend for these stories to help you, but if they don't resonate with you, feel free to ignore them and hold onto the parts of the book that are relevant.

Finally, this book approaches the INFJ personality through the lens of Myers-Briggs personality types. I am a certified Myers-Briggs practitioner and have tried hard to present the INFJ preferences and functions (which you will learn more about in the coming chapters) as clearly, accurately, and simply as I can. You will find that other sources and articles may present the same ideas and concepts somewhat differently.

Organization

This book is organized into three major parts. Part I explains each of the four preferences that make up the INFJ personality: Introversion, Intuition, Feeling, and Judging. The second part of this book explains the driving mindsets, or functions, that make up the INFJ personality type. Last, Part III shares what I wish someone would have told me when I was younger and what I think every INFJ needs to know to enjoy life more.

We will now explore the four INFJ preferences, starting with a brief overview of the Myers-Briggs preferences.

PART ONE

INFJ Preferences

CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction to Preferences

The INFJ personality is one of 16 Myers-Briggs personality types, and one of 8 introvert types. As with all of the Myers-Briggs personality types, the INFJ is a combination of four preferences, or preferred ways of interacting with, taking in, interpreting, responding to, and approaching the world.

In the first section of this book, we will explore each of the INFJ's preferences, discussing what they mean and, from time to time, contrasting them with their opposite preferences (e.g. Introvert vs. Extrovert, Intuitive vs. Sensor, etc.). The preferences are a good place to start when learning about the INFJ personality. They quickly give you a sense of what this type is like and how it tends to operate.

After we explore the preferences, we'll go to the next level and look into the primary mindsets, or functions, that drive this one-of-a-kind personality type.

CHAPTER TWO

Introvert: Your Quiet Side

The first choice of preferences, in the Myers-Briggs personality system, is between *introversion* and *extroversion*. These two preferences reveal where different personality types focus their energy. Introverts focus inwardly on ideas, memories, and personal experiences. Extroverts, in contrast, focus outwardly on other people and action. The INFJ is an introvert.

This particular choice of preferences can be a confusing one for INFJs who don't yet know they are INFJs. INFJs have a strong desire to relate to, help, and interact with other people. As a result, they're prone to think of themselves as extroverts, since they *do* focus a significant portion of their energy on people. After reflecting for a while, however, an INFJ who truly is an INFJ would have to conclude that she is an introvert *because she needs time to herself in order to recharge*.

There are actually several other factors at play here that reveal an INFJ's introverted nature, not the least of which is the functional stack, which we'll get into in part two of this book. For now, take a look at six factors that reveal an INFJ's introverted nature.

Energy

As introverts, INFJs get their energy from being alone; however, there are times when INFJs engage with people heavily. Depending on the individual, some INFJs may have a high capacity for interaction with groups. This is especially true of single INFJs who may not be living with anyone else - or who have roommates who are frequently not in the house.

After college, when I moved into an apartment with friends, I craved time with other people. I regularly attended my church's young adult ministry of 300 plus people. On weekdays I hung out with my three other roommates at almost every meal. Then, when the weekends rolled around, I almost always spent time with a small group of friends whom I valued highly.

Once I got married, I noticed that I had far less energy for interacting with other people. I still greatly appreciated my group of friends and my church, but I didn't have nearly the desire for interacting with people that I did before. I was almost always with my wife, and she was meeting many of my relational needs.

Reflecting on my time living with roommates, I realize now that I had much

more time to myself. Whenever I wanted, I could withdraw to my room to read, which I did almost every night for about an hour. During the roommate years, I often took long walks by myself to think. Some of my fondest memories are of driving to quiet spots at nearby parks, walking into the woods or by a stream and enjoying the calm and quiet of nature. I treasured and needed time alone to recharge.

As you think about your own introversion, consider how you recharge. Though you may like to be with people, what do you do when you're tired and spent? Consider your stage of life and needs. Then, think about where you draw your energy. All of this information will give you insight into your introversion.

Thoughts

Another aspect of introversion has to do with the way a person thinks. Introverts tend to take their ideas and questions inward and work them out through mental investigation and reflection. Most introverts don't talk in order to think.

Introverts talk far less than extroverts for this very reason. They want to know that they're contributing a meaningful idea, one that they've had time to flesh out. If they have not thoroughly considered what they are thinking, they might not say anything at all. Of course, the setting makes a big difference when it comes to talking. If an INFJ is with a friend or two or three, she'll probably share more than if she were in a meeting at work. It depends on how well she knows and trusts the other people and the formality, nature, and topic of the conversation.

For example, when I'm in a meeting at work, I seldom contribute as much as my colleagues. I'll occasionally chime in so that the leader of the meeting knows that I'm engaged, and if I have an important idea, observation, or question, I'll share it. For the most part, however, I keep quiet. When I'm with my family or my wife, it's a different story. Sometimes, I don't shut up long enough to allow others to share in the conversation. I'm so relaxed and comfortable and excited to be with people who actually care about what I have to say that I'll occasionally say more than I should.

For the most part, however, as introverts, INFJs prefer to work their ideas out in their heads first. Then, once they've wrestled with them a while, they may share them with others, seeking feedback and input.

Communication

INFJs can be excellent communicators. They, after all, love to help people by suggesting innovative people solutions. INFJs serve with their words. While they'll do chores when necessary, one of their gifts is language, so they tend to employ this strength most often.

As introverts, INFJs tend to do their best work when they're writing. Most introverts prefer writing to speaking because it allows them time to work out their thoughts before they share them. When speaking extemporaneously with a friend or colleague, a person has to respond quickly on the spot. Behind a

computer or at a desk with a pad and pen, time is on your side. There's no rush, and you can wait as long as you need and take as much time as you need to share an idea in exactly the way you'd like to share it.

Marti Olsen Laney's book [*The Introvert Advantage*](#) sheds some light on why this is the case. According to Laney, the pathway from an introvert's brain to his mouth is longer than the pathway from an extrovert's brain to his mouth. Consequently, he'll never be as speedy a conversationalist as an extrovert will be - or at least the conversation won't energize him in the same way because it's not playing to his strengths.

Extroverts and introverts also differ in what they enjoy talking about. While an introvert can and will engage in small talk out of necessity, she'll never enjoy it as much as an extrovert will. Introverts prefer to talk about a particular subject on a deeper level. More specifically, INFJs tend to want to hear about people's lives, their interests, their problems, and their triumphs. They tire quickly of conversation revolving around topics such as sports and weather, though they'll endure these to get to the good stuff.

Relationships

As an introvert, the INFJ prefers to relate to fewer people at one time. This reality connects back to what we just discussed: in one-on-one and small group relationships, INFJs have a better opportunity to go deep and really get to know other people. They get to open up about their own problems (if they really know the other person or people and feel safe with them) and to hear about what their friends are going through. As I said before, most INFJs love to help people solve their problems, especially when they're interpersonal and intrapersonal in nature.

INFJs do have the capacity to interact with and manage large groups. They will, however, only be able to engage in these kinds of settings for limited amounts of time. Eventually, they'll tire of it. This is one of the biggest challenges of my job as a teacher. I have to manage a classroom of twenty plus students all day. I'm expected to talk frequently on the phone with parents, and I have to interact with colleagues. By the end of the day, I'm completely spent. I do much better working on projects that will help people in the quiet of my living room. Sometimes an INFJ who's overwhelmed by too much interaction with people will sometimes "disappear" for a week or more at a time. This is true for me. Some weeks, I'm out and about with friends and involved at work and school. Then, out of nowhere, I'll talk to no one for a string of days at a time. I won't reply to phone calls, and I'll put off replying to texts.

Network

Because of their inward focus, INFJs have smaller networks than extroverts. They're more concerned with gathering and processing information and working through their thoughts and feelings than they are with meeting new people. An INFJ can know a lot of people; however, he probably won't ever know as many people as an ENFJ will. Again, this has to do with the focus of his energy.

From my time in college to the start of my work life, I noticed a huge drop in the size of my network. When I was in college, I passed people all the time. Because I'm 6'8" and I was a member of the basketball team, a lot of people noticed me. People I'd never met before would come up and ask me how tall I was, and it was a natural way to start a conversation. Because of my height and my desire to be friendly, I met a lot of people.

As soon as I got back home and started working as a teacher, my network shrunk significantly. There were fewer people around and far fewer adults were coming up to me, asking how tall I was, so I met fewer people. My life was reflecting more of my INFJ personality than it had earlier when I was surrounded by people during college.

Stimulation

Returning to Laney's book, *The Introvert Advantage*, Laney points out that another difference between introverts and extroverts is the amount of stimulation they need to reach arousal. By this, she's referring to the kinds of stimulation you need to be at your best where you're most alert and engaged.

Many INFJs are also highly sensitive people. They are particularly sensitive to loud noises, bright lights, graphic information, physical stimulants such as a coffee, and so on. As a result, to do their best thinking, INFJs prefer quiet places free from interruption. This is yet another reason why they prefer interacting with one, two, or a few people as opposed to large crowds. You probably won't find INFJs at loud parties. You'll, instead, find them in coffee shops, at parks, and in libraries.

In college, I learned how important it was for me to have quiet places where I could think. I loved going to the back of the book stacks where there were only two or three people a few desks away from me. There I could study for several hours in peace without interruption. Those were good days for me. It was just me and my textbooks.

Once or twice some of the guys from my basketball team invited me to a party, but I never went. One reason I didn't want to go was that I feared they might be doing things that I didn't approve of. INFJs tend to have high moral standards, at least compared to other personality types. The other reason I didn't want to go was that I knew the party would be loud, and I had zero to no interest in getting myself in a room with a lot of people I didn't know with the music blaring. That wouldn't have been fun for me. It would have been punishment.

In the next chapter, we'll discuss the kind of information INFJs prefer to gather and how they interpret it.

CHAPTER THREE

Intuitive: Your Futuristic Mind

The second preference revealed in the INFJs' four letters - intuition - concerns the way they gather information and the kind of information they trust. INFJs fall into the thirty percent of the total population who are intuitives, as opposed to the seventy percent who are sensors.

Big Picture Thinkers

As intuitives, INFJs focus on the big picture. They can tend to lose the trees for the forest. When they're learning a concept or taking in a problem in order to come up with a solution, they want to know the context and how all the details relate to the whole. This doesn't mean that they're not good with details. On the contrary, when engrossed in a pet project or a meaningful effort to help someone in need, an INFJ can be quite perfectionistic. (INFJs are at their cores idealists who have extremely high standards for themselves.) That said, an INFJ would easily become frustrated if she had to do detail work all day every day. Accounting and chemistry wouldn't fit most people of this personality type.

Looking at the big picture has always been the way I've best understood books and courses. Whenever I read a new book, I first think about the title and the major subject. Then I go to the table of contents and try to organize the parts and chapters under the title and main subject. With this framework in my mind, I'm able to assimilate the details.

Anytime I try to learn something new or wrap my mind around a concept, I'm interested in details only after I have an overarching framework under which I can organize them. Apart from that framework and organization, I'm lost.

Patterns and Connections

INFJs have a knack for identifying patterns and seeing how things connect. This is true for most intuitives. Whereas sensors tend to look at each detail slowly and carefully, one at a time, intuitives look at all the data simultaneously, searching for how they all fit together.

Because they look for patterns and connections, INFJs tend to arrive at conclusions instantaneously and all-of-the-sudden. One moment they're looking at a bunch of stray puzzle pieces. The next, they've put them all together. More often than not, they may have a *hunch* or a *gut feeling* about something. They

get this when [their mind has subconsciously pieced the puzzle together and come up with an answer, as Dr. AJ Drenth describes the process.](#) Explaining how the subconscious put the pieces together is the hard part. Regardless of the fact this process is often inexplicable, it works. There'll be more to come on this subject in the next part of the book.

Future Orientation

INFJs have an amazing ability to predict what is likely to happen in the future. They can look at a set of data and determine the outcome. For example, tell them what your daily health habits are, and they'll be able to project how healthy you'll be in 15 to 20 years.

They enjoy brainstorming future possibilities. INFJs come up with creative and innovative ideas in an effort to make the world better for people. Martin Luther King, Jr. is said to have been an INFJ and so is the Dalai Lama. INFJs focus on what could be and are acutely aware of how what they're doing in the present will affect them in the future. This is part of the reason they put so much pressure on themselves to invest their time wisely. They are, as Steven Covey put it, "begin with the end in mind" kind of people.

Just because INFJs tend to focus on the future doesn't mean that they're not able to or that they don't look at the past. They do. It's just that they take what they've learned from history and use it to predict the future and chart a more fruitful, beneficial course for themselves and others.

A Taste for Figurative Language

If you ever want to identify an intuitive, listen to the way she talks. Does she speak in metaphors? Is her language figurative and imaginative? If you can answer yes, chances are good she's an intuitive.

As intuitives, INFJs tend to use comparisons to explain. Instead of telling you that the person had a red and white striped shirt, they'll tell you he looked like "Where's Waldo?" They also enjoy using words playfully and poetically. I make up new puns on a daily basis.

Inspiration

If you want to motivate and excite an INFJ, don't tell him what's worked in the past. While he'll respect and honor established institutions, *the system* doesn't fire him up like inspiration and change. INFJs want to make things better. Moving stories, possibilities, and life transformations pump them up.

This is partly why, I believe, INFJs enjoy personal development. They think about the possibilities for the future and enjoy hearing about how other people have been able to grow and change. Their brains naturally start thinking about what life could be for them and others so they set to work moving toward the goal with a jolt of energy at the start.

Theory and Practice

An INFJ's intuitive focus also means that he'll tend to have his head in the

clouds as opposed to being a more down-to-earth personality type. Sensors tend to be grounded in the here and now and, as a result, are only interested in theories so far as they apply to the present and make life better. Intuitives, such as the INFJ, however, enjoy theories for their own sake. They'll worry about getting around to the application later on.

INFJs also tend to think more abstractly. They can lose people in their theoretical, conceptual language. My wife gets mad at me when I go on about the functions - the primary mindsets, which we'll talk about in the next section - and how I see them at work in people's minds. She doesn't want to hear about extroverted feeling or extroverted sensing. She'd far prefer that I say: "That person's highly concerned with everyone getting along, or LeBron James has unparalleled court sense."

Creativity

I don't want to investigate this subject too deeply because we'll explore it in the next part of the book, but I do think it needs to be addressed briefly now. Because INFJs are intuitives who make connections, they have an amazing creative side to them. Creativity, after all, is seeing connections that no one else has ever seen before and putting two seemingly unconnected ideas together in a new way. INFJs are masters of this art.

Skills

Finally, as intuitives, INFJs prefer to be learning and acquiring new skills regularly. Sensing types tend to prefer to master a skill and then continue to use it. Put an intuitive in that kind of job, and he'll go nuts.

I initially went into education because I love learning, enjoy communicating, and like helping people. I thought, "This'll be the perfect job!" It has, as a matter of fact, been a good one in many ways, but one of the aspects that I wish I could change about it is the repetitive nature of the job.

I find my escape in learning new technology. I love how the field is always evolving and progressing and that, seemingly every day, there's something new to learn.

In the following chapter, we'll take a look at how INFJs make decisions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Feeler: Your Caring Heart

The third preference that makes up the INFJ personality has to do with decision making. Personality types with a preference for thinking remove themselves from the equation when they make a decision. They value impartiality and logic, carefully evaluating cause and effect relationships, but can sometimes come across as cold and unfeeling.

INFJs employ feeling when making important decisions. They empathize, putting themselves in the shoes of other people. They consider the values of others and the impact their decisions have on the people around them. INFJs will go out of their way to make a decision that meets everyone's needs.

As you think about your preference for feeling as an INFJ, consider the following.

Harmony

INFJs strongly value harmony, which is an indicator of their preference for feeling. They want everyone to get along, to be accepted, and to be part of the group. They'll step out of their comfort zone to make others feel comfortable and welcome.

In high school, from time to time, I'd sit with other students who were sitting by themselves in the cafeteria because I didn't want them to feel left out. When I'm with friends or taking a class and I see someone on the outskirts who's not gotten connected, I'll step away from my introverted nature, pull the isolated person into the group I'm in, and start asking them questions so that they feel connected to the group.

Self-Sacrifice

When it comes to decisions, INFJs will often sacrifice what they want for the benefit of the group. If an INFJ's dinner party is making a decision about where to eat, she may say that she wants to eat at Applebees if that's what the majority wants when she really wants to eat at Ruby Tuesday's. If an INFJ is working on a group project, he may get stuck with the hardest part - writing the research paper - because he didn't want anyone else to be stuck doing the lion's share of the work.

Empathy

Empathy is one of the INFJs' greatest gifts. INFJs can feel what other people feel and sense what those people are going through. It's almost impossible, for an INFJ to make a cold, logical decision. INFJs have to consider what the other person's needs are. It's for this reason that they do well in the helping professions. INFJs make excellent counselors, psychologists, nurses, and teachers because they are wired to make life better for others.

INFJs may become impatient with types that don't consider others' feelings. They have a hard time understanding how anyone could not be sensitive because they're so good at it. Fortunately, they're also good at looking at the world through another person's eyes so that strength can help them understand why other personality types make seemingly cold, unfeeling decisions.

Values

INFJs' preference for feeling also shows up in their strong values. They can come across as stubborn when their values are threatened. Most of the time they seem easy going, but whenever someone asks them to cheat, to gossip, or to be dishonest, for example, they may shut down altogether.

This has always caused the most friction for me in my personal relationships and friendships. In high school, on a field trip, my friends were texting back and forth on their cell phones on a bus. I knew that we weren't supposed to have cell phones out on the bus, so I virtually shut down for the day. I had a hard time not judging them. This bent toward firm values gives an INFJ a very strong conscience.

Communication

INFJs, as a result of their feeling preference, have to work hard to communicate what they want and need. INFJs who are in the early stages of their type development will often bow to the interests of others around them, which can often be a good thing. Some types, however, are bulldozers: they'll always pursue their own good without seeking the benefit of others, so an INFJ needs to learn to communicate the facts in a straightforward manner.

Many thinking types respond best to direct communication. An INFJ's indirect, sensitive communication may not always get the point across to people who aren't making an effort to "read their minds." After I got married, I grew significantly in this area. My wife's family has a number of strong thinkers who tell it how it is. When I first spent time with them, I got my feelings hurt a lot. I thought they were intentionally trying to step on my toes by saying exactly what they thought. Over time, I learned that they were just being direct and that that form of communication was also acceptable and even preferable at times.

Not Mutually Exclusive

The thinking and feeling preferences are NOT mutually exclusive. Just because INFJs have a preference for feeling doesn't mean that they aren't also very logical. In fact, that's one of the most interesting secrets about this type: an

INFJ can be extremely logical - so much so that some mistake him for a thinker. INFJs are first and foremost information gathering introverts, and that means their decision-making preferences are somewhat balanced; they [use thinking and feeling almost equally well](#).

I learned from a [PersonalityHacker.com video](#) that some INFJs are coders. They think so logically that writing HTML and CSS is fun for them. The work INFJs choose to do and the hobbies they enjoy also reveal how balanced their decision-making preferences are. Almost every INFJ has at least a passing interest in psychology, and psychology is a science (logic) that is carried on for the benefit of people (empathy).

As I mentioned before, I've been interested in technology for quite some time now. Technology is very logic based and requires an understanding of systems and how they interact with one another. This appeals to my slightly less prominent thinking preference.

To wrap up the INFJ preferences, we'll look at how judging affects your personality.

CHAPTER FIVE

Judger: Your Bent for Order

The fourth and final preference in the INFJ personality has to do with the way INFJs approach the world. Types who want, more than anything, to experience the world are perceivers. They prefer to live a more spontaneous, less scheduled existence. They enjoy variety and trying new things. What's more, they sometimes fear making decisions because they don't want to miss out on a better choice.

INFJs, in contrast, are judgers. They like their decisions made, their ducks in a row, and their projects completed. Read on to learn what this part of an INFJ's personality looks like.

To Do Lists and Calendars

INFJs love to get stuff done. ([Some more than others...](#)) Each INFJ probably has several to-do lists and gets a lot of pleasure from checking items off. In college, I spent the beginning of every semester copying all of my assignments from my syllabi to a calendar. No one made me do this. I just loved that I could keep track of all my work and that I could see the work progressively getting finished.

I still use Wunderlist - a digital todo list - on a regular basis. In the app I have a todo list for work, for home, for my blog, and for spiritual growth. On top of that, I complete a five-minute journal every morning where I list my top three priorities for the day. Then, at the end of the day, I reflect on what I accomplished and record it. There's nothing like the sense of accomplishment that comes when I've completed my priorities for the day. It's the days when I don't get all of my work done that I feel most frustrated.

INFJs are excellent long-term planners who feel best when they know what's coming down the pike. They make plans for the short-term as well as the long-term. The past several years, I've learned the joy of long-term planning for future goals. Rather than just make plans for the next two weeks, I've started making five, ten, and fifteen-year plans. A lot of personality types don't enjoy looking so far ahead. My wife hates this kind of thinking, but it's a great strength I can bring to our relationship.

Execution and Accountability

When I took the [Strengths Finders assessment](#), I was surprised to learn that three of my five strengths were executionary in nature. I love to get stuff done. When I get frustrated with other people, if it's not over their insensitivity, it's probably when they don't follow through with commitments. If someone tells me he's going to do something, I fully expect that he will.

This bent is another reason why INFJs make great teachers and counselors. They like holding other people accountable. They want to see that people aren't just talking but that they're also taking measurable steps of progress toward a better future. I enjoy following up with friends and family who say they want to achieve certain goals. I'll send them texts and emails for weeks if that's what it takes to encourage them to accomplish their goals.

Right now, in fact, as I'm writing this book, my sister and I are holding each other accountable. She's starting a photography business, and I've made plans to complete several Kindle books. We each set goals with deadlines, and we're going to follow up with each other to make sure we've done what we said we were going to do. When we were video conferencing with each other, I didn't feel good about leaving the conversation until my sister had *written down* exactly what she needed to accomplish over the next few days, so I took the liberty of opening up a Google Document and writing down the action steps for her.

Open Loops

In general, INFJs dislike open loops. When faced with leaving a decision open or waiting for the perfect outcome, they'd sometimes prefer to settle for a less-than perfect outcome, just to get the job done. Too many unfinished jobs will stress an INFJ out. In fact, the more responsibilities you give an INFJ, the more she'll feel the tension mounting. An INFJ wants to start to chip away at the mountain of tasks.

It's when INFJs are getting things done that they feel best. They dislike the stress that accompanies an approaching deadline, and they'll work ahead to avoid that stress.

Approach to projects

As Judgers, INFJs approach projects in a methodical way. They have a bent for backward planning. They begin with the end in mind and then work backward to determine what needs to be done and when. So, for example, if they know that a project is due in a month, they'll calculate the amount of time and effort involved and then determine how to attack the project, throughout the upcoming weeks. For some, this might mean front-loading a lot of the work and cranking it out in advance so that they can enjoy a break. For others, it might mean putting in the same amount of hours each day until the task is due. A lot depends on the individual and on the particular project. What's certain, however, is that few INFJs will want to be caught frantically working on the project the night before it's due. This is a sure recipe for stress, and INFJs don't like stress.

Day-to-Day Decisions

For a lot of simple day-to-day decisions, INFJs may be creatures of habit. They do like routines because they cut back on the number of decisions the INFJ has to make. For instance, the INFJ may prefer to get the same kind of cereal, bread, and sandwich meat instead of trying something new. It's not that INFJs don't like to try new things, but they feel better when the decision has already been made and they can just get a task done.

So, as a result, INFJs will create routines for themselves. They may have a morning ritual, a work ritual, and an evening ritual when they get home. I do pretty much the same thing every day when I get up. I drink my coffee, read, work on my blog, and then get ready for school. I like the consistency of the routine and know that this schedule enables me to get stuff done.

What About Variety?!

The crazy thing about INFJs is that we do like variety. For a long time, I thought I was an INFP because, while I do appreciate routines, I have to change it up after a period of time. I can't do the *same exact routine* indefinitely in the same way an ISTJ can. I face this challenge every year at school. The first month is interesting because I'm teaching a new crop of students, implementing fresh ideas, and feeling the energy of a fresh start. A month in, however, I'm starting to drag: I need a change!

That's why I'll often change the room around, move my desk, or try some new technology. I have to move things around, or I'll lose my mind!

While perceivers appreciate this variety too, this desire for change is more a product of INFJ intuition than it is a preference for perceiving. Yes, every personality, the INFJ included, uses both judging and perceiving, but the judging preference is primary for INFJs. What they want is to always be looking and moving forward toward a more ideal future. They want to learn and acquire new skills, and they need to mix things up.

Now that we've finished exploring the four INFJ personality preferences, let's explore how they interact with one another by learning about your primary mindsets - the functions.

PART TWO

INFJ Functions

CHAPTER SIX

An Introduction to Functions

Now that you've finished reading about the preferences, it's time to delve into the driving mindsets that direct every INFJ. These mindsets are called functions. This is the next tier of understanding in unlocking your personality type. It has to do with the synergy of your preferences: Your introversion, intuition, feeling, and perceiving interact with each other in complex, amazing ways.

Don't worry, if at first, the information in this chapter confuses you. It takes some time to wrap your mind around it. You don't have to fully understand the functions to benefit from what they'll tell you about your INFJ personality. Don't get bogged down in this chapter. Move quickly through it the first time and come back later if you wish.

The Eight Functions

The functions are combinations of introversion or extroversion with either information gathering preferences (Sensing and Intuition) or decision-making preferences (Thinking and Feeling). Introverted sensing, extroverted intuition, and introverted feeling are some examples. In the Myers-Briggs personality system, there are eight functions in all:

	Information Gathering Functions	Decision-Making Functions
Introverted Functions	<i>Introverted Sensing (Si)</i>	<i>Introverted Thinking (Ti)</i>
	<i>Introverted Intuition (Ni)</i>	<i>Introverted Feeling (Fi)</i>
Extroverted Functions	<u>Extroverted Sensing (Se)</u>	<u>Extroverted Thinking (Te)</u>
	<u>Extroverted Intuition (Ne)</u>	<u>Extroverted Feeling (Fe)</u>

- Introverted Sensing (Si)
- Introverted Intuition (Ni)

- Introverted Thinking (Ti)
- Introverted Feeling (Fi)
- Extroverted Sensing (Se)
- Extroverted Intuition (Ne)
- Extroverted Thinking (Te)
- Extroverted Feeling (Fe)

Their Focus

Each of the functions is identified with a capital letter and a lowercase letter. The capital letter represents either the information gathering or decision-making function, depending on what type of function it is. The lowercase letter stands for either extroversion or introversion - whichever is represented in the function.

Of the eight functions, four concern information gathering functions:

- Introverted Sensing (Si)
- Introverted Intuition (Ni)
- Extroverted Sensing (Se)
- Extroverted Intuition (Ne)

Two of them are used inwardly (introversion), and two are used outwardly (extroversion).

The same is true of the decision-making functions. There are four of them:

- Introverted Thinking (Ti)
- Introverted Feeling (Fi)
- Extroverted Thinking (Te)
- Extroverted Feeling (Fe)

Two are used inwardly, and two are used outwardly.

INFJ Functions

Every Myers-Briggs personality is comprised of just four functions called a stack: two are information gathering functions and two are decision-making functions. You, as an INFJ, will be more comfortable and far better at using one of your information gathering functions than you will be the other, and the same is true for one of your decision-making functions. Finally, of the two functions you use most skillfully, you'll use your information gathering function better than you will your decision-making function. All of this to say, here is what your INFJ functional stack will look like:

1. Introverted Intuition - Ni (Dominant Function)
2. Extroverted Feeling - Fe (Auxiliary Function)
3. Introverted Thinking - Ti (Tertiary Function)
4. Extroverted Sensing - Se (Inferior Function)

As you move down your functional stack, your ability to employ each of the functions diminishes significantly. Joel Mark Witt and Antonia Dodge of personalityhacker.com do an excellent job describing this reality using a car. I'll borrow their analogy. Imagine a convertible. Your greatest strength - introverted intuition - would be the driver, the most mature person at the age of 30. You employ this function more adeptly than any other. Besides introverted intuition, in the passenger seat, sits extroverted feeling. Extroverted feeling is 18, so you also use this function well, just not nearly as well as you use introverted intuition. Behind extroverted feeling, in the back seat, sits introverted thinking, a thirteen-year-old. Obviously, this function is less developed, but you've still got a handle on it to some extent. Finally, behind the driver, beside introverted thinking, sits your least developed, three-year-old function: extroverted sensing. This function is like a child, and you have a poor handle on it. In fact, you'll see it rear it's ugly head mainly when you're under great stress.

In the upcoming chapters, we will look at each of your functions, starting with your dominant and moving to your inferior, and talk about how each shows up in your everyday life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Introverted Intuition: Your Greatest Strength

It's time to get to the good stuff. Now that you have a basic understanding of the preferences, we can explore every INFJ's greatest strength. This is where it starts to get fun!

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, an INFJ's most mature and fully developed function - the driver in the car model - is introverted intuition (Ni), and it's through the lens of this function that INFJs see the world. INTJs are the only other type whose greatest strength is introverted intuition, but only INFJs use it in conjunction with extroverted feeling. INTJs combine introverted intuition with extroverted thinking, so each type's strengths come across very differently. Only about eight percent of the population uses Ni, compared to the majority - approximately 46 percent - who use introverted sensing (Si). This means introverted intuition is a mystery to most people. Let's investigate how this function works.

Subconscious Processing

As I mentioned above, introverted intuition is an often misunderstood function mainly because it's unobservable and, therefore, difficult to understand. Introverted intuition works by using the five senses to collect subtle details from the immediate environment. Because INFJs are feelers and they use extroverted feeling, their focus tends to be on people, so the details they notice may be barely recognizable facial cues, voice intonation, and general body language, for example. Once an INFJ notices these things, Ni then begins to process them in the subconscious mind.

Introverted intuition considers all the data at once searching for patterns and connections. When it's working, you may experience an "aha" moment where all of the sudden you have an insight into what a person is thinking or feeling even without that person telling you. That's why a lot of INFJs are mistakenly thought to be mind readers.

Introverted intuition doesn't, however, focus only on details about people. You may, for example, be studying a particular topic, reading articles and books, and thinking through the research in your mind. Then, when you're in the shower, getting ready for the day, walking down the hallway, or driving your car, an insight will hit you out of nowhere: You, seemingly all of the sudden,

understand how all the pieces fit together.

This happens to me a lot. I'll wonder why, for instance, an ENFP would ever want to be a math teacher. I know that ENFPs are creative problem solvers and inventive people and that they like helping others but can't understand why they'd be so interested in numbers, since *thinking* and logic aren't the driving processes in their minds. After reading several articles and thinking back over my experiences with ENFP friends, however, everything clicked for me. Suddenly, I realized that my friend TJ is a math teacher because he likes people - and his feeling and thinking processes are balanced. Then, I remembered that my other friend Mike is also an ENFP, and he works with numbers every day in his financial advisor role. The same is true of my friend Steve, who's an ENFP and has for a long time had an interest in personal finance as well.

When you're trying to solve a problem, introverted intuition may present itself as a *hunch*: seemingly out of nowhere, you have a good idea what the cause is or what the solution may be. This seems odd and fishy to others - [like magic](#), but it's not. What's really happened is that your mind has put the details together subconsciously, identified a pattern or trend, and led you to a highly likely conclusion. My mother-in-law is a nurse. Her supervisor used to give her a hard time because my mother-in-law could solve a problem intuitively. She'd sense what was about to happen - or why something was happening - when no one else would - and she was often right. Because she couldn't explain how she had come up with the insight or answer, the other nurse was annoyed with her, but I suspect it was just my mother-in-law's introverted intuition at work.

Because introverted intuition is an INFJ's dominant function, he may seem like he's often in another place. The process makes it easy for you to get lost in thought. I regularly find that, when I'm driving, I'll miss an exit on the interstate or I'll arrive at my destination with little memory of the actual driving experience and the route I took. My mind will have guided me to the destination virtually on autopilot.

When my wife was in high school, her mom was supposed to pick her up from soccer practice. An hour or two went by, but her mom didn't come. My wife had tried several times to call her house, but she couldn't get through because her mom was on the internet (This was during the days of dial-up internet when you couldn't be on the phone and the web at the same time.) Eventually, my wife got home somehow, only to find her mother lost in research on the bald eagle.

While the story is funny, this sort of thing happens to the INFJ a lot, and it's a consequence of the introverted intuition which is an information gathering function. An INFJ can easily spend two, three, or four hours researching a topic of interest. INFJs get so caught up in what they're doing that they lose track of time and may even neglect their basic needs. They'll forget to eat or drink or to use the bathroom until all of the sudden they realize they're starving or they've got to run.

Introverted intuition wants to know how everything fits together. It's not content to just know that something works. It wants to understand why and how.

Last night, I took a walk with my mother-in-law, who's also an INFJ. We spent a while discussing the rock and soil composition of our region and how the presence of clay and silica indicate that there were once still bodies of water where we live. I suspect that this topic is a deep and abiding interest for my mother-in-law because she wants to understand *why* the world is as it is and how it came to be that way. She's not content to know what rocks are here; she's got to know what brought them here too.

Creativity

Introverted intuition is also an incredibly creative function. It excels at putting seemingly disparate ideas together to make something new and interesting. It naturally and easily connects the dots between ideas that, to most people, don't seem to go together.

Since elementary school, I've been good at puns. I love words and their multiple meanings, so I'm always looking for double meanings. I don't have to make a conscious effort. When I hear a sentence, my brain naturally analyzes the phrase and thinks about other phrases that would go with it. Most people who know me well can't spend an hour with me without hearing three or four puns - or ridiculous jokes. For instance, when my son had a toy sheep in his hand the other day when my wife and I were visiting her family, I asked him, "Are you feeling *sheepish* as though someone has *pulled the wool over your eyes*? Don't feel *baaaad*!" Ridiculous - I know. That's introverted intuition at work.

Most INFJs are good with words, and I think it's largely because of this function - and perhaps because of extroverted feeling. They don't just know language, but they have a deep awareness of the meaning and power of each of the words. Latin was one of my favorite subjects in high school because it helped me understand the origin of our language. I loved seeing Latin words in our words. When, for example, we were studying the word send - "mitto, mittere, misi, missus" - my mind started rifling off related words: missionary, emissary, missile, emit, mission, missiological, amiss, and so on. I still love etymology because it helps me understand how everything works and fits together.

It's this same process at work that's the source of my best humor. Whenever I'm with someone and they're telling me a story or sharing about their day, I listen for the central ideas. After a little while, I'll hear something related to an original topic, but the connection won't be one that the person I'm listening to would think of. I'll, then, bring the current conversation back around to that original thought in a surprising or ironic way. If, for example, an engineer were to explain to me how a gear box can only handle so much force or *structural load*, I might reintroduce the concept when talking about a mutual friend. "Yeah, Jon left the party early because he'd had enough people time. His social gear box had reached its structural load."

Introverted intuition is what makes INFJs excellent musicians, artists, graphic designers, writers, and so on. The connections they make are original and

wonderful, and there is a world of creativity in each INFJ's mind.

The Future

Introverted intuition also postures INFJs toward the future. They will look at the past and the present, but they'll do so in order to collect enough data to project what's going to happen in the future. They're wired to analyze what's happening *now* - or what has happened - and anticipate what will happen in the future. Because introverted intuition is always at work in their minds, they do a great job predicting what's coming down the pike or imagining what *could be*.

This is partly why INFJs are so idealistic. The personality types with an NF in them are referred to as the *idealist* for good reason. They can anticipate what's going to happen, and they are seldom content with reality as it is. They want the *best possible future*, and, as a result, they're often unhappy with their present circumstances. INFJs are usually happier with working toward a desired goal. They need to see that they're making progress every day toward a better future, and when they're not, they can grow discouraged.

As I mentioned before in this book, INFJs are great at beginning with the end in mind and backward planning. They can anticipate the future and work out what it'll take to get there. INFJs live with a deep hunger for a sense of purpose. They anticipate the end of their lives and want to know that they've made a difference in the world, primarily through serving people. They'll commit themselves to personal growth plans and work tirelessly to achieve their long-term visions.

This past year, I read and listened to a combined 80 books. It was one of the best years of my life partly because I learned so much about myself, others, and how the world works and partly because what I learned helped me take measured steps toward a more exciting future.

INFJs' gift for generating ideas and seeing the future also makes many of them great entrepreneurs. They see what people's needs are and they can come up with amazing solutions and future possibilities. Many INFJs also like entrepreneurship because it allows them to design a business that fits their personalities. They can help people from their homes so that they have the quiet they need to focus, and they can also ensure that their business or practice aligns with their personal values and high standards of integrity.

Since I started blogging a year or two ago, my mind has almost constantly been generating potential business ideas. I keep my phone or computer near me as often as possible so that I can capture my ideas in Evernote and come back to them later. I love this brainstorming process.

As NFs, INFJs naturally see possibilities for people: this is when introverted intuition and extroverted feeling work together. An INFJ can project what will come to pass for an individual based on her current state of affairs. He also loves to help her figure out what she's good at and create an action plan to help her get there. Again, this is why INFJs make great teachers, life coaches, counselors, psychologists, nurses, and other workers in the helping professions. They enjoy helping people get where they want to go and to the places and positions that

are best for them, their families, and society at large.

Complexity

Because introverted intuition is your dominant function as an INFJ, you are a deep thinker. You won't be satisfied with knowing *that* something is as it is - you'll also want to know *why*. Introverted intuition is the capacity to understand complex systems. You'll also be able to focus on a problem or project for an extended period of time until you've figured it out. These are wonderful gifts, and you'll be happiest when you're fully engaging your mind while trying to solve a complicated problem, create something completely original, or understand a challenging theory or idea - all in the service of others.

When I have free days, I invariably spend time on the computer writing, researching, or composing a song. If you can't find me there, I'll be reading a book or having a deep discussion. I'm happiest when I'm engaged in these sorts of activities.

Action

INFJs are also people of action. Their introverted intuition yields dreams and visions of future possibilities, but unlike other perceiving types who come up with ideas but have a hard time putting them into practice, INFJs are most satisfied when they're actively working toward a goal and making a vision a reality. [They not only dream it; they do it.](#)

I love brainstorming future possibilities with other people, but once we've settled on an idea, I fully expect that we implement. One of my greatest frustrations is when someone gets fired up over a good idea and says he's going to do something but then does nothing. I once planned a website with another person that was going to allow her to create videos and share her knowledge. I set up the website for her and spent several hours talking about how she could present the content and planning how she could add that content to the website. When it came time to enact the plans, however, she just couldn't get started. She was worried about her work being imperfect and she always had a reason why she needed more time to do more research. That experience frustrated me to no end and taught me that I need to be more careful when I decide to help someone: I need to know that the person is actually going to do something before I invest time because I *need* to see that the project is moving forward.

Signs of Introverted Intuition at Work

I know that introverted intuition manifests itself in different ways for different INFJs. For me, [it shows up](#) as follows:

Learner

First, I'm a learner. Like most intuitives, I get bored when I'm stuck using the same old skills. That's why I went into teaching. I hoped that I'd always be learning and sharing something new. When I'm not in the classroom, I'm usually reading, listening to a podcast, or watching some kind of video. I can't help but continue to study personalities and try out new technologies. I have an

insatiable desire for knowledge and for understanding how the world works.

Futurist

My mind naturally drifts into the future. I naturally imagine what life will be like a year, five years, ten years, or twenty years into the future following my current pattern of living. It's because of this that I put a lot of pressure on myself to be productive *today* so that life in the future will be like I envision it now. When I have an unproductive day, it's super easy for me to feel discouraged.

Intellection

I think - a lot. I analyze observations I've made about people, brainstorm, introspect, reflect on earlier conversations, and ask why things are as they are. What I think about varies widely, but I'm always thinking about something, putting my introverted intuition to work.

Individualization

When my introverted intuition and extroverted feeling combine, they give me an intense desire to understand people and what makes them tick. My friends and family think I'm always psychoanalyzing everyone around me. I wouldn't call it that. I just love to figure out *why* they do what they do. This knowledge enables me to better appreciate the difference between people and help them take the steps that are right for them. I love coaching others because I realize that *every person on this planet is unique and different and has special strengths and gifts*. I have a hard time with institutions and practices that treat people like cogs in a machine. I know that any team can be improved when they get people in the roles that are right for them.

This incredible gift - introverted intuition - is one of the best parts of being an INFJ. Let's discuss another one of your gifts, extroverted feeling.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Extroverted Feeling: Your Compassionate Side

The second strongest driving mindset for the INFJs has to do with the way they make decisions. It's called extroverted feelings. Unlike the dominant function, introverted intuition, extroverted feeling is visible to others. It's what everyone will notice first about you because you use it in your relationships with other people and as you take action. Let's explore what extroverted feeling looks like, how it works, and how it shapes your personality.

What Is Extroverted Feeling?

Because it's their auxiliary function, extroverted feeling is less-developed than introverted intuition. Nevertheless, INFJs have a strong handle on this function. They use it well, and it drives a lot of what they do, despite the fact that using it drains them. As introverts, INFJs will never get energy from acting in an extroverted way, even though they're really good at it.

First and foremost, extroverted feeling is concerned with meeting other people's needs. It makes decisions based on values and is primarily based on how others will be impacted by decisions. It seeks to include others, make them feel as though they're part of the group, and meet their emotional needs. Because INFJs use this function, they're adept at picking up on and interpreting how people are feeling. They can do this without anyone else ever telling them how they're feeling. This is true of almost all extroverted feeling users.

Because INFJs pair extroverted feeling with introverted intuition, they have an incredible ability to "mind read", or so it would seem to outside observers. Attending to the nuances of people's body language, facial expressions, and voice intonation, they infer - usually very accurately - how others are really doing. They read between the lines and depend more on nonverbal information than on the words they hear. As a result, they're often extremely perceptive and great at helping people work through problems.

Extroverted Introverts

The paradox of being an INFJ is that you crave privacy, but because you use extroverted feeling, you're skilled in social situations. Most INFJs really do enjoy their time with people. They're natural conversationalists who can talk to almost *anyone*. They have the ability to almost "get inside another person's mind" and

determine what she wants to talk about. Then, they can adapt their words to fit the conversation and engage the person they're talking with. They're conversational chameleons when not making a concerted effort to be completely transparent and say what they think and feel. Granted, this is a valuable skill, and we all need to adapt our styles somewhat to engage the different people we talk to.

Because INFJs are so good at connecting with and talking to other people, others often mistake them for extroverts. INFJs can be fun and lively, when they feel comfortable. I've always enjoyed making other people laugh and being goofy at times. The challenge of being an incredibly private introvert and wanting to be around people is that INFJs have a tendency to overdo it in social situations and then fall off the map all of a sudden. One day, an INFJ will be out with friends, sending text messages, and participating in a variety activities. Then, the next, no one can find him. This happens to me on a regular basis. I'll be enjoying time with friends and family. When I've spent all of my energy, however, I'll disappear for a while. I'll stay inside or intentionally keep a low profile until I'm ready to talk to people again.

INFJs may also experience competing feelings. When they see someone in the grocery, for example, they might one day go up and say "Hello" and have a lively conversation. On other occasions, in the same grocery store, they might hide behind a fruit display to avoid having to talk to someone. A lot depends on how much energy they have and what their mood is for the day.

Helping People

As extroverted feelers, INFJs have an irresistible urge to help other people. As NFs, they see possibilities for people and particularly love helping people make strides in personal growth. They do extremely well in the helping professions as nurses, teacher, counselors, and coaches. Because INFJs are introverts, they do better helping people in small group and one-on-one settings. While they *can* fulfill the role of a classroom teacher, for instance, they probably won't enjoy it long-term because it places such a high demand on their energy. Most INFJs will be happiest in roles where they can help people but do so in a setting that preserves their alone time and privacy.

In [*Do What You Are*](#), a career book that uses the Myers-Briggs personality system to match people with careers they'll enjoy, the authors tell about an INFJ who works from her home creating children's Bible study curricula for children. The job fits her because she gets to work from the quiet of her home and use her creativity to design original lessons that will benefit churches and the families they serve. This suits her well because she gets the privacy and creativity her introverted intuition needs when she designs original lessons from home, and she works to *help others*, which suits her extroverted feeling.

Many INFJs also make good writers. Writing is an extremely private activity, but authors write to benefit an intended audience. So, again, this work meets the requirements of alone time and creativity as well as work done in the service of others. In fact, if you were to break INFJ work down to a formula, it would look

like this: privacy + originality + helping others = satisfying work.

The Challenge of Being an Extroverted Feeler

One of the first things other people will notice about INFJs is that they're kind, caring, and genuinely concerned about other people. With introverted intuition as their dominant function, they'll also want to talk about why the world is the way it is, purposeful living, and theory, but that doesn't change the fact that they'll be concerned for other's well-being. Until they learn that many people communicate directly and are *not* concerned with feelings and harmony, INFJs will also be at risk for getting their feelings hurt. They have paper-thin skin. This is one of the biggest challenges of being an INFJ: you easily get your feelings hurt and are hypersensitive.

When I was in high school, I played middle hitter for our volleyball team. I was a decent hitter and could dunk a basketball. One of the parents of a player on our team encouraged me several times to spike the ball into the face of a player on an opposing team and give him a bloody nose. It seemed that he thought this would be an empowering experience. I, however, had absolutely no desire to give anyone else a bloody nose, regardless of whether he was on the other team or not, so I had to put up with a lot of grief that season.

Over and over, throughout my basketball career, coaches kept telling me to "be tough" or "get mean", but I could never do it. It wasn't in my nature. I was a decent athlete, and I did learn as time went on to be more aggressive. Really, it wasn't until my mid-twenties when I started to develop my introverted thinking more that I learned to be competitive. Looking back on my high school days, I wish someone would have told me that there was nothing wrong with me. I was just an extroverted feeler!

INFJs can also be somewhat manipulative when they want to get their way. Because they quickly pick up on other people's moods and motivations, they can craft their words to make a person feel a certain way. In close relationships, the INFJ may selfishly try to get people to do what he wants them to, but he can also use this gift in service to others, motivating them to take action for their own good.

The Advantages

Extroverted feeling is an incredible and valuable function. While you will need to develop some thicker skin and toughness to keep from getting your feelings hurt, this function paired with your introverted intuition will give you the chance to relate to all kinds of people. As an INFJ, you genuinely care about people you meet and treat them with dignity and respect. You look out for their good. People don't always get this treatment, and they appreciate that you take interest in them and attempt to make a genuine connection. You possess an especially high level of emotional intelligence, and this gift makes you an extraordinary people person as well as an incredible networker.

My senior year of college, I was named homecoming king. If anyone would have told me *I'd* be homecoming king, I would have laughed. My first day of

kindergarten, I hid under the bed and refused to come out. I stayed an extra year in preschool before I was ready for public school. When you treat everyone with kindness, however, people take notice. The good reputation I'd built up from doing the right thing and treating others well also helped to get me my first job out of college. I got a teaching job at the same school that I had attended as a child. The teachers there knew what I was like and how I worked, and I think that caused them to want to help me.

In addition to being compassionate people persons, INFJs can be logical too. The next chapter will explore INFJs' third function, introverted thinking.

CHAPTER NINE

Introverted Thinking: Your Logical Side

Your third driving mindset, or function, is introverted intuition. Unlike feeling, thinking takes a logical approach to decision making. It's objective and impersonal. Introverted thinking, in particular, is often associated with a search for truth. It's also responsible for organizing and arranging a large amount of information. Let's explore how this function colors the INFJ personality type.

Keep Your Intuition In Check

INFJs' introverted intuition and extroverted feeling work together to many times give INFJs accurate impressions. According to AJ Drenth of personalityjunkie.com, [introverted thinking keeps these processes in check](#). It enables INFJs to critically analyze their intuition and check it for accuracy. This logical review of your insights about people provides a healthy balance and keeps you from leaping to faulty conclusions.

Balancing Your Feeling

As I mentioned in the preferences section, INFJs use extroverted feeling and introverted thinking in a balanced way. This enables them to feel compassion for others but also allows them to listen to a person's story in a detached manner. They've got the best of both worlds going on.

Some INFJs even present as INTJs. They thoroughly enjoy academic endeavors and, to an outside observer, can appear cold and logical. The fact that they are introverts makes it hard to judge what's really going on inside their minds without taking the time to get to know them.

I loved the academic side of college. I enjoy psychology, philosophy, and English equally. In fact, I had more fun in my general education classes than I did in the classes for my education major. They challenged me and expanded my understanding of how the world works.

Organizing Large Amounts of Information

INFJs often want to know *why* things are as they are. Furthermore, they want to be able to explain and organize the world around them. This is a result of their introverted thinking at work. Most of the information that I take in and organize revolves around my core interests. These days, I'm learning about

different personality types, especially introvert personality types, and what makes them unique. I'm on a quest, of sorts, to analyze and explain why the sixteen personality types think and behave as they do. I'm constantly evaluating other people and revising and adding to my mental personality knowledge base.

What you know much about and focus on will depend largely on your personal interests. People have told me that I know a lot about a variety of subjects. Most people know a good deal about one subject, but INFJs have the capacity to know much about many subjects. It's not surprising, then, that INFJs are one of the highest performing types in academic settings.

Meaning

Introverted thinking also adds to an INFJ's depth and complexity. They are anything but content to just exist. Rather, they're the kind of people who search for the purpose of life and ask deep questions. They want to know how the world came to be and what holds it in place. I've heard from a number of INFJs who love astronomy, geology, and other sciences that explain the origin of the universe. Many INFJs are also people of faith. They have to have a purpose in life, and many find it in a God who is bigger than they are.

That's been the case for most of my life. I don't know how I could go on if I didn't believe there was a God. To me, life would be pointless and empty if my pitiful little life is all I was living for. I need to exist for a purpose that's greater than myself. Believing that God created me for His greater purposes and plan adds both meaning and value to my life.

During college and as I transitioned into the work world, I asked a number of deep questions that had to do with my purpose, calling, and the future. I wrestled with my beliefs, and the people I talked to tired of wading through such deep waters. I'm thankful for the time that they gave me and the energy they invested. In particular, my dad and I read and discussed a number of C.S. Lewis titles together, and that helped me a great deal.

Your introverted thinking will raise questions and show up more noticeably as you reach your twenties and thirties. Pay attention to the questions and engage them. You'll be a happier, better-balanced person on the other side of the struggle if you do.

Independence

In addition to the fact that you, as an INFJ, are a creative introvert, you'll desire freedom to do things your own way. This is another consequence of your introverted thinking. INTPs and ISTPs, two personality types with introverted thinking as their dominant function, are fiercely independent. Above all else, [they want the freedom to solve problems their own way, and they resist systems that tie them down.](#)

This is the difference between extroverted thinking and introverted thinking. Extroverted thinkers design systems that facilitate productivity and increase efficiency. Introverted thinking, however, works on a more case-by-case basis and engineers unique solutions for specific problems that arise in the moment.

With introverted thinking as a driving mindset, INFJs experience a dilemma. On one hand, they are people of strong values and integrity, so they want to honor whatever system they are a part of and conform to the expectations as long as the rules and regulations don't violate any of their values or standards. On the other hand, INFJs want the freedom to do work on a project in a way that works for them: they need freedom to tackle it in a meaningful way. This is another reason why I think INFJs are often happiest when they are their own boss. If they can do work that successfully pays the bills and allows them to approach a job in the way they want to, they'll enjoy their work more.

The final chapter in Part II of this book will look at your fourth driving mindset as an INFJ, extroverted sensing.

CHAPTER TEN

Extroverted Sensing: Your Achilles Heal

The last mindset - or function - making up an INFJ's personality is extroverted sensing. Remember that this function is the most immature. It's the three-year-old in the group. As a result, INFJs aren't very good at using it, and when they do use it, they're usually under extreme stress. They don't call extroverted sensing your *inferior function* for nothing!

What Is Extroverted Sensing?

Extroverted sensing is a function that uses the five senses to pick up on and respond to stimuli in the immediate environment. It excels at performing and in-the-moment problem-solving. Many professional athletes and performers excel at extroverted sensing and have this mindset as their dominant or auxiliary function. They can read a situation, and they feed off of a crowd. LeBron James's dominant function is extroverted sensing: he has incredible body control and court sense. His coordination and physical prowess allow him to dribble between an opponent's legs in a full-out sprint and jump over a grown man. LeBron thrives in the present and on competition.

Extroverted sensing also enjoys the moment. People who have extroverted sensing as their dominant or auxiliary function tend to like expensive cars, upscale houses, and flashy jewelry. They dress fashionably and like exotic getaways, exhilarating experiences, and fine dining. They spare no expense to experience what the world has to offer.

A Big Weakness

Most INFJs will have a hard time being in the moment, at least early in life. They'll be prone to getting caught up in their minds and will prefer to employ introverted intuition than they will extroverted sensing. This is why, when I'm driving, I'll often miss my exit or when I'm listening to a conversation, I'll mentally go off on a rabbit trail. I remember a time when my wife and I were sitting on the porch eating a popsicle and watching the sunset. My wife, an ISTJ, loved the experience. To her, memories are one of the best parts of life, so she loves enjoying experiences together that she can look back on. I, on the other hand, had the hardest time being present with her. While I enjoyed the beauty of the sunset, I had to fight to keep my mind from wandering to the future or

pondering some more complex problem. I struggle to enjoy the moment.

Under Stress

Under great stress, you are likely to overindulge your senses. You may overeat, get drunk, or watch too much TV. You might also overdo exercise. During the times in my life when I was stressed, I spent way too much time on the computer perusing the internet, doing nothing productive. This is in contrast to the meaningful research I enjoy doing when I'm at my best.

Over Time

Carl Jung, the mind behind the Myers-Briggs theory, believed that people's preferences balance out as they age. At least, this is the case when they intentionally work on them. He called this process [individuation](#).

While an INFJ will never use extroverted sensing as adroitly as she uses introverted intuition, she can learn to be present in the moment and use it well. As time passes, she'll improve. As a result, at the end of your life, you have a much greater chance of having balanced functions and, as a result, more balanced thinking as you learn to employ your introverted thinking and extroverted sensing.

I would also challenge you to actively work on both of these. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, your extroverted feeling and introverted thinking are somewhat balanced already. Still, work to develop introverted thinking and, especially, extroverted sensing. When you do, you'll enjoy your relationships - and your life - a lot more.

I'm thankful for my parents. When I was young, they recognized that I was uncoordinated, so they allowed me to play video games so that I could work on my eye-hand coordination. They also got me involved in sports, which helped me learn to control my movements. If I hadn't played sports, to this day, I would have an even more challenging time controlling my large body.

In the final section of this book, we'll talk about how you can develop your personality, reach your potential, and cultivate a life that suits you.

PART THREE

Developing Your Personality and Reaching for Your Potential

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Boundaries: Your Greatest Potential for Growth

A challenge that comes with being a feeler is that you want harmony, and the fact that you're able to pick up on what other people are thinking and feeling without them telling you only makes things worse. INFJs are prone to be people pleasers who seek their self-worth and value in others' happiness. Until they start to get a handle on this and recognize their value apart from what other people think or say about them, their emotions will ebb and flow with the reactions of people around them. Developing healthy boundaries is one of the best - if not the best - way for an INFJ to grow.

People Pleasing

While they're often selfless and considerate, sometimes INFJs will hide what they're truly thinking and feeling in order to preserve relational harmony. As extraverted feelers, that's what their decision-making style is all about, and putting your own thoughts and feelings aside for the good of the group can be admirable and valuable.

There are times, however, when it has a negative effect. INFJs have a strong desire to be accepted just the way they are. They want others, as do all people, to understand their strengths, faults, and foibles and love the whole package. This kind of whole-person acceptance is only possible when INFJs tell the truth and reveal their true thoughts and feelings. Most of the time, this kind of complete self-disclosure only happens with safe people - extremely close friends, family members, and coworkers whom INFJs know they can trust.

As an INFJ grows and develops, she would be wise to reveal more about herself to everyone. This is no easy feat, considering she is so sensitive to criticism and picks up on others thoughts. Nonetheless, she'll have no chance of being accepted and understood for who she really is until she reveals more of her true nature. Of course, there's a balance to strike here. An INFJ will need to exercise discernment and determine how much of herself to reveal and to whom. This discernment is developed over time through micro-experiments and by revealing bits of personal information little by little.

Strong Personalities

Opening up and being honest about how you think and feel is particularly

important when you're with extroverted thinking personalities such as ESTJs and ENTJs, the most prevalent business leaders and managers. Unlike you, extroverted thinkers are not tuned into what other people are thinking and feeling. This isn't to say they don't care about people or their feelings. They just care more about the facts and communicating openly and honestly. They "tell it how it is" first and worry about people's feelings later. When an INFJ is around extroverted thinkers, he'd be wise to adapt his conversation style and share more directly as well.

For instance, if you want to go out to dinner at Ruby Tuesdays, say, "I want to go to Ruby Tuesdays." Don't say, "Ruby Tuesdays or Olive Garden both sound good," when someone else suggests Olive Garden. When you're deciding where to go for vacation, say, "I want to go to the cabin" and "I don't like the beach." Don't say, "Either one works for me..." and expect people to pick up on what you really want.

Granted, it's going to be draining to be so direct, and you'll want to pick your battles. You don't need to communicate directly when talking about everything, but on important matters you'll want to dig your heels into the ground a little. Even though the initial interaction will probably be unenjoyable, you'll be far happier with the final outcome. In the end, direct communication is one of the best ways to avoid getting steamrolled.

Let Your "Yes" Be "Yes"

INFJs, early on, can be stuck picking up jobs, responsibilities, and assignments they don't want to do in order to make other people happy. They'll say they're willing to help when they'd rather not to preserve group harmony and please others. This has been a major challenge for me.

Several years ago, I was coaching volleyball when I really wanted to stop coaching. I continued to coach because other people wanted me to, even though I couldn't wait for the season to end. I feared what they would say when I told them I wanted to quit, so I kept coaching. Around the same time, I picked up several assignments at church - organizing and teaching a Vacation Bible School with my wife and putting together a technical manual for volunteers - that I wished I'd never said yes to. The work was drudgery - drudgery that I could have avoided with an honest "no".

You'll always be happiest when you decide ahead of time what you enjoy investing in and what you'll pass on. If you take a little time to consider what your priorities are and where your gifts lie, you can contribute to extra projects at school, work, church, and in your community while avoiding tasks that drain you. We all have to do our fair share of unenjoyable tasks, so this is not a get-out-jail-free card for chores at home.

The Truth in Love

Finally, your relationships will be healthier when you disclose the truth in love. As an INFJ, you'll want your friends and family to like you, and you'll want harmony between you and your spouse. There are times, however, when you

need to be forthright and honest for the benefit of your friends, family, and coworkers, as well as yourself.

When your spouse, for instance, is doing something that could hurt her - such as spending time with the wrong crowd or cutting corners when she usually finishes strong - you'll love her best when you tell her what she doesn't want to hear, even though she might not like what you have to say initially. Just make sure you're sharing in love, not in annoyance, and with great sensitivity and concern. Speaking the truth in love will lead to a stronger relationship in the end. Your friends or family members will trust you more because you were willing to sacrifice your personal comfort for their good, and you'll feel better about having shared the truth.

It's also important that you share the truth whenever your values are in jeopardy. If someone's asking you to make copies of a copyrighted document, for instance, stand your ground, and tell him you won't. If a coworker wants to leave work a few minutes early, and you know you shouldn't, don't go along. If you violate your conscience and go against your values, you'll be miserable in the end, but if you stand your ground, even though people dislike you for it, you'll be at peace with yourself, and people will respect your integrity.

Furthermore, fight against withdrawing when your values are in jeopardy. While it's easier to protect your values by pulling out and letting a relationship atrophy, it's usually better to confront. Confrontation can strengthen your bond of friendship. It helps your friend, and it helps you to become more confident.

Along with learning to be more direct, INFJs need to learn how to take action on their ideas. We'll take a look at that topic in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Imperfect Action: The Road to Reaching Your Potential

Perfectionistic tendencies and lucid visions of what the future could look like stop many INFJs in their tracks. They come up with great ideas and exciting dreams, but they fail to do anything with them because they fear failure: not absolute failure, mind you - just doing or creating anything that falls short of what they've envisioned. This specific challenge is one of the best opportunities INFJs have to grow.

Introverts

Because they're introverts, INFJs focus their energy inwardly on the world of thoughts and ideas, as we've discussed before. Their introverted intuition yields clear visions of the future that they can get excited about. The challenge, however, is that action is not their forte. Unlike extroverts, they struggle to get moving on their ideas. Their dominant function is one they use inside, but to do the work they know they need to do to help others and make a difference in the world, they have to continue to develop their auxiliary function - extroverted feeling.

Extroverted Feeling

Extroverted feeling, as we explored earlier, is primarily concerned with relational harmony and helping other people. To take action on their visions and get moving, INFJs would be wise to [picture a specific person](#) or people that they'll be able to help when they start taking action on their vision. Whenever they're hesitant to get moving, they need to reconnect with a real, live human being. That doesn't mean that they need to go see or call anyone. Rather, they just need to stop and remember that someone could use their help. No matter how much better they think someone else is at something than they are - be it blogging, counseling, or singing - they'll remember that they have an important contribution to make.

Other People

Friends can help INFJs overcome this challenge. Accountability is essential to progress. No one succeeds alone. I was reminded of this fact when I read the following words from personal development guru [Michal Stawicki](#): "If you want

to change, change with someone else. That should be your new default.”

While any of us can make a certain amount of progress alone, none of us can succeed indefinitely alone. Since I started my blog iSpeakPeople.com, I’ve been able to persevere primarily because of the support of friends and family. In the past, I started new ventures on my own, but they all fell through. Before starting this endeavor, however, I formed a mastermind group - a small group of three people devoted to checking in and encouraging one another.

For nearly half a year, we met every week to ask each other about our progress and to push one another to keep going. We provided objective feedback and cheered each other on. I also obtained a mentor, and I’m so glad that I did. INFJs appreciate the wisdom and experience that a trusted guide brings to the table. As the type most likely to seek professional help from a counselor, it shouldn’t be a stretch to find some assistance from someone who’s already succeeded at what you want to do. And if the thing you’re trying to do is important enough to you, I would recommend paying for it, if you have the finances. If it weren’t for the encouragement of friends and the input of my mentor, I would have given up on my blog a while ago.

Keep Finding New Partners

Accountability partners change over time. This reality frustrated me at first, but when I realized that people’s interests changed along with their life stages and availability, I also realized that I wasn’t going to change the world. I instead needed to recognize how accountability worked and adjust my approach accordingly. Be aware that some of your accountability partners will drop off, so be ever on the lookout for new partners to bring in. Think of people who you admire. Remember [Jim Rohn’s quote](#), “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.” Then, choose accountability partners whose lives you want to emulate.

Also, consider who has similar goals. If you find someone headed in the same direction as you, you can learn from one another and cheer each other on along the journey. Two proverbs come to mind. One says, [“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”](#) An African proverb says, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with others.”

Imperfect Action

In the end, you’re going to have to act, and your actions aren’t going to be perfect. They’ll be quite imperfect. I encourage you to act anyway because in risking you will learn far more than you ever would by wondering what could have been. Consider a few pieces of counsel.

First, use your fear as a compass. [Seth Godin](#) teaches others to follow their fear to the next step of growth. Our brains, he explains, do everything they can to keep us safe. Most of the time, that means avoiding challenges and staying in our comfort zone. But your next step of growth is never in your comfort zone. It’s always in the unknown where you have to risk failure. If the thing you want to do scares you - and it’s not physically, emotionally, or relationally dangerous -

do it! It's probably the exact step you should be taking.

Recently, I taught my first webinar. I created a presentation, promoted the event, and prepared for the webinar. When I launched, my blood was pumping and my heart was beating like a drum, even though only four people had signed up. I taught it like there were a hundred people watching and broadcast the webinar to Facebook live. When I shut down the webinar and wrapped things up, I was shocked that 66 people had viewed the presentation on Facebook, and after a few days, about 200 people had seen it. That was most definitely the step I needed to take, but let me tell you, I didn't feel like taking it.

The steps that make the biggest impact are usually the ones that scare you the most. When I published a blog post with [73 things I wished other people knew about me as an INFJ](#), I wasn't sure how people would react. I was nervous. To this day, that's still by far the most popular post I've written.

Second, in addition to using fear as a compass, let curiosity drive you. Don't live your life wondering what could have been. When you're tempted to settle and stay in your comfort zone, remind yourself that you don't want to wind up wondering what could have been at the end of your life. Tell yourself that you won't settle for inaction, and get out there!

Finally, live for a higher calling. Focus on how you can use your gifts to serve others. Remember, you are a rare gem, and very few people have your gifts. No one can do exactly what you can. You are a steward of the gifts you've been given, and you will be happiest when putting them to use.

I regularly think of [the story Jesus tells in the Bible](#). A master of a household was going on a journey and entrusted three of his servants with money to invest. To one, he gave five coins, another two, and to the third servant he gave one. The servant with five coins and the servant with two invested their talents and doubled the amount of money their master had given them. The last servant, however, afraid of what would happen to his master's money, hid it in a hole in the ground.

When the master returned, he called his servants to him and checked on what they had done with his property. He praised the first and second servants equally, even though one had made more than twice as much money as the other. More important than their earnings were their efforts. Each used the money he'd been given to the best of his ability, and his master was pleased. The master, understandably, was angry with the third servant who'd played it safe. He took his coin away, gave it to the one with ten, and punished the slothful, fearful servant who took no risks at all.

When your life draws to an end, how will you have spent your talents? Know that you'll be happiest when you put them to use. Finally, remember that as an INFJ. You know well what great work is. That's why it pains you to do anything that falls short of it, but also recognize that it takes hours and hours and volumes and volumes of work that's not up to your standards to get to the point where you can create work that you consider excellent. Know this, and persevere. I'll leave you with the words of [Earl Nightingale](#): "[Don't] give up on [your] dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway."

Looking for more strategies you can use to combat your idealistic tendencies?
Look no further than the next chapter.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Idealism and How to Beat It: Additional Strategies for Taking Action

In addition to the recommendations in the previous chapter, I'd like to share several tools you can use to combat your idealism to help you take more action. These are strategies that I use on a daily basis and that have benefited me significantly.

Prioritize

As an idealist, you'll probably want to spend more time on projects than necessary, striving to get every detail just so. While your high standards are admirable, it will, in many cases, drive other people batty. At times, it won't be good for your health. You'll be prone to forget your practical health needs (e.g. food and sleep) and stress yourself out, fretting over whether your project is good enough.

Instead of pouring yourself into all your projects with equal intensity, choose which ones are your priorities, and focus your time and energy on the most important ones. While it's unwise to invest huge amounts of time and energy into every project, there's nothing wrong with giving a few pet projects your all. List all of your projects, and weigh the importance of each. Then, decide which ones should receive your time and attention. The time you save will greatly benefit you as well as your relationships with friends and family.

Fit Your Task to Your Time

Along with prioritizing, aim to fit your tasks to your time. I learned this strategy from my ESTJ mentor. He pointed out that sometimes time constraints don't allow for perfectionism: You just have to do the best job you can in the time you have available and let good enough be good enough. Admittedly, this was a challenge for me in college and as I entered the work world. I'd pour hours and hours into a task and exhaust myself, wanting everything to be perfect. I often wound up tired and disappointed with myself for creating a less-than-perfect final product which invariably led to bouts of depression. This was not an enjoyable or healthy cycle.

When I started applying what my mentor recommended, however, I eased up

on myself and wasn't nearly so self-critical. I got more rest and felt as though my life had a lot more balance. At times, I was still a bit disappointed with the work I'd done, but overall, I was much happier. Furthermore, I learned an important principle: Tasks expand to the time allotted for their completion - [Parkinson's Law](#). In other words, when I reduce the amount of time I give myself to complete a project, I am still able to do a good job but in less time.

Keep a Journal of Accomplishments

When you place such high demands on yourself, you may end your days disappointed with what you've accomplished. This often happens to me. I'll create a lengthy checklist of what I want to get done, and if I'm not able to work through all of the items on my list - or if I don't get the major tasks accomplished - I end my day feeling disappointed. While a desire to get things done and be productive is helpful in many ways, focusing on what you don't accomplish is counterproductive.

To help me determine if a day's work has been profitable, I've started keeping a five-minute journal. In the morning, I take a minute or two to list three major things I want to accomplish. Then, at the end of the day, I recall whether or not I completed those tasks. Since the tasks I list are usually priorities, I get them done most of the time. If I'm not able to check them off, however, I try to list three other tasks or projects I was able to accomplish. This helps me end each day with an attitude of gratitude which is far more profitable than one of discontentment and self-condemnation.

Compromise

As an INFJ, it can be hard to remember that most folks don't see the world the way you do. You look around and wonder why other people aren't applying themselves more and striving for growth. In one sense, that's where you come in. INFJs see possibilities for people and help them strive for their personal best. They facilitate life stewardship and personal growth. On the other hand, you'd be wise to recognize that you've probably got an inordinate amount of yearning for what could be. Most people don't feel the pressure to grow, produce, and perform that you do, so cut them some slack.

If your friends, co-workers, or family members aren't pursuing personal growth with the same intensity you are, that's okay. Now, I'm not saying to let them go and never challenge them. They need your encouragement. Still, you'd be wise to find like-minded people who are as excited about reaching their potential as you are and work together with those folks to reach your potential. Meanwhile, give the people around you a break, and don't hold them to the same high standard that you put on yourself. Judge charitably by always assuming the best about them. Your relationships will benefit.

Inaction in others isn't the only challenge you face as an INFJ. Hypersensitivity is a constant obstacle you face as well. Read on to learn more about the causes of your sensitivity.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Highly Sensitive People: Why the World Can Seem So Harsh

[Dr. Elaine Aron has blazed a trail into the unknown world of highly sensitive people.](#) Having lived several decades as a sensitive person herself, she began researching whether or not there are people who are especially sensitive to the world around them.

Definition

Many, if not all, INFJs are thought to be highly sensitive people. Highly sensitive people (HSP) comprise about twenty percent of the population and aren't limited to INFJ types. The words "shy" and "introvert" don't describe this group either. By highly sensitive, Aron means that HSPs are [especially perceptive and process more stimuli, think more deeply, and pick up on more emotional activity in others than the average person.](#) As a result, they're more vulnerable to violence, loud noises, crowds, other people's moods, and smells. (For a complete list and to take the free self-assessment, visit this site: <http://hsperson.com/test/highly-sensitive-test/>.)

The Benefits

From a population perspective, we need HSPs. Aron says that HSPs pause longer to evaluate before making a decision. They think about the past and ponder the implications of a decision. This is beneficial because it prevents people from leaping into danger. If the HSPs in a group can keep others from jumping into a bad situation, they can save lives or at least prevent a lot of harm. HSPs can also pick up on what other people are thinking and feeling. They can detect wrong motives and comfort others who may be having a hard time expressing their feelings or who are trying to mask what's really going on but need to talk about it.

The Challenges

The challenge of being an HSP is that INFJs can easily get overstimulated. Too much time with people and too much noise can flood our minds and virtually shut us down. We have to retreat to the safety of a quiet sanctuary because, when we become overstimulated, we stop picking up on anything at all. We won't be able to do so again until we've had adequate time to recharge.

In addition, remember that most people are not HSPs. Around forty percent of the population isn't highly sensitive, while the remaining population is moderately sensitive. Because so many of the people around us are not HSPs, they'll have a hard time understanding why we INFJs, as well as other HSPs, act the way we do.

This was certainly my experience in school and in sports. My coaches were always encouraging me to get tough and "want the ball," but it just wasn't in me. I had no desire to dominate anyone. While I enjoyed pick-up games and basketball practice, when I got into a game situation and there was a crowd of people watching me, I'd shut down. In a game situation I became overstimulated and couldn't perform nearly as well as normal.

This is often the case with HSPs. They do their work well in one setting when not being observed. Then, suddenly, when someone comes to watch, they start botching what they'd normally do with ease. It's a frustrating challenge to work through.

Aron offers an interesting explanation for this phenomenon. She says that, in psychology, it's well-understood that all people have an optimal level of arousal - or stimulation. If they are understimulated, they'll become bored. If overstimulated, they'll stress out and shut down. To be at our best, then, we need work, and a life, that allows us to operate at our peak level of stimulation. Knowing this, you should be careful to choose work and a lifestyle that grant you an optimal level of stimulation, which will be less than is preferable for most people.

We'll continue to explore ways to navigate and manage your sensitivity in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Criticism: Dealing with Hurtful Words

To be an INFJ is to be sensitive to criticism. You care a great deal about what others think about you, and you crave their validation. To want to be loved is not a bad thing but to care too much about others' opinions of you is. In order to grow, you need people in your life who care about you who can help you see your pitfalls. You also need to learn how to accept constructive criticism graciously and make the most of it. In this chapter, we'll explore how you can accomplish these objectives and, as a result, continue striving, unhindered, pursuing your potential.

The Importance of Criticism

Every personality type has blind spots, and INFJs are no exception. There are things that you think, do, and say that need to change but that you'll never know about apart from other people's input. Constructive criticism, therefore, is critical. While hearing the truth about yourself is seldom fun, it's nonetheless important and vital to your personal growth.

To maximize your gifts and reach your potential you need others. More specifically, you need a group of safe people helping you - people who will call you out when you get sidetracked or start slacking. Here are few suggestions for choosing those people.

The Right People

As I've already explained, one of the worst things you can do is care too much about what other people think of you. Fear of what people think of you will keep you from realizing the creative visions in your head. You'll get bogged down in inaction, and your chances of making a positive impact on others will diminish. While you can and should learn from the criticism of everyone, even your enemies, it's important that you surround yourself with level-headed advisors who will tell you the truth.

Specifically, I recommend that you find *safe* people who think differently than you do. In his book [*Thinking for a Change*](#), John Maxwell explains that no one excels at every type of thinking. Whereas some demonstrate skill in strategic, financial, and logical thinking, for example, others are wired more for big picture and creative thinking. Because of this fact, you need other people's

perspectives and expertise, or you'll miss out on valuable insights and information.

As an INFJ who's gifted with intuition and people skills, you would be wise to develop relationships with practical, logical thinkers. You need people who see the flip side of the coin. For me, I hear the alternate viewpoint from my Dad and wife. They are excellent with the details and the day-to-day affairs of life. When I have a big idea I'm excited to implement, they challenge me to think about the practical ramifications - the time and monetary expenses, for example. My mentor has also been a huge help to me. As an extrovert, he's constantly challenging me to take action when I'm dragging my feet. I often worry that the grandiose and near-perfect visions in my head won't turn out the way I picture them if I try to make them a reality, but he urges me to try anyway. I need this.

My advisors' advice and insights help me to see what I would be blind to otherwise, and they help me make informed decisions. Because I trust them, I've given them a license to point out my mistakes and problems. They're not afraid to tell me how it is. You need these kinds of candid relationships to succeed.

Other Intuitive Introverts

In addition to cultivating relationships with friends who see the world differently than you - I'm talking about thinking sensors - consider building relationships with other intuitive introverts. If possible, get to know INTJs, INTPs, and INFPs. You and these wonderful people will at once be able to connect on the fact that others misunderstand you and your values because these personality types are also in the minority. Each of them is great at envisioning future possibilities and coming up with creative solutions in ways that most people can't. Friendships with these personality types will refresh your soul because you'll be able to go deep, discuss philosophies and theories, and exchange creative ideas. You'll be able to dive into the meaty things of life and appreciate each others' gifts.

I would be remiss if I didn't also suggest that you develop friendships with other INFJs. While you may not be able to find other INFJs in your local community right away, there are lots of communities where you can connect online. Just do a simple Facebook group search, or google INFJ communities and discussion boards, and you'll be amazed by the number of folks you'll be able to connect with.

If and when you are able to start to get to know individuals in a group, you may also want to ask them to meet you via video conferencing. Talking online - through video software - on a regular basis, encouraging and commiserating with one another can provide you with a much-needed boost. I met with an INFP friend for a couple months and very much enjoyed my time talking with him.

Roll with the Punches

Always remember that, in terms of the overall population, you are in the minority, as we've already discussed. 70 percent of the world is made up of

sensors. Furthermore, only one-and-a-half percent of the population is just like you. Remember that most people will have a difficult time understanding your perspectives and values. This is another one of the mountains confronting INFJs. Because we long to be understood and appreciated for who we are, we want others to empathize with us as we do with them. Realistically, we should not expect this to happen regularly.

Another important way you can protect yourself from criticism, then, is to adjust your expectations. If you wrestle with people's failure to understand you and you're frustrated because they just don't get how you feel, stop expecting them to see through your eyes. Instead, start anticipating that they'll have no clue, and decide to be okay with that. In lieu of finding support and encouragement from the world at large, turn to your group of NF and NT friends instead. Please understand that I'm not suggesting you grow hardened and shut yourself off from others. Instead, I'm recommending that become more selective in choosing to which people you reveal what really matters to you.

A Balancing Act

People will probably always tell you to grow thicker skin, not understanding that this advice irritates you to no end. Do your best to ignore them, but don't shut them out completely. Hear what they have to say, but [build emotional, psychological, and spiritual "walls" of the healthy variety](#) around yourself, the kind that let the good in and keep the bad out as we discussed in the chapter on boundaries. Finally, be quick to run from trolls, people who want to put you down for their own enjoyment, and to cling to quality friends committed to building you up.

Now that we've discussed ways to work with others to keep growing, let's explore your thoughts and emotions. More specifically, let's look into how your thoughts and emotions can get out of hand and what you can do when they do just that.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Introspection: What to Do When Your Mind Is a Whirlwind

INFJs are thinkers. We like to replay the past, mull it over, and ask, Why? We're built for introspection. While a careful analysis of any event can be productive, too much thought can be counterproductive.

At one point this year, for example, I said I was going to get to work early. I told a coworker I'd be there to help with parking for a special event. But I showed up late. Then, before school started (I'm a teacher), I got more bad news. I'd forgotten to create some assignments I told a colleague I'd make. So he did the work himself. While he didn't make a big deal about it, I still felt awful.

I started replaying the morning's events in my head, over and over, beating myself up. Needless to say, getting my thoughts back on track was a struggle. I spent a good hour trying to shift into a more productive state of mind. And even when I did start thinking positively, it took the rest of the day to actually come around.

That's the challenge of introspection gone awry. In this chapter, we'll explore six things you can do when your thoughts turn negative to get them back on track.

1. Journal the lessons.

One of the best things I've learned to do when my introspection turns negative is to look for lessons. When I blow it, I need to make amends. But beyond that, dwelling on my failings doesn't do me or anyone else any good. Learning from my mistakes, however, is highly profitable. It enables me to make better decisions in the future.

Regular journaling is one way I process lessons. At the end of each day, I write down one thing that I would change. Usually, it's something like "go to bed earlier" or "turn off the music so I can focus and be more productive." Occasionally, the lesson is more meaningful. What's important is that I have a routine. Journaling every night builds reflection into my day. It gives me a chance to process major lessons when they show up.

Doing it at night allows me to process before I go to bed so that I can sleep

soundly. And when I start the next day, the lesson is still fresh in my mind. Journaling takes only five minutes, and the benefits far outweigh the costs.

2. Focus on gratitude.

My wife taught me to play the Thankfulness Game. It sounds a little hokie, but hang with me for a second. When your thoughts get you down in the dumps, try counting your blessings. Turn your attention from what you don't have to what you *do have*. List...

- Relationships
- Opportunities
- Experiences
- Physical provisions
- Anything else

It's almost impossible to think negative thoughts and be thankful at the same time. You've got to choose one or the other. You might also want to have a friend play this game with you. It's more fun with others, and your friend will benefit too.

3. Get a second opinion.

I tend to skew the facts when I'm down. While I'm good at seeing other people's points of view, I don't see straight when I'm discouraged. That's why I need to hear from other people. I need to hear from one or two other people that I trust. Most of the time it's my wife. And sometimes it's a friend or family member.

I especially like hearing from rational thinkers. When I'm mired in emotion, I need objective feedback. The facts ground me and rescue me from the emotional rollercoaster.

Do you have a confidant you can turn to? You only need one or two.

4. Feed your mind.

I love listening to or reading encouraging and inspiring words. They help me meditate on uplifting thoughts rather than on negative ones. [Zig Ziglar](#) observed that people who consume positive material each day recover more quickly from discouragement than those who fill their minds with negative content.

How do you use your drive time? Do you listen to talk radio? Or are you listening to an inspiring book or positive music? Do you watch hours of TV at night, or are you taking 15 to 30 minutes to read something that will help you grow? What could you read or listen to?

5. Help someone.

I'm selfish. I spend a lot of time thinking about me, and that's not a good thing. When I start to get stuck on myself, it's a sign I need to spend more time thinking about others. My mentor taught me that I can shift my thinking from self to others through serving. And there's always someone I can help.

When you focus on helping other people...

1. You remember that everything is NOT about you.
2. You let go of negative thoughts.
3. You have fun helping someone else.

Now, that's a win-win! It doesn't have to take a lot of time either. What's something small that you can do for someone else? Who can you serve?

With your thoughts on track, let's turn to communication and discuss several ways you can adapt the way you communicate with personality types who prefer sensing.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Communication: How to Talk in a Way that Other Personality Types Will Understand

In an earlier chapter, I mentioned that seventy percent of the world's population is made up of sensors. That being the case, most people don't talk the way you do as an INFJ. INFJ communication tends to be abstract and metaphorical, while the majority of personality types communicate in a more down-to-earth, pragmatic way. This difference in style can be a source of frustration that often leads to miscommunication and relational strife.

Fortunately, a small tweak in delivery can make a big difference in your relationship with a friend, spouse, or coworker. It can also help you convey your insights and visions in a way that other people will hear and appreciate. Keep in mind that you don't have to stop being you to do this, and I'm not saying to change and "be like everyone else." Rather, I'm simply suggesting that you employ your already stellar ability to understand people and their needs to help you do a better job of communicating whenever the situation calls for it. Let's look at a few key points that can help you do this.

Understand Your Style

Your mind is wired for complexity and theory. You prefer the future and complex discussions. You don't mind thinking outside the box, and you like to know how the world works on a deep level. This isn't true of most people. Just recognizing this simple fact and remembering it when you talk to sensors will help you quite a bit. Save deep discussions for like-minded people who will appreciate them and engage with you. You'll feel stifled and frustrated far less often.

The Ladder of Abstraction

From Antonia Dodge at personalityhacker.com, I learned that the best way to communicate with sensors is through concrete, tangible explanations. Dodge used [The Ladder of Abstraction](http://personalityhacker.com) to make her point.

Picture a ladder. At the bottom, you'll find sensors, people who prefer to discuss what's real and immediately observable with the five senses. When talking about cows, for instance, they prefer to discuss Bessy, a real, live

individual. Now, mentally ascend to the highest rung of the ladder, completely opposite Bessy the cow. This is where you'll find the most abstract, theoretical language. At this end of the ladder, cows become intangible "income" and "inventory," and this is the style most intuitives gravitate toward.

The thing about the ladder of abstraction is that *everyone* understands and *appreciates* the bottom rung, where we can find Bessy the cow, but far fewer people understand and appreciate the top wrong, where cows are also "income" and "inventory." The bottom line is this: If you want to communicate with sensors, use real, concrete descriptions.

Other Key Communication Principles

In addition, do your best to ground your ideas in the past. Tie in recorded history and talk about your - or other people's - experience. Sensors appreciate what can be verified with the senses. Give sequential, easy-to-follow explanations too. Don't expect others to connect the dots as easily as you do. It's not how their brains are wired. Finally, tone down your emotions. Most sensors are steady and feel uncomfortable around people with strong emotions.

As I've learned to talk this way, I've been able to communicate more successfully with my ISTJ wife. I remember one particular day where adapting my style made a significant difference. I was on the computer, trying to write, when she interrupted me several times in a row. Eventually, I blew up and started comparing her interruptions to something like bombs going off. When I did, she quickly shut down and ignored me. But when I went back a few minutes later, apologized, and gave a clear, sequential, unemotional explanation, complete with real examples that she could relate to, she got my point right off the bat and agreed to give me some space. Before returning to her work, she asked, "Why didn't you just say that the first time?"

Practice

Living in a world of sensors isn't easy. Conversation gets monotonous rather quickly, and there are few people who'll go deep and talk about things that interest you. What's more, you probably have to constantly remind yourself to talk in a way that people around you can understand and appreciate. It'll always be that way.

The good news is that the more you work on practical communication the better you'll get at it, and you *will* notice a difference in results that are worth your effort. So practice with people who are close to you, and ask them for feedback. Then, use their suggestions to improve. When you want to have deep discussions, instead of turning to sensors, seek out other intuitives.

Finally, know that not every conversation will require you to adapt your style. Many times, you'll be fine talking as you always have. For more information on learning when and how to tailor your style, check out [*The Art of SpeedReading People*](#) by Tieger and Tieger. It's a great book!

With these communication tips under your belt, let's check out why you may

sometimes appear like an extrovert to others and how to handle your energy needs as an *extroverted introvert*.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Extroverted Introvert: What You Look Like to Other People

One of the most confusing things about being an INFJ is that you'll often feel like an extrovert when you're really an introvert. You are naturally loquacious: you enjoy talking through your thoughts, and your busy mind gives you a lot to discuss. In addition, you need to be with people on a regular basis. Most INFJs feel compelled to spend time with a small group of close family and friends at least every week or two. Another factor that may confuse you and others is that you are decent with small talk, even though you don't enjoy it. Those are just a few reasons why others may mistake you for an extrovert. Let's look at some other reasons.

1. You crave people time.

A sure sign that you're an extroverted introvert is that you crave time with people. While you don't need to see friends and family all the time, you can't go too long without hanging out with them.

After a long week, I enjoy staying home on a Friday evening. Some weekends, I enjoy staying home all day Saturday and most of Sunday as well, but when I fail to plan a small get-together for some time during the weekend, I feel disappointed.

So, wanting to see people, I scramble to find someone who's free for an impromptu get-together. The fact that I'm married to another introvert who needs less people time than I do only compounds this problem! I just can't go too long without people contact.

2. You need to retreat to your cave, after being with people for a while.

As much as you do enjoy being with friends, family, and coworkers, by the end of the day, you can't wait to hide away in some private space in your house. You run for cover and grab a book, your computer, or musical instrument, needing to be left alone for an hour (or four!) to recharge by yourself.

This is definitely true of me. After a day of teaching, I have to drag myself into my house. I'm an empty battery and a sagging balloon until I can catch up on my alone time.

3. You are able to connect with all kinds of folks.

For the most part, you enjoy talking to and working with all kinds of people. Not only do you enjoy it, you're good at it! You know how to adapt your presentation to fit any conversation without shedding your identity.

Social adaptability is a necessary skill in the helping professions. Anyone in a people-centric job who lacks people sense won't be employed for long.

4. You enjoy helping others.

Your job probably revolves around meeting other people's needs. Many INFJs are teachers, nurses, counselors, or other kinds of helpers.

I'm an elementary teacher. I enjoy building relationships with students. I launched www.ispeakpeople.com to get to meet and help introverts. At my core, I'm wired to solve people problems and help others. I bet you are, too.

5. You'd probably enjoy helping people from a distance.

Would you consider telecommuting to work all or part of the week? Maybe you already do.

The book [*Do What You Are*](#) describes several introverts who've started private practices. They spend time with people during the week but also have time to themselves. These smart introverts enjoy the best of both worlds.

INFJs sometimes build online businesses that enable them to help people from the comfort of their own homes. [Michael Hyatt](#), for instance, has a strong desire to influence people, so he helps others by sharing his knowledge through blog posts, podcasts, webinars, courses, and eBooks.

6. You disappear from time to time.

Do you ever seemingly "fall off the face of the earth"? Maybe you fail to return phone calls or answer texts. You become unreachable and friends and family start to worry about you until you finally reemerge alive and well.

This happens to me. One day, I'll engage in a flurry of messaging, calls, and activities. Then, the next, I'll vanish for a week or two. The only people I talk to are my wife and son.

I find myself in these situations when I've had too much people contact. I need a vacation from social interactions in order for my batteries to recharge.

7. You periodically enjoy hanging out with a close group of friends.

Because you're an extroverted introvert, you need time with your friends. You don't crave time with just anyone. Rather, you want to spend it with people who get you.

I'm enormously grateful for my high school, college, and post-college friend groups. During those stages of my life, I spent the majority of my social time with groups of three to six close pals. While I could and did connect at large gatherings, I longed for the times when I could be with the friends who knew, understood, and accepted me for who I am.

8. You need a sympathetic ear to help you work out your problems.

Is your mind ever a confusing ball of thoughts and emotions? One of the best ways for an extroverted introvert to untangle that ball is to spill his guts to someone he trusts. In fact, sometimes it's the only way he can sort out his thoughts.

INFJs won't share their innermost thoughts and feelings with just anyone; they reveal them only to people they implicitly trust.

I've probably shared more with my Dad and wife than I have with anyone else. They have the same personality and both are extraordinarily trustworthy. Dad always said, "Your heart should be a graveyard: When someone entrusts you with personal information, keep it to yourself as though what you heard had died inside you."

9. You're a skilled people reader.

You read other people well. We've already established that. You have a "sixth sense" for figuring out what people are thinking and feeling and can see through their words and determine their motivations.

You probably also enjoy people watching and guessing what's going on in other people's minds. I analyze many of my relationships and think about what motivates my friends, family, and coworkers. I do it without thinking. It's who I am.

10. You're great with small talk - even though it makes you cringe.

While you may be good at holding a conversation with others, you prefer to talk about the weightier things of life. You want to hear people's stories, problems, and triumphs. You want people to be transparent and authentic, so you try to be both as you relate to others.

Just because you dislike small talk doesn't mean you can't play along. It's just that, deep down inside, when engaged in a conversation about sports or the weather, you'd much rather be talking about something more meaningful.

11. You can put on – and sometimes enjoy putting on – a show!

Do you like to make people laugh? Do you have a crazy side that you let out around close friends and in small groups? A lot of INFJs do.

One of my quieter, more formal introvert friends initially had a hard time believing I am an introvert. When I'm with him and a few other friends, I love to crack jokes and dance around the room in a ridiculous manner. I love the attention, but you'd never catch me acting that way with people I don't know - with one notable exception.

When I was starting my teaching career, I wrote and performed a video rap to get kids ready for the state scholastic assessment. Eight years later, our TV studio is still playing it for the entire school to watch. And every time they do, I feel as though I need to run and find a place to hide.

In the next chapter, we'll discuss INFJ health: what it's like, what works, and

what to avoid.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Healthy Living: Why It's Wise for INFJs to Stay Active

From what I've observed, health is something most INFJs value. It may be linked to the fact that they have high standards for themselves, lofty personal values, and a hunger for personal growth. Fitness also appeals to their extroverted sensing.

Whatever the reason, INFJs tend to take care of themselves physically, and this tendency benefits them in many ways. In this chapter, I will discuss the value of diet and physical exercise for you as an INFJ.

1. Exercise resets you.

I typically allow my emotions and thoughts to build. They sometimes get out of control. One of the best stress relievers I know is exercise. I'll go for a walk, a run, or ride a bike. Even strength training helps me to de-stress and relax. Along with having someone you can trust to talk to, I'd highly recommend investing in a regular exercise regimen.

Most INFJs wrestle with depression from time to time, perhaps because they're misunderstood for thinking so differently or because they're disappointed that their insights and ideas haven't seen the light of day or come to pass in the way they'd hoped. No personality type enjoys feeling down, and INFJs are no exception. Fortunately, one of the best ways to combat depression is to get moving. If you're feeling low and lethargic, go for a run, play some basketball, lift weights - do something active, maybe even with a few friends. You'll feel a lot better afterward.

2. Exercise grounds you.

In your functional stack, extroverted sensing comes last, so you're aware of the world but not like most personality types. Sometimes, I forget that I even have a body. Exercise helps me engage my senses and remember that I'm a person with a mind *and* body. It grounds me in this physical world and is, overall, helpful in bringing me back down to reality. It can do the same for you!

3. Working out engages your secret aspirations.

I learned from [*My True Type*](#), a book by AJ Drenth, that every personality type often aspires to do work that employs his inferior function. For INFJs, that's

extroverted sensing. Recall that this is the function most professional athletes use best. It's the one that causes you to value nice possessions and appreciate beauty. People who possess extroverted sensing as their dominant function are generally more coordinated than other types.

When I was a kid, I spent a lot of my free time outside playing basketball. I was a boy, yes, but my desire to excel at basketball was more of a yearning to develop and use my inferior function. Often, AJ Drenth points out, the inferior function for all personality types is associated with pleasure and ecstasy. It's where they find a lot of joy.

The bottom line is that when you work out or do something active, as an INFJ, you strengthen your ability to use your inferior function, and that gives you a lot of joy.

4. Fitness begets fitness.

If you're like me, you like helping people grow in all areas of their lives. Fitness is no exception. When you take care of your body, you have more sway in persuading others to do likewise.

I try to exercise four times per week. Recently, that's meant biking or walking two days and strength training the other two. Whenever I work out, I try to get my wife to join me. I do this because we get to spend time together, and I enjoy her company, but I also try to get her involved because I know she needs to stay fit, too. She's more likely to exercise when I exercise with her.

I've only recently come to realize how important exercise is to INFJs. I've known that my mother-in-law, an INFJ, has been into healthy meal planning for quite some time and takes care of herself, but I've had some other conversations that make me think health is important to most INFJs. One of them was in the comment thread of a blog post I wrote. Another INFJ was trying to decide what she wanted to do for work, and she told me that her passion was health and fitness: she was thinking about going back to school to become a personal trainer. The job would probably be a good fit for her because she'd get to help people grow in an important area of their lives.

5. Fitness sometimes gets out of hand.

Under great stress, you're likely to either neglect your health or obsess over it. Whenever you feel tempted to binge eat and lay around or exercise obsessively, beware. You're probably in need of help. Consider talking to a close friend or family member who won't judge you but, rather, offer encouragement. In extreme cases seek out the help of professionals who can help you work through whatever's got you down.

The upcoming chapter will explore how you can make wise financial decisions and who you need on your team to help you do it.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Money Management: How to Keep Money from Stressing You Out

As an introvert, INFJs start by looking inward. They want to identify who they really are and live a life that's true to themselves. The yearning to be true to themselves combined with their idealism leads them into creative careers and work where they get to help others. It's in these kinds of jobs that INFJs are happiest. The downside is that, among the 16 personality types, INFJs tend to [rank at the bottom of the totem pole](#) when it comes to earning money.

For INFJs to be at their best and use their introverted intuition at full capacity, they need to feel both safe and comfortable. They don't need luxury, but they do need to have their basic needs met - and maybe a little more. The INFJ who's always scraping to get by will probably be stressed out and unhappy.

Your drive to do art, help people, or pursue a passion has to be reconciled with the fact you've got to make money to survive. This is sad news considering you probably don't get a kick out of balancing the books, but it doesn't change the fact that financial health is essential to your overall well-being. Because this is an important point and a point of frustration, I will offer some suggestions for handling finances in a way that won't drive you nuts or stress you out.

Work to Your Strengths

INFJs can do math as well as anyone else, but many of us aren't the shrewdest money managers - at least compared to other types such as ISTJs and INTJs. We don't need a lot, but we do like to buy quality merchandise when we're going to spend money. For instance, I don't need every computer gadget on the market, but when I decide to get a new computer, I tend to buy high-end Macs. This point aside, most INFJs don't care to pour over spreadsheets of expenditures or to work with money on a regular basis. We're more interested in art, people, and science.

If possible, look for someone in your life who can help you with money. I'm fortunate to have a Dad who's a financial advisor. From an early age, he taught me how to save, budget, and plan for the financial future. Because of him, I don't have any debt right now and I'm far less stressed than I could be. My wife picks up some of the slack with our finances. Every Thursday, she scans receipts

and enters our expenditures into a spreadsheet. She also keeps an eye on our bank account.

Both my Dad and wife are thinkers - not feelers - so their minds tend to consider numbers and money more than mine does. I appreciate their help. In turn, I help both of them with technology - something that comes more easily to my intuitive brain. I also do my best to help them with whatever friendship or relationship challenges they're facing.

If money stresses you out or drains you, let someone else manage it if you have that option. Then, use your strengths to serve others.

Pay an Expert

If you aren't married or you can't find someone in your life who's financially savvy, you may want to consider hiring an accountant and a financial advisor. Having your finances in order and a plan for the future could well be worth the money you'll invest. If you are stressed out about making ends meet, you'll never be able to achieve your true potential.

Since I've started my online business, my wife and I recently hired an accountant. Initially, my wife was going to try to figure everything out since she enjoys details and tax laws. In the end, we went with the professional accountant, and we're so glad we did. The difference between what we would have gotten back in our tax refund and what he got for us more than paid for his services. Paying for expert guidance can be paying for peace of mind. Just make sure you get someone you can trust and who is competent in his profession.

Have a Plan that Doesn't Involve Quitting Your Day Job

I won't spend too long on this topic at this time since in the next chapter we will address it in greater detail, but it is true that when INFJs pursue work that pays the bills, they often end up unhappy or dissatisfied. Many have to settle for an unsatisfying job in order to meet their basic needs, so they find themselves doing work that's humdrum and unfulfilling. While their physical needs are being met, their emotional and psychological ones go unfulfilled. In this situation, it's easy to want to jump ship and try to transition to a better tomorrow without having anything solid to jump to. Do your best to avoid this. It's probably not wise to leave a steady job for an uncertain future.

Some of the best advice I ever received I learned from Kary Oberbrunner's book [Day Job to Dream Job](#). Kary reminds his readers that a hasty transition is unwise because it doesn't allow you time to build up the skills you need to do other work. If you hustle on the side for five years, though - despite it being painful - your efforts will build up your skills, and you'll become the person you need to be in order to make the transition into your new, more satisfying line of work.

Use Your Learner Strength to Your Advantage

I'll never be the financial wizard that some of my friends are, and that's okay. I do think that learning about financial stewardship is valuable even though I

may not have the same level of interest in the topic as others do. When I'm with friends, I try to learn from the ways they manage money. I listen to podcasts, such as the [Your Move with Andy Stanley](#) podcast. I also read books, such as [Profit First](#), by Mike Michalowicz.

INFJs are great learners. As intuitives, they enjoy learning and mastering new skills. Use this to your advantage. See personal finance as a skill for you to learn. [Check out Dave Ramsey's materials](#) and read other financial resources. Watch videos. Listen to podcasts. Think outside the box.

I'll leave you with one creative way my wife and I are doing this. While I've never aspired to be a landlord, I've been learning about rental real estate lately. I'm learning about this because my wife would like to stay home with our kids, and I support her in this. In order to do this, we're planning to "house hack" - or buy a duplex, live in one side, and rent the other. The rent we earn from tenants could offset our monthly mortgage payment and nearly replace my wife's income so that she can stay at home.

I'm not suggesting you become a landlord, but do keep learning and talking to people who are more financially savvy than you are. They'll give you great ideas for how you can become financially savvy, meet your basic needs, and free yourself to do the work you love.

We'll wrap up with a common pain point for many INFJs: finding enjoyable work.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Work You'll Enjoy: How to Find a Job You'll Love

Many INFJs struggle to find work they love. This happens for a few reasons. First, INFJs are rare, as I've mentioned before. The majority of the world's population is comprised of sensors. Second, INFJs are among the most idealistic types. As AJ Drenth points out, INFJs have a clear picture of the what they want to be true in their own minds, and they have a hard time reconciling that picture with reality.

Every INFJ I know wants to do meaningful, purposeful work. They're not content to clock in, create a predetermined number of widgets, collect a paycheck, and wake up to do the same thing again the next morning. This kind of existence is a slow death for the INFJ. In contrast, they want to do work that utilizes their core gifts to help people.

They need to do this while meeting their basic needs because INFJs won't be happy doing work they love but struggling to get by financially. In order to use their introverted intuition to its greatest capacity, they need to feel comfortable and safe, which means they need to generate a decent living. Somehow, INFJs have got to find a way to reconcile their dreams with the challenge of meeting their basic needs. Here are a few things that have worked for me thus far.

1. Start by meeting your basic needs.

You won't be able to do your best thinking unless you've met your basic needs, as AJ Drenth points out in his book [The 16 Personality Types](#). In order to free up your creativity and insight, you need to be able to put food on the table and pay for a roof over your head. Scrimping and scraping to get by will leave you drained and stressed out. It's for this reason that I recommend getting a job that allows you to pay the bills and, if possible, is a decent fit for your INFJ personality.

For eight years now, I've taught in the public school system. It's a good job for me in a lot of ways, albeit not the best fit. While many days I feel frustrated that I can't have more time to myself to write and work on creative projects, I'm immensely thankful that it's meeting my family's needs including providing our health insurance.

As an INFJ, you are among the best students. INFJs [finish among the top personality types](#) in academic settings. Therefore, landing a job that requires a

college education is probably a good move for you. You'll excel in an academic atmosphere.

Do seek counseling and insight from people who have a solid grip on your eventual earning power: You want to make sure that the course you choose has the potential to pay the bills adequately. I know a lot of INFJs who are drawn to psychology, and it's a great field for our type. Nonetheless, it's important to realize that a bachelor's degree in psychology doesn't have many applications. Usually, it's a given that you go on for further studies. Factor this in when you choose your major.

2. Enjoy creative side projects.

Once you've landed a job that pays the bills, make sure you schedule time for working on your passions. Make time to play an instrument, draw or design, write, study, and do whatever else it is you love to do. These times will energize and revitalize you, and they are essential to persevering in your full-time work.

After I finished graduate school, I took time on the weekends and on my days off to write music and to write various articles. The time I spent doing these things was essential for me. Since a lot of the work that I was doing at school was redundant, this creative outlet allowed me to engage my dominant strengths and to be myself. I needed this, and I know I could not have survived without creative times.

3. Hustle on the side.

In my opinion, the best way to bridge the gap between paying the bills and doing work you love that pays the bills is to hustle on the side. This is the way to make your creative side projects your business - or land a job doing what you love to do. All of the time you invest working in off hours is not a waste; it's training you and helping you develop the skills and abilities you'll need to do work you love.

Hustling on the side is also a great option because you eliminate a ton of unnecessary risk. People who jump from jobs they don't fully enjoy into the unknown are setting themselves up for unnecessary stress. In [Quitter](#), Jon Acuff explains how, for a long time, he jumped from new job to new job but never made any real progress. It was only when he stuck it out with his day job while working on the writing career he longed to pursue that he ever made the progress he wanted to make.

Kary Oberbrunner's book [Day Job to Dream Job](#) also offers great insight. He shares that when you jump from a boring day job to nothing you fail to acquire the skills you need to make the transition. When you stick it out at your day job and hustle on the side, however, you give yourself time to acquire the skills you'll need. The struggle changes you into the person you need to become for your new position, and for that reason, the struggle itself is invaluable.

4. Be willing to explore unconventional options.

Because, as an INFJ, you are one of the rarer personality types, I encourage

you to explore unconventional options. That said, you may find a job you enjoy as a counselor, psychologist, or educator, but it's also true that no job will give you the freedom that your own business will. When you start your own business, you get to set the standards and build it the way you want it to run.

For a long time, when I was looking for jobs that fit me, I read job description after job description and never found anything that fit. As my disappointment mounted, I picked up an eBook on how to make money blogging. That little book opened my eyes to the world of online businesses - particularly online writing businesses. Over the next few years, I continued to learn how to make it happen. Now, as I continue to work my teaching job, I'm hustling on the side to meet my family's needs through a blog that will offer eBooks, courses, coaching, and speaking engagements.

While nonfiction writing is something many INFJs excel at, I'm not suggesting you pursue that path. Each of us is different. I know, for example, that my mother-in-law is gifted in the area of science. Whatever you do, be willing to think outside the box. There are more options in today's world than there ever were before. It's likely, then, that your best options may be ones that you haven't heard of or that you don't know much about. Investigate and explore them.

6. Expect to encounter opposition.

If and when you do choose to go an unconventional route, such as blogging, expect to encounter opposition. People will tell you that it won't work out or question your decision because they've never seen it done before. That doesn't mean that what you're doing can't or won't work out. As an INFJ, you have an amazing ability to envision the future and a potential business and to see it become a reality. Other people won't be able to share your vision until it's realized, so be careful not to let their criticism deter you. Heed their insights when they're helpful, but ignore whatever words are hurtful and take the wind out of your sails.

Also, recognize that your dreams won't become reality overnight. In fact, as Dave Ramsey points out in his book [Entreleadership](#), most overnight successes were ten years in the making. No one recognizes the hustle that went on behind the scenes for so long. It takes work to make your business a lasting success, but the final result is definitely worth the effort.

Realize as well that, though the work may be slow going in nature, most of us "overestimate what [we] can do in one year and underestimate what [we] can do in ten years," as [Bill Gates pointed out](#). Press on!

7. Be true to yourself and your vision, despite what other people say.

You will be happiest when you are true to yourself. INFJs tend to feel alone and misunderstood. There are two sides to this. The one side is the struggle and hurt that come with being overlooked and put down for being different. The bright side, however, is that you are original, unique, and needed in this world. I read a quote the other day from Jonathan Milligan of [BloggingYourPassion.com](#). He recommends that when you look around and see other people and what

they're contributing to the world and you start to question your own ability to contribute, you tell yourself, "I have a gift. My gift is needed in the world. Someone needs to hear it from me." Those words give me goosebumps. They are true of you, and I couldn't agree more.

Dear fellow INFJ,

I hope that this personality guide has served you. I know what it's like to feel misunderstood and unappreciated, and I want you to know, first and foremost, that you are special and needed in this world. People need your insight, vision, creativity, logic, high values, concern for others, drive to grow, and compassion. Always remember that.

If you found this resource helpful, please take a moment to check out www.ispeakpeople.com for additional INFJ resources. I write posts just for INFJs, as well as content for introverts in general.

I would also greatly appreciate your feedback. Please take a minute to leave a review for the book on Amazon. Your feedback will help get this book into the hands of other INFJs who need to learn about themselves and why they are valuable. Consider recommending this book to a friend.

Cheering for you,

-Bo Miller