

**HowExpert Presents**

# **ISFJ 101**

**How To Understand Your  
ISFJ MBTI Personality and  
Thrive as the Defender**

**HowExpert with  
Mary Blake**

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# **Part I: Myers Briggs and ISFJ**

# **Chapter 1: Myers Briggs Personality Type Indicator**

## **What Is the Myers Briggs Type Indicator?**

The Myers Briggs (personality) Type Indicator (MBTI) is a multiple choice inventory which has been widely used for more than seventy years to help people understand themselves. Its battery of questions about individual preferences and perceptions allows an assessment which can be somewhat reliably predictive of personal patterns of attitude, interactions, and decision-making. The Myers Briggs inventory serves as a summary-interpretation of information I have provided about myself in my answers to the inventory questions given. Its accuracy is therefore limited by my ability and willingness to accurately self-represent (or at the very least to represent similarly to others of my personality type.) (1, Gregory) (2, The Myers & Briggs Foundation)

## **Of what use is the assessment to me?**

The Myers Briggs assessment should lead me to a better self-understanding, affording me greater opportunity to capitalize on my strengths and work on or compensate for my weaknesses. The result shouldn't come as a surprise to me; but it should provide a cohesive and somewhat predictive "picture"



of me. As a picture paints a thousand words, the Myers Briggs assessment should illuminate and clarify the person behind the “thousand” inventory questions. Assessment should be generally descriptive of me, based upon the answers I have given. It will not describe me exactly (especially if the differentiation between my preference and the opposing preference in any or all categories is small -- for example if I am 52% introvert and 48% extrovert); it describes a type within which many many people will fall. The higher my percentages toward one preference and away from another, the more accurate the description should be. If the result seems highly inaccurate, however, perhaps I have been inaccurate in self-reporting during the inventory, or maybe I don't know myself as well as I thought.

Now that we have briefly discussed the nature of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator and have some understanding of what it is, it might be instructive to address also some things that the MBTI is not.

## **Not Magic**

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator is not magic; there is no hocus-pocus involved. As we have described, the types are generated from my own description of myself. It doesn't predict my future; it doesn't determine whether or not I will be successful, and it doesn't predict my individual areas of interest or talent.

## **Not set in stone**

My test result is not set in stone. If I were to take the test on the first Monday morning during three consecutive months, my result, at least in degrees, might vary slightly. If I were to take it immediately upon graduating from high school and then again ten years after graduating from college, marrying, and having two children, it is possible that my result might see a more significant change. Age and experience might change a preference enough to move me over a line between two dichotomous preferences, especially if I were previously positioned near one. It may be that my personality remains the same, but my self-perception (and therefore self-reporting) changes enough to make some difference.

Also If I were to take other, similar personality tests based on the same or similar theory, they might produce a slightly different results.

## **Not likely to change drastically**

Even given the potential for variation in results or even some change or at least development in personality, personality type probably does not change very significantly over time. I cannot seem to produce the evidence, but believe that I tested many years earlier as ISFJ. So, twenty five intervening years and the raising of three children do not seem to have changed my personality type (or my self-perception, though I would have liked to believe that

during those years I have come to know myself better and to be much more comfortable in my own “skin.”)

## **Not the perfect, error-free picture of me**

As we said before, my Myers Briggs type will not describe me exactly, especially if the differentiation between my preference and the opposing preference in any or all of the four categories is small. Since I am a somewhat narrowly differentiated (borderline) I/E and F/T but test as ISFJ, it might be useful for me to look at ESFJ and ISTJ as well. If I feel that the description for ISFJ misses the mark on some points, then the others might possibly bridge the gap. The Myers Briggs type describes commonalities between a very large category of people. It is called a type, after all, and not an essence or summation. So, where the shoe fits, wear it to your benefit. But where it doesn't, simply take a heavy pair of shears and cut the shoe away!

# Chapter 2: What Is the basis of Myers Briggs Personality typing?

## History and Rationale

The Myers Briggs is based upon the work of Carl Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist whose influence rivals that of Sigmund Freud in its importance to the development of modern psychology. Jung's theory of psychological types recognized three criteria which determined a personality, each a dichotomy:

### Attitude

- Extrovert vs. Introvert - Outward or inward focused?

### Functions

- Sensing vs. Intuition - How do we take in information? How do we perceive?
- Thinking vs. Feeling - How do we process information? How do we judge?

Jung believed that one of the four functions (sensing, intuition, thinking, or feeling) would emerge as primary (dominant). He called the judging dominant types rational, because they are driven more by conscious processes of rules and order, and the perceiving dominant types irrational because they are driven more by unconscious processes of perception.

Isabel Briggs Myers decided to represent this aspect (dominance of either a person's judging (T or F) or perceiving (N or S) function) as a fourth criterion: J (judging) or perceiving). The J/P dichotomy does identify the dominant function, but not necessarily directly. The correlation is direct for the extravert but indirect for the introvert. The more accurate description of the fourth attribute is, therefore, an identifier for which of the two middle attributes, the perception (N/S) or judging (F/T) function is extraverted (implying that the other will be introverted). For the introvert whose type includes the J, then, the first extraverted function will be his F/T, but his dominant function will be his S/N. If his type includes the P, it is just the opposite; his first extraverted function will be his S/N, but his dominant function will be his F/T.

In addition to serving as indicator for whether a judging or perceiving function is dominant, the Myers Briggs J and P carry their own, observable, lifestyle-descriptive traits, related of course to the function (whether a judging (F/T) or perceiving (S/N) function) to which they point as extraverted. In order to diagnose J or P, then, Myers Briggs' inventory seeks to learn from whether in my interactions with the world/others I am more structured and decisive or whether I am more relaxed and perpetually receptive.

NOTE: There are those who disagree with the Myers Briggs picture. Some completely overlook the attributes associated by Myers Briggs with J and P and state that J/P serves solely to determine whether the "first extraverted function" (as opposed to dominant function) is a judging or perceiving function. Further, there are those who disagree with

the assumption that J/P points to the “first extraverted function,” believing that for the introvert as well as the extrovert, J/P points to your dominant function (which will for the introvert be introverted) with all other functions being directed opposite (for the introvert, they will be extraverted) and much less pronounced. Even this is said to vary based upon the degree of introversion and whether the auxiliary (second most dominant) function has been consciously developed. Internet research, then, reveals some clearly heated argument on the interpretation of J and P. For the purpose of this book we will stick with the Myers Briggs interpretation.

The Myers & Briggs Foundation explains its first preference choice, I/E, as “Favorite

World”( inner or outer); the second, S/N, as “Information” (sensed directly or processed/interpreted; the third, T/F, as “Decisions” (based in logic or in human factors); and the fourth, J/P, as “Structure” (conclusion and closure or information and options).

The Myers & Briggs Foundation refers to each of its four dichotomies as preferences, although it does also refer to the preferences that make up the two central positions in the type, Sensing, Intuitive, Feeling, and Thinking, as mental functions. Every person possesses -- and uses -- each of these functions to some extent. My preferences, S and F, make up my function pair (SF). The function pair alone provides certain hints as to my personality. The first and last positions in the type, Introvert/Extrovert and Judging/Feeling, referred to by some sources as

attitudes determine the order of my mental functions, or functional stack, which includes all four of the mental, or cognitive functions (N,S,J, and T), preferred and lesser preferred, as well as the attitude (introverted or extroverted) of my first two mental functions, dominant and auxiliary.

(2, The Myers & Briggs Foundation)

Associated with each personality type determined through the use of the MBTI, then, is a function stack consisting of each of the four functions, the two preferred followed by the lesser preferred. They are designated, according to the order in which they are utilized by the particular Myers Briggs type, as the primary or dominant, auxiliary, tertiary, and fourth or inferior. The first two (primary and auxiliary) are given a direction or attitude, based upon the “attitude” preferences, as well. The Myers & Briggs Foundation does not associate attitudes with the third (tertiary) and fourth (inferior) functions. The MBTI function stack for ISFJ is:

Si - Introverted Sensing

Fe - Extroverted Feeling

T - Introverted Thinking

N - Extroverted Intuition

As noted above, not every serious student of psychology agrees with the Myers Briggs interpretation of personality type. It follows that not everyone will agree upon the arrangement of the

functional stack (the functional stack and type interpretation are essentially one in the same). Some schools of thought state that the attitudes of the tertiary and inferior functions will agree with the attitude of the auxiliary function (necessarily departing from that of the primary function), such that the stack reads:

Si

Fe

Te

Ne

But current thought seems to come to a greater consensus around alternating attitudes, such that the stack reads:

Si

Fe

Ti

Ne

It is difficult for me to determine from reading the descriptions (you can find description for each function/attitude, Si, Se, Ni, Ne, Fi, Fe, Ti, Te) whether my tertiary function (thinking) and inferior function (intuition) are introverted or extroverted; and since they are of lesser prominence in my personality, the MBTI functional stack mentioned



above: Si, Fe, T, N, will be assumed for the remainder of this discussion.

## Summary for ISFJ

To summarize, the Myers Briggs assessment asks questions in order to learn from you what is your personality type. Based on your preferences, you will receive one each of four dichotomies: Introvert or Extrovert, Sensing or Intuitive, Feeling or Thinking, and Judging or Perceiving.

Attitude: I Introvert - Inward focus      OR      E  
Extrovert - Outward focus

Collecting Information: S Sensing – Observation  
OR      N Intuitive - Gut feeling

Information Processing: F Feeling – Emotions OR  
T Thinking - Logic

Structure: J Judging - Information processing OR  
P Perceiving - Information collection

Sensing and intuition are perceptive cognitive (mental) functions.

Feeling and thinking are judging cognitive (mental) functions.

Everyone has all four mental functions, but one from each dichotomy is preferred over the other.

Your first and fourth type attributes also represent preferences, but they are not cognitive (mental) functions. Myers Briggs refers to them as preferences of attitude (I/E) and structure (J/P), but sometimes they are both referred to as attitudes, which may be more intuitive since together, the first and fourth attribute or preference determine the attitudes (introverted or extroverted) of at least two and according to some thinking, all four (preferred and non-preferred) mental functions and in so doing, determine also the interpretation of the type.

The ISFJ type indicates Introvert, Sensing, Feeling, Judging, with functional stack:

Introverted Sensing dominant (Si)

Extroverted Feeling auxiliary (Fe)

Introverted Thinking tertiary (T)

Extroverted Intuition fourth and inferior (N)

# Chapter 3: ISFJ What does it mean?

## The Breakdown

In order to understand the ISFJ personality type, let us first examine the breakdown. We will consider each attribute, each part of the type equation.

### *I* *Introvert*

As an introvert, you indicate a preference for your “own inner world” says the Myers & Briggs Foundation.

Merriam Webster defines the verb introvert: “to concentrate or direct upon oneself.”

The noun is defined as “a shy person : a quiet person who does not find it easy to talk to other people.”

The Oxford dictionary defines the noun introvert as: “a shy, reticent person.”

It also provides a psychological definition: “A person predominantly concerned with their own thoughts and feelings rather than with external things.”

Introverts can also be described as those who expend energy in interactions with the outer world and restore energy during periods of quiet and reflection.

Therefore they need some time alone, if not physically then at least in their own minds.

Common descriptions of the introvert include:

- Reserved, somewhat private
- Passive in large group settings, more observant than participative
- Contemplative, introspective, inwardly focused
- Prefers “a few” to “a crowd”
- Prefers deeper conversation to pleasant but more superficial chatter
- Prefers a quiet dinner or game night with ten to the elaborate gala of 200
- Needs and enjoys people, but has just a few very close friends.
- Tends to think before speaking

Since definitions of introvert range from “quiet and shy” to “self focused” to “energized from within” to “energy conserving,” we might be led to believe that we are unfit: antisocial and selfish and weak and lazy, or on the other hand to imagine that we are superior: contemplative and introspective and philosophical. As with each of the attributes, the truth lies somewhere there in between. I have come to appreciate the profound example of the two-sided coin. We must remember that ***our most frustrating weaknesses are most often inextricably linked to our greatest strengths.***

Expanding on above descriptions of introverts and extrapolating from personal experience, I present the following as descriptions of the introvert experience. I believe that the following things could be said of

almost any of us; and the more differentiated our preference, the truer they will be.

1. ***We hold back.*** In most settings we do not just “let ourselves go.” Our response to others and to our environment tends to be somewhat measured. This is not to say that we cannot share, cannot let down under the right circumstances, or do not allow ourselves to be known. We want to be known, just like everyone else, but in the way of our own choosing, safely.
2. To at least some small extent, ***we find the social exercises to be taxing on our energies.*** There is only so much we can take. At the big, boisterous, social mixer we feel ourselves to be Daniels in the proverbial lion’s den. We fare much better in smaller, meaningful interactions than in larger social contexts. We may thoroughly enjoy a full day alone or with one or two close friends, but two hours in a “cocktail party” event may exhaust us. We are not social butterflies, flitting from one exchange of pleasantries and rubbing of elbows to the next. No, not social butterflies... more like social turtles, cautious and measured in our habit of socialization. We can be in the midst of an active crowd and looking for cover as we cling to some shred of anonymity, or even already closed up, having retreated into our own shells.
3. I’ve heard introverts say, “I don’t like people.” I hate to hear that said, because ***introverts need people.*** Desperately. Not a drove,

maybe, but at least a dependable few. And people need us. And even those whom I have heard say that they don't like people, love (a certain set of) people. So, it's not really people they don't like, it's the work of dealing with people. And most often, others are no more difficult to deal with than the avowed people-disliker himself. If we really dislike people, we need to examine our own hearts; if not, then we shouldn't be saying we do.

4. ***We are introspective.*** We tend to think deeply about things. And our deep thinking sometimes combines with a loss of perspective (that results when we pull too far into ourselves) to cause us to be vulnerable to self-centeredness or melancholy. The deep thinking and self examination can be good; but we must also look outside ourselves in order to interact generously with others and to maintain perspective.
5. ***We need time alone.*** We don't mind an evening at home. We need to some time to be alone with a book or a hobby or some creative pursuit, or to just be with our own thoughts in our own inner worlds.

## **S Sensory**

A person who prefers the sensory (S) rather than intuitive (N) function of perception is most likely:

- more focused on the immediately observable than the possible,
- more focused on the reality than the hypothetical,
- more focused on the concrete than the abstract,
- more focused on the past and present than future,
- more interested in the facts than the fantasy or vision.

As sensors we tend to be concrete thinkers. We like to deal in facts and realities, that which we can see, hear, feel, taste and touch. We tend to be observant, detail oriented, practical, methodical, thorough, and sequential. We have little interest in the hypothetical, improbable possible, or fantastic. We see things as matters of fact, and don't want to be dragged into the speculative "out there." Objective observation is our strength, not subtle impression or imagination. It's not that we don't have impressions, imaginations and even intuitions; again, everyone lies somewhere along the N/S spectrum. It's just that our objective observation takes precedence. We have our feet on the ground, our frame of reference in previous experience, and our focus on the here and now.

## **F Feeling**

As one whose judging preference is feeling (F), rather than thinking (T), our primary consideration in making judgements is feelings. How will it make others feel? Will it increase or decrease their "good" feelings. In our deliberations then, truth and justice

may be compromised or at least influenced by our consideration of the feelings of other people concerned. It is not an irrational but a rational approach; it's just that priority is somewhat skewed away from pure truth-based logic and toward what I'll call human factors (the effects of any outcome on others). Just as a thinker deliberates in his rational but impersonal way in order to make a correct judgment, the feeler deliberates in his relational, human way. We all agree that we should make a judgment that is right and good. In real life, however, options are rarely black and white, and tradeoffs have to be made. While this is certainly an oversimplification, with the thinker and feeler it is almost as if, when right and good can in any way be distinguished, the thinker battles for what is right (just and true) and the feeler for what is good (creating peace and goodwill). We might alternatively say that, unlike the thinker, who decides with his head, the feeler decides with his heart.

So, as feelers we are concerned about how our decisions will affect others. We may be more likely to go with a compromise judgement, one which produces the most harmony and the least distress all around. We value what is right, but our determination as to what is right may be colored by our perception of the effects (for good or ill) of a given judgment on real people.



## **J Judging**

The J/P dichotomy expresses a person's preference with respect to his outer world.

Introverts who prefer judging over perception will have a judging cognitive function (T or F) as the first extraverted and second (auxiliary) function. For the ISFJ, this means that extroverted feeling (Fe) will be the auxiliary function and the one primarily used in interacting with the outer world. While it is not the dominant function for the introvert, then, the judging preference (Fe) will be the more visible of the two. The Fe is very sensitive to the feelings of others, detecting subtleties of demeanor, and her external behaviors are based in large part upon them. The IFe (which would of course include ISFJ) wants to see everyone happy. He detests conflict and seeks harmony for all in his world, and his interactions are gaged in such a way as to try to effect that outcome. Tact, discretion, and diplomacy are hallmarks of IFe types. And, we might say with respect to the blunders of others, that the IFe covers a multitude of indiscretions, or at least makes every effort to do so.

A Judging introvert will use her dominant, perceptive function with respect to her preferred, inner world. For ISFJ, introverted Sensing (Si) will be the dominant function. Si seems to be distinguished from Se in part by the preferred application of sensory information. Se uses his detailed sensory observations for practical, real-time navigation as he interacts with the world. Si, on the other hand, seems to store and catalog such observations for future reference, such that a new smell or taste or visual can

be compared with sensory information from the past. ISi types are rooted in tradition and tend to prefer the familiar. They compare their current circumstances, problems, or experiences with those from their past, which are clearly recorded in terms of sensory information (which is in turn linked to emotions surrounding the past experience), and interpret the present through the lens of those past experiences. They tend to be more conservative, to work with reliable, proven methods, and to be the preservers of customs.

## **What Are the Practical Implications of my ISFJ Personality?**

### **My Strengths:**

It is no coincidence that Myers Briggs refers to the ISFJ as Defender. Other descriptors given the type are Conservator, Helper, Nurturer, Protector, altruistic, caring, compassionate, conscientious, considerate, dependable, diligent, dutiful, faithful, giving, loyal, patient, perceptive, practical, peace-loving, service-oriented, social, supportive, and stable. Clearly we have something important to offer. We are keenly observant of the feelings and needs of those around us, we are committed to doing what we can to help where help is needed, and we are steady and dependable in follow-through.

We are accurate, detail oriented, down-to-earth, hard-working, industrious, meticulous, orderly, practical, precise, reliable, responsible, steady, straightforward, thorough, and true to our commitments. We tend to be well-organized and good with money.

Who could ask for more, really, in a friend, caregiver, employee, or teacher? In the ISFJ we see a loyal, dependable, and sacrificial companion, friend, or coworker. In addition, we see a loyal and reliable employee who is precise and thorough. We could wonder in looking at such a list what's not to love in an ISFJ, or even in being an ISFJ, for that matter. But we know that there are two sides to every coin. So now we will turn to the weaknesses of the type.

### **My Weaknesses:**

ISFJ's reserve could certainly be perceived as a weakness. His reluctance to extend himself toward others is sometimes misinterpreted as disinterest or worse, dislike or disdain. That reserve also can prevent him from openly expressing his own emotions. Such repression is unhealthy as it can deny others the ability to know and respond to the ISFJ's needs, and it can interfere with open communication in relationships.

ISFJ's focus on helping others can backfire. Her priority of seeing others happy sometimes gets carried away, resulting in a martyr syndrome, or at least a perceived martyr syndrome. Nobody wants to be indebted at all times to a martyr. Or worse, she can

provide help that is not helpful and, in some cases, may even be detrimental to the object of her service.

ISFJ's discomfort with the spotlight, paired with his perfectionistic tendencies, lead him to downplay any credit or even compliment that he might receive from others for his work or service. He doesn't know how to deal with such attention, and furthermore, he recognizes flaws in his work or service and therefore does not feel entirely worthy of any praise that may be offered.

ISFJ's preference for the traditional and familiar make it difficult for him to transition. The greater the transition (a job change, a move to another state, etc.) the more difficult the transition. But even a vacation can be somewhat upsetting on both ends, as the ISFJ has to pull up from that with which he has become comfortable and move to something else. And a change of method at work -- or schedule -- (or even chair) may be resisted by the ISFJ.

ISFJ is a people pleaser. She works hard to please and wants in return to be accepted and appreciated (as uncomfortable as she may be with receiving overt appreciation). In order to please people, she will be tempted to agree to whatever they ask as long as it does not compromise her beliefs and perspective. Overcommitment can become a chronic problem to the ISFJ as she seeks to please as many people as possible.

It is said that the ISFJ may take things too personally and therefore be prone to defensiveness and negativity. Perhaps this is because he feels responsible for pleasing others and maintaining

harmony. Such priorities might lead an ISFJ to feel particularly (and possibly overly) sensitive to and hurt by criticisms. Perfectionistic tendencies may again play in, as the ISFJ struggles with his failure to maintain perfect harmony and to make everyone happy.

## **Career Recommendations for ISFJ**

One point that has been made before in this book and will likely be made again is that not all ISFJs are alike. ISFJ is a type which gives us a general picture based upon our answers to carefully selected questions designed to determine our preferences.

This is important when we think about careers. If an ISFJ is not clearly differentiated in one or more of the dichotomies, there may be other careers besides those indicated here which might suit him as well or better. Sometimes ISTJ careers, which include some of the less service and people-oriented careers (such as musician, artist, engineer, surgeon, and accountant) can be good for ISFJs, especially those who are not greatly differentiated between F and T. If you are not clearly differentiated between N and S, you might look at INFJ careers, and so forth.

Typical career choices (given below) for the ISFJ are found in the fields of administration, business, counseling, design, elementary education, health care, law, religion/social work, research, and science. Support or assistant roles of many kinds, from

personal assistant to bookkeeper to office manager to court reporter are held by ISFJ helper types.

## **Design**

- Design
- Graphic Design
- Interior Design

## **Medicine / Health Care**

- Dentist/Optometrlist/Audiologist/Veterinarian
- Helper/technical medical jobs:
- Nurse
- PA
- Physical Therapist
- Speech Therapist
- Dental Hygienist
- Dialysis Technician
- Radiology Technician
- Nutritionist
- Dietitian

## **Education / Counseling**

- Teacher(children) /Administrator
- Counselor
- Social Worker
- Religious worker
- Religious education

- Money Counselor

## **Law (support)**

- Paralegal
- Court Reporter
- Court Clerk
- Probation Officer

## **Research / Science**

- Librarian
- Curator
- Historian
- Genealogist
- Scientist
- Biologist

## **Money / records**

- Bookkeeper
- Teller
- Payroll Clerk
- Real Estate Appraiser

## **Office**

- Office Manager
- Hotel Manager
- Customer Service Rep
- Tech Support Specialist
- Administrative Assistant
- Personal Assistant
- Insurance Claims Clerk
- Insurance Policy Processing Clerk
- Medical Records Technician
- Human Resources
- Administration

## **Other**

- Farmer
- Rancher
- Electrician
- Jeweler
- Publisher

## **Compatibility Recommendations for ISFJ**

Perhaps opposites attract, but do they represent the best partnerships? The answer to this question may be “No, not quite.” The most common recommendations for type compatibility are generally based on the idea that the ideal partnership involves two people with the same dominant cognitive function, but differing (opposite) attitudes (I/E and



J/P). This approach is said to ensure a shared vision while providing different approaches to interaction with the world.

Therefore the commonly recommended types for ISFJ are ESFP or ESTP.

There are other recommendations floating around, including:

- SFJ, STJ, and NFJ
- ISFJ, ENFJ, and ESTJ (and least compatible with NTJ, NTP, and ENFP)
- SFJ and STP
- Women: SFJ and ISTJ
- Men: ISFJ, ISTJ

Remember that these are just recommendations. They do not necessarily approve or blacklist any particular person from consideration. Why? Because there are so many different people within each type. Key word: *different*. Remember; it's a type, not a summary or essence of any particular individual. It has some predictive value, but it will not be a bull's eye.

Every relationship takes a lot of give and take. A good marriage, it has been said, is not a 50/50 proposition. It's 100/100. We each have to be all in! So while it may take a lot of work to create a healthy relationship with a type very different from your own, it can also take a lot (maybe even more) work to put up with somebody else just like you! You can enjoy a relationship with any type. Type doesn't prescribe

companions, but type information can help you to navigate your interactions with them.

## **Part II: ISFJ Personal Experience and Applications**

As an introvert, I am not sure why I agreed to tell everyone who was willing to read it about my personality. Probably because I don't have to be there. But you will be disappointed if you are hoping to find within these sections any "shocking revelations" from my life. Were there any to be shared, I certainly would not share them here. Someone out there may actually know me, after all! But herein you will find truth. That's my motto: Truth Told Here. And I intend to share only truth, if not the whole truth, in this discussion of my personal experience as an ISFJ. Following are sections discussing my experiences, good and bad, as related to my ISFJ personality type. You should know that while my least differentiated dichotomy is F/T, I am not very extremely differentiated in any category.

# Chapter 4: ISFJ Personal Experience - Introversion

## 1. Failure to extend to others

One of the greatest weaknesses of introverts is that we may fail to extend ourselves toward others. When we fail to initiate or extend interaction we can be perceived as aloof, disinterested, and even disapproving. Sometimes, for better or worse we may be, but in my case it was/(is) usually because I didn't want to intrude; I didn't want to bother anyone. At least consciously I assumed that others who were busy or speaking with someone else or even sitting alone looking to be engaged in thought might not want to be interrupted, at least by me. But it was/is sometimes perceived as disinterest, and probably much more often than I know. I actually had a loved and respected mentor tell me in a work evaluation when I was a teen, "at first I thought you were a snob, but now that I know you better [I'm much happier with your interactions as part of the team.]" I have realized only in more recent years that I stand back in part because, more subconsciously, I am uncomfortable with the idea of joining in an already active situation or conversation, and partly in self defense out of fear of rejection.

It finally occurred to me that most people including me actually enjoy being recognized and called by name, even if they are busy -- that most everyone enjoys being known and recognized! Even now that I have had that brilliant illumination, however, habit (along, probably, with a considerable degree of

incompetence in negotiating social settings) very often prevents me from stepping forward. At times I realize I've just fallen back into that same old pattern. At other times it feels awkward to interject myself into a particular setting. And then there are those occasional (rather selfish) moments when I just don't feel like it.

### **Applications:**

- Introversions can be limiting if we do not stretch ourselves. Many people will not understand and will misread our reluctance to initiate interactions. We will miss opportunities, personal (friends), educational, and career related. We won't miss all opportunities, of course, but we will miss some that might otherwise be available to us.
- Introversions, as mentioned above, can (and may primarily) be a kind of self-protection. Perhaps we are not socially savvy (I know I'm not), and so after once, twice, three times as a child experiencing rejection, we just pulled back. This kind of experience may not address the whole of the introversion preference, but it is important for us to be aware of it. We need to recognize when we really want or need to be interacting but are afraid, and push ourselves forward a little bit. Little is gained in life without assuming some reasonable risk!
- To reiterate, as introverts we do need to push ourselves to extend to others, to be generous toward them in our giving of recognition,

interest, affirmation, and friendship. This is directed outwardly in that we need to get over ourselves and think of others, but also inwardly in that, we need to get out of our social (or antisocial, as the case may be) comfort zones in order to grow as human beings.

- I cannot overestimate the importance of our learning and repeating names and of asking questions of others. Because of our inward focus, which can appear self-centered and, left alone may even *be* self-centered, we introverts need to be intentional about it. I know my brain tends to zoom right past the hearing of someone's name to the learning of information about him or her, probably for the purpose of finding some commonality. Then once I find it, all my reserve tends to fall away and I can take off talking about - you guessed it - something related to me! Ugh. Often, I don't realize it until it's too late. So, know that I am preaching to the choir in the biggest sort of way. I NEED to try to learn and repeat names, both immediately and each time I see a person, and I need to ask questions, and ask, and ask, and then talk just a little, and then ask! Now, if I can only find it in me more consistently to take my own advice!

## 1. Passivity

We have already touched on the subject of passivity, the appearance or reality of which can be features of introversion. Failure to initiate results in loss of

opportunities whether personal, career, or leadership opportunities.

### **Applications:**

- While introversion does not necessarily imply passivity, it does usually indicate some passivity in some social contexts. I have enjoyed many friends both introverted and extroverted, and in some cases it was I who initiated the interactions leading to friendship. But in larger group settings I tend to remain on the perimeter and to meet those who also hang at the perimeter. I've met some wonderful people on the perimeter. Some are among my dearest friends. But I know I have overlooked some wonderful people who were hanging at the very center of things. I tend naturally to assume that they wouldn't like me, so even if I see them later in a smaller setting reluctant to initiate or prolong interaction. It amounts basically to a kind of judgement. I am deciding for them that they would not want to interact with me -- an assumption for which there is no substantial basis and probably little truth. This false assumption equals lost personal opportunity.
- I learned as a young person beginning a career that I needed to know how to “sell myself.” Fortunately as a student I was a high performer, and I also took advantage of available opportunities for on-the-job training during my college years. My degree was

engineering -- highly sought after at the time, and opportunities were readily available. All I had to do was show up and present my case, and the offers were there. Because it was so relatively easy I didn't learn how to sell myself *proactively*, however. I waited for others to notice my good points or at least to ask me about them. I didn't speak confidently about my work for a long time, because I didn't feel confident. Until I know about 95% of relevant material, I just don't feel confident. Others will go, head high like they know it all, with 60%, while with 80% I feel like I am failing. And, introvert that I am, I did not go out of my way to meet higher-ups. I assumed they were too busy to bother with me. My promotions came on a regular basis, right on schedule, and given time, I was recognized by higher levels of management. But I know that I could have done more, should have done more if I had wanted to rise through the ranks. Fortunately for me, I didn't really *want* to rise through the ranks. As I continued working I realized that I would prefer to become a technical leader and not a people manager, so my losses were small if any. But I know that some introverts believe that they face discrimination when it comes to leadership opportunities and promotions to higher levels. It may be that the culprit isn't discrimination but passivity. Passivity equals lost opportunity.

- Introverts can be good leaders. Key word: *can*. But *will* they? I find that leadership is most often given to those who reach out to take it. Sometimes those who take leadership lead in the wrong direction, but at least they do lead.



(I'm in no way implying here that it is better to lead, even if wrongly, than not to lead; I'm saying that someone who is striving already to lead is likely to be chosen for leadership over someone who is not, even if the latter might lead in a better direction than the former.)

- We do not have a single “born leader” in my home. Can we lead? We can. Each of us has been given opportunities to lead and has led well on those occasions. But we are generally overlooked for leadership or selected only *after* those who lead naturally (or when there is no one available in that context who leads naturally.) As introverts, we sometimes feel that our abilities are overlooked when leadership is assigned. We believe that others who have very obvious flaws are selected over us. This reason this is true, in my opinion, is because, despite their flaws, they have demonstrated initiative. They have assumed responsibilities without being asked. They have volunteered or have just stepped in and done whatever they believed needed to be done. If we wish to lead, we cannot wait quietly in the corner for someone to recognize our leadership potential. We must learn to be proactive. To be passive equals lost leadership opportunities.

## **2. Close relationships**

While extroverts may have a horde of friends, introverts generally have a smaller group of very close

friends. This has always been the case with me. Although I have collected many over the years, in any given context I usually have only a few, close friends. I am the kind of person who tends to sit in the same place (near the back or side) every time I come to a particular venue. I am more likely to approach someone who is alone or just a small group for conversation than a larger group. I am more likely to choose an empty table than a table which is nearly full. I enjoy being with my family. It is as if I have some claim upon them that I cannot enjoy with anyone else. I don't have to feel, generally, that I may be imposing on them in some way. I have enjoyed close relationships in imperfect but strong, committed (and mostly introverted) families throughout my life. My close friendships and family ties are a great strength and blessing to me; but I could stand to grow a little bit in the way of increasing and inviting more friends into my outer circle!

### **Applications:**

- You cannot be everything to everybody. Even given the smaller group of people to whom introverts are well known, it is difficult to meet the needs of everyone. Sometimes, when there are conflicting needs, it's hard to know in which direction to turn. If we try to commit to everyone, we will have to leave some disappointed. It is good to be focused, investing at a given time in only a few. So it's OK to have a smaller group of peeps. But we

need to notice everyone, as best we can, and be generously friendly to a greater circle.

- My close friendships last and last. Even after I move on in stage of life or activities. Even after I move away. Even if for some reason we haven't seen one another for ten years. When we again establish contact it is as if we go right back to where we were in terms of the closeness of our relationships. I do try to make an effort to maintain occasional contact with close friends, whether through facebook or texting or by telephone, and look for opportunities for reunion with those I have not seen is a great while. I'm not perfect. Sometimes life gets rolling and we must roll with it. But don't forget your friends. You never know when an opportunity may arise to be together again; and what a soul-strengthening thing it is!

### **3. Too self-conscious, self-focused, concerned about what others think:**

I've always be self-conscious. I know, because my mother always said to me, "Mary, don't be so self-conscious," (which made all the difference in the world, right?) I believe that I am far, far less self-conscious, however, than I used to be as a young person. That's one of the best things about being, shall we say, "middle" aged as I am. You don't have to worry so much about what people think about you anymore; you've got bigger things to worry about, like

how to get up off the floor after once you sat or knelt down on it. When we are always thinking about how we look and sound and are perceived, we are probably too self-focused. If you are a teenager, it's pretty normal, though it can't hurt to work to grow on out of it. Otherwise, it's really time to be beyond it. If we can focus our attention more outwardly, on others, we won't have so much time and energy to spend thinking about ourselves. Even feelings of inferiority can actually be the result of spending too much time thinking about ourselves. Any personality type can fall victim to these habits, but I believe as introverts we are more prone to such behavior. As people who are naturally inwardly focused, therefore, introverts need to be intentional about seeing outside ourselves and extending ourselves.

### **Application:**

- As introverts we need to focus our attention on others and not worry so much about how we are perceived. Most of the time other people aren't looking at me, judging me. Some of them, in fact, are too busy worrying about how they themselves are perceived to pay much attention. It is hard to worry about how I look when I am serving the needs of others. I need to concentrate not on having a friend but on being a friend!
- At least for those of us who believe in a God of grace, we need to put into regular practice our understanding that our value is intrinsic, given to us by our creator, and does not depend upon

either our physical or personal attributes or our performance. Yes, we need to do our best to obey, but we are loved and valued, from the beginning, even before we obey.

#### **4. Still waters run deep.**

That old saying certainly holds true for the introspective introvert. Introverts have a whole world of thought and emotions going on inside, of which most others never know, since we tend not to be outwardly expressive of our personal feelings. Like everyone else, we have them; we just don't fly them from a flagpole for all to see. (Ever wonder why they don't invite introverts on game shows?) We often prefer to keep them, especially very personal hurts, embarrassments, or disappointments to ourselves. Sometimes we'd rather deal with them in any other possible way than to express them clearly such that anyone else could actually understand.

Personally, I have a variety of strategies for dealing with deeply felt, negative personal feelings. I can refuse to deal with them all together: ignore them, deny them, tough them out. Or, I can throw underhanded jabs, sniping at others who have hurt me possibly even unintentionally, or even at innocent bystanders. I can drop subtle hints, or simply go silent, such that it is clear that I have been put off in some way, and leave to others the task of guessing the infraction -- and its possible remedies -- by trial and error. Each of these strategies enables me to avoid the angst associated with having to disclose directly any

negative feelings. Note that these strategies will not be included in the practical application section, as they are neither practical nor worthy of any possible application.

### **Applications:**

- Introverts love their space and their privacy. ISFJs tend to be very sensitive to the feelings of others and careful of disturbing them. We tend to use discretion in our communication with others. This discretion and consideration of the feelings of others is a good thing. Even the practice of a reasonable degree of privacy is a good thing. But to withhold our own feelings, especially with those we love, is not a good thing. It's not healthy, and it prevents us from finding solutions to relational problems. Even introverts need to learn how to be honest and transparent. We don't have to tell everybody everything. It isn't wise to do so. But we do need to share on a need-to-know basis what we're feeling. It's a risky business, but reasonable risks and healthy risk-taking is necessary work, not only for life, but also in our relationships.

# Chapter 5: Personal Experience - Sensing

## 1. Exceptional observation

Introverts who prefer their sensing function (S) to intuition (N) are very observant. Our ability to observe helps us in learning; we can easily pick up on some things in which others must be explicitly trained. As those who also prefer judging to perceiving, ISFJs have sensing as our dominant function, and we possess excellent memories of events because of the sensory details that we take in. (I have one memory from before the age of three which might have escaped me completely had I not returned to the location some years later. It was the smell of the house that brought a very clear memory to my mind, one which I was then able to have confirmed.) I am able to find things more easily than my INFJ family members, some of whom can't find their own shoes even if they are looking directly at them.

As a sensor/feeler (SF) I find that I am well able to detect how those close around me are feeling. If someone is out of sorts, I usually know it in a hurry. If someone isn't telling me the truth, I almost always know. If someone is irritated or anxious or upset, I know. (I used to sound my lie detector alarm, "**deedeedeedeede! Not true, not true!**" upon detection of an untruth, amazing my children who had no clue how I knew these things.) If someone, even someone I don't know well, is becoming uncomfortable in a social interaction, I know that,

too; and I try to find some way to provide relief. This kind of sensitivity is often very useful in parenting.

## **2. Attention to detail:**

As sensor/judge (SJ), ISFJ observation feeds into our attention to detail, one of our notable strong points. We are good organizers and managers of details, and we can be very thorough. We can train our attention to minutia that drive others out of their minds. There have been times, I must confess, when I stayed at the homework table long after my high school student to work on a consternating calculus or chemistry problem. On these occasions, the student would have long since been “over it” and would have been released to go to bed. But I could not let go of the problem. I had to find the answer, for the student -- yes -- because I did very much wish to teach him, in the morning, how to solve the problem so that he could go to school prepared, but also for me! While he had long since let it go, I hung tenaciously on until I reached a solution.

### **Applications:**

- ISFJ sensors with their attention to detail and thoroughness can also be perfectionistic and slow in their work. For some important projects, which require such attention, this is a very good thing. For others, it can result in wasted time, or at least time which might have



been better spent in another way. Sometimes we might get lost in minutia and lose sight of the end goal or urgency of a project. It can be very difficult for the ISFJ or ISTJ to overlook inconsistency in detail, however minor. I wondered, just this week, “Why am I refolding this towel?” My husband had folded it well enough, but I couldn't stop myself from wanting it to be folded exactly like the others on the shelf before putting it away. It would be wise for ISFJs like me to note and make rules regarding which jobs justify perfection or complete consistency -- *and which do not*.

- Because of our ability to focus and desire for order and perfection, ISFJs find it difficult to let a task go until all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed. Transitioning in the middle of a task can be a problem. I can sit for hours working on a project and get to the point at which I realize probably I need a break for both mind and body, and it can still be difficult for me to tear myself away. Often I'm a little late or last minute arriving to the next activity (not a wedding or funeral certainly, but possibly an after school pickup or informal lunch meeting) because of my reluctance to release the last. If you find yourself having the same problem, you probably need to set two alarms: one for 10 minutes before time to leave your task and the other at deadline, in order get to the next item of business on time. Having done this, obedience to the alarms will be your next challenge.
- Obviously, given the above, ISFJs may not be great multitaskers. I am not. I have the gift of

focus, not of multitasking. That said, I am very capable of multitasking in tasks which do not require conscious focus. I do have a large number of tasks that I do mostly on autopilot -- driving (and have never caused an accident or received a ticket), most house and yard work, crocheting, anything that involves physical learning, certainly. I can talk and wash dishes and be alert to impending disaster (someone about to knock a dish off a table) all at the same time. But when it comes to focus-tasks, I need mental isolation. I am patient and handle most competitions (such as loud noises, non-ambient music, people talking around me but not too me) and interruptions well, but inwardly they create stress -- I can feel it rising -- and, the more interruptions, the more stressed I become! If you are like me, you'll want to do whatever you can -- close the door, use earplugs, etc. -- to create some mental isolation when you are working on focus-tasks.

# Chapter 6: Personal Experience - Feeling

## 1. Is everybody happy?

FJs (I know; I have three in my family who are even stronger FJs than I), whether introverted or extroverted, are very attuned to the feelings of others. Preferring feeling (F) over logical thought (T) in their decision-making, they tend to prioritize the impact of a decision on the feelings of others over the strictly logical conclusion. FJs, therefore, tend to be empathetic. I find this to be true in my own life. As an ISFJ Defender, not only can I detect changes in the emotions of those around me, but I am moved, when I see evidence of negative emotions, to see those feelings resolved. I well know my husband and children and others close around me. I can predict how they will feel in various circumstances, and I often find myself trying to reorder my schedule and priorities for the purposes of their happiness. This is not a catering to every whim; to the contrary it is a sensitivity to emotions and emotional well-being. On that flip side that we have discussed and understood is always present, such interest in the feelings of others can be taken to an unhealthy extreme. It is normal for our happiness to be affected by the well-being of those we love. However if our happiness is entirely dependent upon the complete happiness of all around us, then we will never be contented, neither will we be effective as people. Similarly, those around us can benefit from our empathy and motivation to be of help, but it is also possible for us to overstep our bounds. If our “help” intrudes upon others, it is

inappropriate. Similarly if it allows them to avoid doing what they can and should be doing to *help themselves*, we are contributing to their dependence and ineffectiveness as human beings.

### **Application:**

- As Defenders we need to be careful to be encouragers and helpers -- not vicarious participants in the feelings of others. We need to balance our feelings with our practical thinking in order to know how best to help. If we cannot maintain some degree of objectivity, we will be incapable of thinking logically. We must think clearly and logically so that the course we choose in our desire to help will not be the wrong one.
- As parents or mentors particularly, ISFJs need to be careful not to rush too quickly to the rescue. Struggle produces strength, and in the absence of struggle people are not able to grow in strong. We don't want to create dependents, but strong, healthy independents. As a mom I was aware and always tried to be conscious of this; however the temptation to run to the rescue was very strong in me. I can't say whether I found the correct balance, but I can say it is absolutely critical as parents that we sometimes let our children work out their own problems, social or other. Further, we have to be willing to allow them the privilege of failure, something which as a mother I found to be exceedingly difficult.

## 2. Objectivity

Another strength that I have noticed is objectivity. I am able in the event of a conflict to engage in a factual, relatively non-emotional analysis, considering all perspectives, especially if I am not a party to the conflict. If I am a party to the conflict (which is very rare outside of the occasional tiff with a family member), I might have to step away to regain my perspective, but usually I can then proceed more objectively and reasonably. From what I read, the ISFJ is not generally seen as a diplomat, and that may relate to his strong feeling (F) judging Function; and I am not by any means *always* calm and impartial during conflict. I believe that it is my feeling for others and desire for harmony, definite ISFJ traits, however, that serve to motivate me toward objectivity for the purpose of conflict resolution.

### **Application:**

While ISFJs are not necessarily known as diplomats, my advice is that we take care to see a conflict or dispute from both sides. This practice, which enables us to take advantage of the ISFJ preference for objective facts, will better enable us to maintain the harmony and happiness that we so strongly desire.

# Chapter 7: Personal Experience - Judging

The Myers & Briggs Foundation describes judges as those who like things decided and who like to plan ahead. In addition as we have said, the judging attribute paired with introversion Determines that our judging function, feeling for the defender, is extroverted and auxiliary while our perceiving function, sensing for the defender, is introverted and dominant. Therefore our personal experience of our judging attribute is largely inseparable from our personal experience of our dominant sensory attribute and auxiliary feeling attribute. I have left those experiences which seem to be related to Not more strongly to introversion or sensing or feeling but related as well to the judging preference, for this section. It might be more accurate to refer to them as ISFJ related than judging related, however.

## 1. Traditional

As defenders we tend to be traditional, holding to familiar habits and patterns. We may be resistant to change and we struggle to keep our balance during times of transition. We may be viewed as inflexible, wanting to do things as we have always done them and as predictably unadventurous, unwilling to give up the known for the unknown. We can also be sentimental, not wanting our home to change, unwilling to give up things that we don't need but which we associate with valuable people or

experiences. It may not be a common trait for all ISFJs, but I am very sentimental. I remember things from the past, and I treasure these memories. Associated with the memories are things: things I found, first things, last things, and especially things that have been given to me by friends and loved ones. In addition to my sentimentality, my upbringing with my financially conservative, depression-era-thinking father has made me reluctant to let go anything which might remain useful, especially if it is not suitable for donation and resale by some charity. This all adds up to far too many things kept. boxes and boxes of it, well organized, mind you, but still... much of it amounts to things which most anyone else would have thrown away long ago. It fills closets and makes it difficult for us to find a place to store the things that we actually use. To make matters worse, my husband and at least one of my children are cut from the same cloth. We are all sentimentally attached to things. If I present something to my husband as a candidate for Goodwill contribution, he says, simply "It's mine. I want it. My aunt Gertrude gave it to me." How can anyone argue with that?

### **Application:**

- ISFJs must challenge themselves always to be trying something different, learning something new. I know that I am the last to embrace changes in the way I do things, particularly as they relate to technology. While I definitely have some support for this position in the unpredictability and not infrequent headaches

that can come with the adoption of a new technology or even the latest software update, I probably take it to the extreme. I have been known to find a workaround for a problem and use it for years, literally, before seeking a better way, only to find that indeed, there is a better way which may have existed all along, and that it is very easy to learn. The same is true of new products. My husband has learned. If he suggests a new product for our family my usual response is that we don't have room for it, and we don't need it. On the first account I am correct; we don't have room. We might need to get rid of something we already have (yet another major challenge for me). But if he believes that it will make life easier in some way, he is likely to order it anyway. Once it enters the home and I adjust to the reality that this new product belongs to us, I may be willing to attempt its use. Often I've then find it to be very helpful, something, such as a microwave oven (Yes, that!) that I wouldn't again want to be without. The reality is that there's a happy medium somewhere between his purchasing pattern, which is heavily influenced by suggestion, and mine which tends more toward, "if we don't have it, we don't need it." I'm not sure we'll ever find it, and I'm pretty sure will continue to argue about it. But I know one thing; we're committed for the Long Haul.

- The above should be applied to our thinking as well. Defenders must challenge themselves to be open to new ways of thinking. We can tend to be in-the-box thinkers, predictable in our thinking as well as in our actions. We want to approach problems with the same approaches



we have used before; but we need to try new approaches. we want to see things from the same perspective, but we need to consider also new perspectives. We can learn to think out-of-the-box. We can learn to consider new perspectives and new approaches without sacrificing our deeply held convictions. And we need to do so if we wish to keep learning and growing and becoming.

- If you, like me are a potential hoarder in the making, and if your habit is creating difficult logistical challenges in your home, try first to appeal to your generous side. What do you have that you will never use that someone else may need right now? Even if a particular item is not a need, perhaps it could be sold to purchase meals for those who are hungry or some other kind of assistance to others; many charities accept donations for just such purposes as these. If that strategy doesn't accomplish enough, try enforcing upon yourself a practice of selecting just one thing each day to throw away or give away. Or two things. four, five, depending upon the severity of your situation. Any progress is better than no progress. The theory behind this strategy is that you will begin to experience and enjoy the freedom that comes when we let go of things. It may be literal freedom of movement if you can increase the space around you, or it may be just the freedom of not having to shuffle, organize, and maintain as many things. Be determined to avoid justifying the collection of more things by the removal of a few from your home. I have recently reached the age at which it has occurred to me when I look into a box

which is accessed only on a rare occasion, that it is possible the next time it is accessed it may be by someone other than me, when I'm no longer able to manage my own things. This in and of itself is a motivator, as it leads me to realize what little value some of my things will have to anyone who follows me.

## **2. Organized**

ISFJs value organization: We want things to be orderly and predictable, and we want to feel that we have everything under control. I have already mentioned in the section related to the dominant cognitive function, sensing (S), that I'm not a good multitasker when it comes to focus-tasks, and certainly not a willing one. Just as interruptions to focus-tasks create inward stress, so do instances of disorder in my home. As a child, my room was kept, by me, in perfect order. I loved it. Occasionally I would go through every single item in my room, to the deepest corner of every storage box, and make sure all was organized. I could not go to bed -- could not have slept -- until the task was complete.

After we married it was the same, even though I worked, everything was kept in near-perfect order. Then we had children. Children for whom order held little value, the first two of whom were dominant intuitives, not sensors. Children who couldn't find their own shoes. My life and home as I had known them fell apart. With the great increase of joy and love in my life came the demise of order and, for me, the peace and security that had come with them.

It didn't change much as they grew; they began to appreciate some order, but it certainly was not the priority for them that it was for me. It seemed a lonely battle, a battle against the inexorable progress of entropy, and worse, a battle against those I loved. Where I cleaned up, they messed up. This made me frustrated and angry, and I complained. And complained. And explained. And begged, bribed, and demanded, all in the hopes that someone would hear and join my crusade, but all to no avail. It's not that they never help; it's that they do not "*see things*" like I do, nor do they *see* like I do. I don't like that feeling of enmity with those I love; so, at some point, maybe eighteen or twenty years in, I pretty much gave up. Not even my own workspaces are ordered as they used to be. There is order underneath. I still do periodic "to the bottom of the box" organization. But I can't organize everyone else's things anymore. We are, basically, five adults. And I can't keep ahead of the surface disorder. While I am ordering one place, others are disordering another. Not everything can be perfectly organized/consistent in a home like mine, with four diversely-focused people and three animals. It drives me nuts; there is always that nagging sense that things are simply not as they should be. But I have long since given up hope of fixing it as long as all are coming and going - and I do welcome them with all my heart to come and go, and come again!

### **Application:**

- For now, at least, I have chosen to satisfy myself with small pockets of order: little

categories of my life in which I can maintain some order and enjoy some degree of perfection: my photography, my photo books, my writing. And when I disappear into those pursuits, I find that to some extent the disorder around me fades away. I still hope to have order in our home again one day. But I won't wish my kids or pets away in order to achieve that. If it come, it comes. If not, my battle will be to maintain the underneath order, order in those things we do not interact with every day, such that we or someone else can take a quick look and know pretty much what category of papers or things they are looking at. I won't offer too much advice in this category. Different people will deal with it differently. As for me, I have to satisfy myself with my own private pockets of order and deal with the disorder around me the best I can.

### **3. The three P's**

ISFJs are stable, solid, loyal, and dependable. We're practical; we're pragmatic; and we're predictable. What's more, we actually like predictable! People rarely have to wonder what we'll do next. In my family I'm almost always the one noting the price of things. I'm the one warning of the possible pitfalls associated with any new idea or activity. I'm the one who doesn't want to see the movie, at least in part because of the time that is wasted in watching. I'm the one who told my boyfriend (now father of my children) that he should invite someone else to the

fraternity formal because I didn't have a dress, didn't know what kind of dress to buy, and didn't know how to dance. (Did I actually write that?)

### **Application:**

- As the pragmatic, practical, predictable ones, ISFJs can unfortunately also be unnecessarily fun-quashing. Our practical, measured approach does not necessarily go along with spontaneity and fun. We tend to be just about as adventurous as a turnip. Sometimes we overlook the whole purpose of a proposition for fun, immediately beginning analysis of its practical advantages and disadvantages. Sometimes we are reluctant to interrupt a task on which we are focused or even just to interrupt our routine in order to enjoy a few minutes with someone else. And, very often if something new and different is suggested, we are automatically uncomfortable with the idea. It doesn't come naturally to defenders suddenly to jump up and say "let's go!" That which doesn't come naturally but which is valuable we need to cultivate with intentionality. So it's important for ISFJs themselves occasionally to plan a bit of fun. It's important, too, that when others suggest some recreation with us, we immediately consider overriding our natural inertia in order to take part. Remember, an ambiguous response on the front end can dampen the enthusiasm before the fun ever gets started!

## **Chapter 8: If I Had It To Do Over**

If I could start my life over, knowing what I know about myself as an ISFJ Defender, there are several things I would do differently. This kind of exercise always seems a little silly, since even if I had known ahead of time what I now know, I'm not sure as an ISFJ that I could have done all these things differently. Further, all of my ISFJ (or Mary Blake) quirks, good and bad, have gone, only by the grace of God, into creating the life that I now know and so enjoy. And, as to the possibility of my effecting such changes for the future, I know that, having formed my behavior over the course of a respectable lifetime, that will be a difficult task. Still, even recognizing and articulating these things which could be better done should help me at least a little.

Here they are, and, if you are an ISFJ, especially one following along some years behind me, I hope that you may find some that will be of help to you!

### **Extend myself to others, earlier and more.**

- Assume that everyone could always use another friend.
- See each person as a potential friend unless proven otherwise.
- Learn people's names.
- Ask people about themselves.

- Be proactive, rather than passive, preparing and asking for responsibilities or positions that match my gifts or interests.

## **Take reasonable risks.**

- Learn to dance.
- Don't let the fact that I don't know how to do something keep me from trying.
- Bite the bullet when there's some pursuit to which I feel called, and just go for it!
- Plan spontaneity. (I know; I know! But, plan spontaneity anyway!)
- Periodically, do something completely new to me.

## **Separate my emotions from those of the people around me.**

- When others are struggling, be as much as possible an encourager and helper, not a participant.
- Especially in the case of children or mentees:
- Don't provide help that they should be providing for themselves.
- Allow them struggle and the growth that comes through it.
- Allow them to take reasonable risks.
- Allow them the privilege of failure.

## **Be appropriately honest and transparent about my feelings (this, too, relates to risk).**

- Risk rejection in the effort to achieve relationship.
- Be willing to accept and even ask for help from others.
- Be willing to acknowledge that someone has hurt me.

Be always who I am and what I believe -- never without discretion or consideration for others or self control -- but: to live in the open, in view of all those around me, without any cause for shame or regret, lovingly, honestly, authentically, transparently.

This is a tall order for me, certainly, as well as for any of the human persuasion, but one well worth our pursuit.

So, to all you ISFJs out there: having examined ourselves quite thoroughly, let's now march forward (with full knowledge of our quirks, our gifts, our strengths, and our weaknesses) to live, to love, to triumph, and to defend! Onward, Ho!



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# About the Expert

Confirmed ISFJ (but with highly suspected clandestine T activity), Christian believer, and recently retired roadmom, Mary Blake is new to the field of writing with a degree in engineering, past career in computer programming and lifelong propensity for writing. She lives in Knoxville, Tennessee with her remarkably patient husband, three dearly-loved grownish children who move in and out on a regular basis, an INFJ Advocate dog, and two cats, ENTJ Commander and neurotic. Mary draws great joy and strength from her faith, family, and friends; from learning; from the created world; from photography; and from writing for a wide variety of applications.

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