

# The Inspirer: ENFP

As an ENFP, your primary mode of living is focused externally, where you take things in primarily via your intuition. Your secondary mode is internal, where you deal with things according to how you feel about them, or how they fit in with your personal value system.

ENFPs are warm, enthusiastic people, typically very bright and full of potential. They live in the world of possibilities, and can become very passionate and excited about things. Their enthusiasm lends them the ability to inspire and motivate others, more so than we see in other types. They can talk their way in or out of anything. They love life, seeing it as a special gift, and strive to make the most out of it.

ENFPs have an unusually broad range of skills and talents. They are good at most things which interest them. Project-oriented, they may go through several different careers during their lifetime. To onlookers, the ENFP may seem directionless and without purpose, but ENFPs are actually quite consistent, in that they have a strong sense of values which they live with throughout their lives. Everything that they do must be in line with their values. An ENFP needs to feel that they are living their lives as their true Self, walking in step with what they believe is right. They see meaning in everything, and are on a continuous quest to adapt their lives and values to achieve inner peace. They're constantly aware and somewhat fearful of losing touch with themselves. Since emotional excitement is usually an important part of the ENFP's life, and because they are focused on keeping "centered", the ENFP is usually an intense individual, with highly evolved values.

An ENFP needs to focus on following through with their projects. This can be a problem area for some of these individuals. Unlike other Extraverted types, ENFPs need time alone to center themselves, and make sure they are moving in a direction which is in sync with their values. ENFPs who remain centered will usually be quite successful at their endeavors. Others may fall into the habit of dropping a project when they become excited about a new possibility, and thus they never achieve the great accomplishments which they are capable of achieving.

Most ENFPs have great people skills. They are genuinely warm and interested in people, and place great importance on their inter-personal relationships. ENFPs almost always have a strong need to be liked. Sometimes, especially at a younger age, an ENFP will tend to be "gushy" and insincere, and generally "overdo" in an effort to win acceptance. However, once an ENFP has learned to balance their need to be true to themselves with their need for acceptance, they excel at bringing out the best in others, and are typically well-liked. They have an exceptional ability to intuitively understand a person after a very short period of time, and use their intuition and flexibility to relate to others on their own level.

Because ENFPs live in the world of exciting possibilities, the details of everyday life are seen as trivial drudgery. They place no importance on detailed, maintenance-type tasks, and will frequently remain oblivious to these types of concerns. When they do have to perform these tasks, they do not enjoy themselves. This is a challenging area of life for most ENFPs, and can be frustrating for ENFP's family members.

An ENFP who has "gone wrong" may be quite manipulative - and very good at it. The gift of gab which they are blessed with makes it naturally easy for them to get what they want. Most ENFPs will not abuse their abilities, because that would not jive with their value systems.

ENFPs sometimes make serious errors in judgment. They have an amazing ability to intuitively perceive the truth about a person or situation, but when they apply judgment to their perception, they may jump to the wrong conclusions.

ENFPs who have not learned to follow through may have a difficult time remaining happy in marital relationships. Always seeing the possibilities of what could be, they may become bored with what actually is. The strong sense of values will keep many ENFPs dedicated to their relationships. However, ENFPs like a little excitement in their lives, and are best matched with individuals who are comfortable with change and new experiences.

Having an ENFP parent can be a fun-filled experience, but may be stressful at times for children with strong Sensing or Judging tendencies. Such children may see the ENFP parent as inconsistent and difficult to understand, as the children are pulled along in the whirlwind life of the ENFP. Sometimes the ENFP will want to be their child's best friend, and at other times they will play the parental authoritarian. But ENFPs are always consistent in their value systems, which they will impress on their children above all else, along with a basic joy of living.

ENFPs are basically happy people. They may become unhappy when they are confined to strict schedules or mundane tasks. Consequently, ENFPs work best in situations where they have a lot of flexibility, and where they can work with people and ideas. Many go into business for themselves. They have the ability to be quite productive with little supervision, as long as they are excited about what they're doing.

Because they are so alert and sensitive, constantly scanning their environments, ENFPs often suffer from muscle tension. They have a strong need to be independent, and resist being controlled or labelled. They need to maintain control over themselves, but they do not believe in controlling others. Their dislike of dependence and suppression extends to others as well as to themselves.

ENFPs are charming, ingenuous, risk-taking, sensitive, people-oriented individuals with capabilities ranging across a broad spectrum. They have many gifts which they will use to fulfill themselves and those near them, if they are able to remain centered and master the ability of following through.

Jungian functional preference ordering for ENFP:

Dominant: Extraverted Intuition

Auxiliary: Introverted Feeling

Tertiary: Extraverted Thinking

Inferior: Introverted Sensing

## **ENFP Relationships**

ENFPs take their relationships very seriously, but also approach them with a childlike enthusiasm and energy. They seek and demand authenticity and depth in their personal relationships, and will put forth a lot of effort into making things work out. They are warm, considerate, affirming, nurturing, and highly invested in the health of the relationship. They have excellent interpersonal skills, and are able to inspire and motivate others to be the best that they can be. Energetic and effervescent, the ENFP is sometimes smothering in their enthusiasm, but are generally highly valued for their genuine warmth and high ideals.

## **ENFP Strengths**

Most ENFPs will exhibit the following strengths with regards to relationships issues:

- \* Good communication skills
- \* Very perceptive about people's thought and motives
- \* Motivational, inspirational; bring out the best in others
- \* Warmly affectionate and affirming
- \* Fun to be with - lively sense of humor, dramatic, energetic, optimistic
- \* Strive for "win-win" situations
- \* Driven to meet other's needs
- \* Usually loyal and dedicated

## **ENFP Weaknesses**

Most ENFPs will exhibit the following weaknesses with regards to relationship issues:

- \* Tendency to be smothering
- \* Their enthusiasm may lead them to be unrealistic
- \* Uninterested in dealing with "mundane" matters such as cleaning, paying bills, etc.
- \* Hold onto bad relationships long after they've turned bad
- \* Extreme dislike of conflict
- \* Extreme dislike of criticism
- \* Don't pay attention to their own needs
- \* Constant quest for the perfect relationship may make them change relationships frequently
- \* May become bored easily
- \* Have difficulty scolding or punishing others

## ENFPs as Lovers

"To love means to open ourselves to the negative as well as the positive - to grief, sorrow, and disappointment as well as to joy, fulfillment, and an intensity of consciousness we did not know was possible before." -- Rollo May

ENFPs make warm, considerate, passionate partners who are generally willing, eager, and able to do whatever it takes to make The Relationship a positive place to be. They are enthusiastic, idealistic, focused on other people's feelings, and very flexible. These attributes combine to make them especially interested in positive personal relationships, and also makes them very able to promote strong relationships in fun and creative ways. ENFPs take their commitments very seriously, and are generally deeply loyal and faithful to their partners.

There are a couple of difficult relationship areas for the ENFP. The first problem is that many ENFPs have a problem leaving bad relationships. They tend to internalize any problems and take them on their own shoulders, believing that the success or failure of the relationship is their own responsibility. As perfectionists, they don't like to admit defeat, and will stick with bad situations long after they should have left. When they do leave the relationship, they will believe that the failure was their fault, and that there was surely something they could have done to save the relationship.

On the entirely other end of the spectrum, many ENFPs have a difficult time staying focused and following things through to completion. If they have not focused on their ability to follow through, they may have problems staying in dedicated, monogamous relationships. They are so in tune with all of the exciting possibilities of what could be, that they will always fantasize about a greener pasture out there somewhere. If they are not paired with a partner who enjoys new experiences, or who shares their idealistic enthusiasm, the ENFP may become bored. The ENFP who is bored and who is not focused will be very unhappy, and will eventually "leave" the relationship if the problem is not addressed.

Since relationships are central to the ENFP's life, they will be very "hands on" and involved with their intimate relationships. They may be in the habit of constantly asking their partner how they're doing, what they're feeling, etc. This behavior may be a bit smothering, but it also supports a strong awareness of the health (or illness) of the relationship.

The ENFP needs to be given positive assurance and affirmation. More than one ENFP has been known to "go fishing" for compliments. They like to hear from their significant others that they are loved and valued, and are willing and eager to return the favor. They enjoy lavishing love and affection on their mates, and are creative and energetic in their efforts to please. The ENFP gets a lot of their personal satisfaction from observing the happiness of others, and so is generally determined to please and serve their partners.

A problem area for ENFPs in relationships is their dislike of conflict and sensitivity to criticism. They are perfectionists who believe that any form of criticism is a stab at their character, which is very difficult for them to take. Conflict situations are sources of extreme stress to the ENFP. They have a tendency to brush issues under the rug rather than confront them head-on, if there is likely to be a conflict. They are also prone to "give in" easily in conflict situations, just to end the conflict. They might agree to something which goes against their values just to end the uncomfortable situation. In such cases, the problem is extended and will return at a later time. The ENFP needs to realize that conflict situations are not the end of the world. They are entirely normal, and can be quite helpful for the growth of a relationship. They also need to work on taking criticism for what it is, rather than blowing up any negative comment into an indictment against their entire character.

Generally, the ENFP is a warm and affirming creature who is very interested and able to have an intense, meaningful, close relationship with their mate.

Although two well-developed individuals of any type can enjoy a healthy relationship, ENFP's natural partner is the INTJ, or the INFJ. ENFP's dominant function of Extraverted Intuition is best matched with a partner whose dominant function is Introverted Intuition. How did we arrive at this?

## ENFPs as Parents

"You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth...

Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;

For even as He loves the arrow that flies,

so He loves also the bow that is stable." -- Kahlil Gibran

ENFPs take their parenting role very seriously, but are also very playful. There's a bit of grown-up kid in every ENFP, so they get a lot of fun and enjoyment from playing with their children. However, they consider it essential to pass their strongly-held values and beliefs down to their children, and will strive consistently to create a positive, ideal environment for their children's growth.

The ENFP may exhibit an inconsistency in their roles with their children. At one moment, they might be their child's best friend, laughing and whooping it up, and in the next moment they may appear the stern authoritarian. This inconsistency seems to be a result of a conflict between the ENFP's genuine desire to relate to their children on the children's level, and their compulsion to follow their deeply-felt value system. In other words, the ENFP wants to be their child's friend, but if a value is violated, they will revert to the parental role to make sure their children understand the violation. This inconsistency may be confusing and frustrating for the children.

The children of ENFPs generally feel loved, because the ENFP gives their children plenty of genuine warmth and support. They usually value their children as individuals, allowing them room for growth. The ENFP's enthusiasm and affection may at times seem smothering to their children. This will be especially true for children with strong Thinking or Sensing preferences, who will have a difficult time understanding the effervescence of the ENFP, and will feel at times embarrassed by the ENFP's enthusiasm and tendency to display their affection publicly.

The ENFP is able to take care of day-to-day necessities, such as picking children up at the correct times, getting them to softball practice, getting them fed, etc. However, it is a chore for the ENFP and is not a natural strength. The ENFP also has a difficult time disciplining their children, unless a very strongly-held value has been violated.

The rich imagination and creativity of the ENFP parent creates a fun, dynamic and exciting environment for kids. The ENFP's strong value system turns experiences into meaningful lessons for their children. The ENFP parent is valued by their children for their warm, affirming natures, and their fun-loving approach to living.

## **ENFPs as Friends**

ENFPs are warm and sociable people who are keenly in tune with other people's feelings and perspectives. They are energetic and fun to be with. They are very affirming, and get great satisfaction from supporting and lifting up others. They are idealists who seek authenticity in their personal relationships. ENFPs are valued by their peers and confidantes as warm, supportive, giving people.

In the workplace or other casual relationship environments, the ENFP is likely to get along well with almost all other types of people. ENFPs are genuinely interested in people, and are highly perceptive about them, to the point where they're able to understand and relate to all of the personality types with relative ease. They like to see the best in others, and are likely to bring out the best in others. While they are generally accepting of most all people, ENFPs with strong Feeling preferences may have a difficult time understanding people with very strong Thinking preferences who do not respond to the ENFP's enthusiastic warmth. The ENFP will stay open-minded about what they consider a "rejection" by the Thinker, until the situation has repeated itself a few times, in which case the ENFP may shut themselves entirely against the Thinker.

ENFPs may also feel threatened by individuals with strong Judging preferences. With a tendency to take any criticism personally, the ENFP may find themselves irritated or emotional when the Judger expresses a negative opinion, believing somehow that the Judger is expressing disapproval or disappointment in the ENFP.

For close friendships, ENFPs are especially drawn to other iNtuitive Feeling types, and to other Extraverts who are also enthusiastic about life. Like the other iNtuitive Feeling types, the ENFP needs authenticity and depth in their close relationships. They're likely to have friends from all walks of life who they feel close to and care about, but will have only a few very close friends with similar ideals to their own. The ENFP also tends to value the company of iNtuitive Thinkers.

## **What does Success mean to an ENFP?**

ENFPs are motivated in everything that they do by a desire to understand the world around them. They are constantly searching about. Mentally and physically, for input that will help them to better understand the Big Picture. They are open-minded to new people and new experiences; they're eager for the opportunity to understand what the new people and experiences are all about. ENFPs use their understanding of the world to serve the agendas of their value systems. An ENFP's value system often includes respect for the needs and desires of individual people over the needs

of a social group. Their respect for the individual makes them dislike controlling others, and being controlled by others. ENFPs are passionate about their beliefs, whatever they may be. They often stubbornly adhere to their value system regardless of threats to its validity. They are more concerned with keeping true to what they believe than they are with expectations or demands from the social group that they function within. ENFPs dislike personal criticism, because it threatens their validity as an individual and the validity of their value system. ENFPs may internalize anger rather than express it; their respect for other individuals makes it difficult for them to hurt others. An ENFP's feeling of success depends upon the availability of opportunities to grow their understanding of the world, upon feeling that they're living true to their personal value system, and upon the condition of their closest relationships.

### **Allowing Your ENFP Strengths to Flourish**

As an ENFP, you have gifts that are specific to your personality type that aren't natural strengths for other types. By recognizing your special gifts and encouraging their growth and development, you will more readily see your place in the world, and be more content with your role.

Nearly all ENFPs will recognize the following characteristics in themselves. They should embrace and nourish these strengths:

- They're exceptionally perceptive about people and situations. They're often able to quickly and accurately assess where someone is coming from.
- They accept and value people as individuals, and are strongly egalitarian. They believe that individuals have the right to be themselves, and are very tolerant and accepting of most people.
- They're often deep and intelligent, and may be quite brilliant in their ability to tie things together. They're wired to look for connections in the external world, and so they may mentally put things together more easily than others.
- Their interest in understanding the world usually makes them in tune with what's socially acceptable and what isn't. This may help them to be popular and likeable.
- They're highly creative. This ability may be used in an artistic way, or may be used to generate ideas and new ways of thinking.

ENFPs who have developed their Introverted Feeling to the extent that they apply judgement to all of their perceptions will enjoy these very special gifts:

- They will have the ability to follow through on projects they've begun.
- They will be less gullible and malleable, and generally more able to discern between "good" and "bad", rather than accepting everything without question.
- They may be highly artistic.
- They will have the ability to focus and concentrate deeply on tasks. This enhanced ability to think and process information internally will make them more capable on many levels.
- They will balance out their desire to meet new people and have new experiences with the desire to put their understanding to use in some way.
- They will find more meaning and purpose in their lives.

## Potential Problem Areas

With any gift of strength, there is an associated weakness. Without “bad”, there would be no “good”. Without “difficult”, there would be no “easy”. We value our strengths, but we often curse and ignore our weaknesses. To grow as a person and get what we want out of life, we must not only capitalize upon our strengths, but also face our weaknesses and deal with them. That means taking a hard look at our personality type’s potential problem areas.

Most of the weaker characteristics found in ENFPs are due to their dominant Extraverted Intuition overshadowing the personality to the extent that they don’t apply judgement to anything. Or, they may use their primary judging function (Introverted Feeling) to support the agenda of Extraverted Intuition, i.e. to rationalize and support the idea of welcoming all experiences and accepting all individuals. In such cases, an ENFP may show some or all of the following weaknesses in varying degree:

- May be what many would call a “sucker”; vulnerable to schemers and con artists.
- May get themselves into dangerous situations because they’re too eager to push the envelope of their understanding, and not willing to apply judgement to anything.
- May feel intense anger towards people who criticize them or try to control them. But will be unable to express the anger. Left unexpressed, the anger may fester and simmer and become destructive.
- May blame their problems on other people, using logic and reason to defend themselves against the world.
- May develop strong negative judgements that are difficult to unseed against people who they perceive have been oppressive to them.
- May get involved with drugs, alcohol, or promiscuity, and generally seek mindless experiences and sensations.
- May skip from relationship to relationship without the ability to commit.
- May start projects but be unable to finish them.
- May be unable to stick to a career or job for any length of time.

## Explanation of Problems

Nearly all of the problematic characteristics described above can be attributed in various degrees to the common ENFP problem of wanting to understand and experience everything at any cost. If the ENFP does not learn how to discriminate things and people in their external environment, the ENFP will begin to use their judging function (Introverted Feeling) as solve a “rubber stamper” to support their agenda to seek out experiences. This is a natural survivalistic technique for the ENFP personality. The main driver to the ENFP personality is Extraverted Intuition, whose purpose is to understand the world as one Big Picture, seeking connections and meaning in everything. If their ability to seek understanding is threatened, the ENFP shuts out the threatening force. This is totally natural, but unfortunately the individual who exercises this type of agenda protection regularly will become more and more unable to apply judgement to anything. When the unbalanced ENFP does apply judgement, it will generally be skewed to support their subjective agenda. They will always find justification for their own inappropriate behaviour. They will be unable to finish anything that they start, and generally wander through life from experience to experience.

It’s very common for ENFPs to resist applying judgement until they feel they truly understand a person or situation. However, part of the understanding process includes using discernment to classify qualities. If the ENFP shuts judgement off entirely, he or she will not achieve their ultimate goal of understanding; rather they will jump from experience to experience in a purposeless fashion.

Anger can be a problem for anybody, but may be especially so for ENFPs who have not sufficiently developed their Introverted Feeling. The desire to keep everything non-judgemental, combined with the tendency to use Introverted Feeling as justification rather than true judgement is a recipe for suppressed anger. These are very contradictory forces. “I hate you for judging me” is an ironic feeling, but is unfortunately common. The inability to apply judge-

ment, or to accept negative judgement prevents the ENFP from expressing negative judgement, and therefore causes them to stew in their anger, rather than deal with it.

## **Solutions**

To grow as an individual, the ENFP needs to focus on applying judgement to all of their perceptions. This means they need to decide how they really feel about people, places and things, rather than allowing their feelings to hang open indeterminately. The ENFP needs to understand that developing their ability to discern qualities does not threaten their ability to understand the world, but rather enhances it, and enhances their personal changes for achieving a measure of success in their lives.

The ENFP concerned with personal growth will pay close attention to their motivation for making a judgement. Are they trying to really determine the objective value or merit of something, or are they trying to defend their individual right to not be judged or controlled? The goal when judging something is to not let your personal agenda influence your opinions. Obviously, this is not entirely possible, but it is the exercise to keep in mind. You want to open your mind to judgement without feeling threatened, and without using your own judgement in a defensive, rationalizing mode.

## **Living Happily in our World as an ENFP**

As can be seen from the above, some ENFPs can have difficulty fitting into society. Their problems are often due to feeling different from others because of their dominant Intuition, and being unable to stick to anything long enough to feel a sense of accomplishment. They feel like they don't fit in, and can't find the place where they belong in the world. The ENFP who consistently makes decisions and applies classifications to their ideas will be able to turn their ideas into reality, and experience the feelings of accomplishment and success that accompany being effective.

The key to personal growth for the ENFP is competent execution of Introverted Feeling. It's difficult for most to understand what this means, much less incorporate that directive into your life. I have created some action-oriented suggestions that will help lead you down the path towards more effective use of the Introverted Feeling function. Specific suggestions:

- When you feel angry or resistant towards someone who you feel is criticizing you, take this as a cue that you are not judging effectively. When that happens, take a step back from your anger and try to really hear what the person is saying objectively. Rather than expending mental energy in defining how the other person is wrong, try to judge what the person is actually saying.
- Periodically make lists of goals and accomplishments. Revisit your goals and accomplishments as often as you'd like to maintain a sense of direction.
- Spend time alone regularly for the purpose of thinking through issues in your life.

## **Ten Rules to Live By to Achieve ENFP Success**

1. **Feed Your Strengths!** Make sure you have opportunities to have new experiences to feel your quest of understanding the world.
2. **Face Your Weaknesses!** Realize and accept that some traits are strengths and some are weaknesses. By facing your weaknesses, you can overcome them and they will have less power over you.
3. **Express Your Feelings.** Don't let anger get bottled up inside you. If you have strong feelings, sort them out and express them, or they may become destructive!
4. **Make Decisions.** Don't be afraid to have an opinion. You need to know how you feel about things in order to be effective.
5. **Smile at Criticism.** Try to see disagreement and discord as an opportunity for growth, because that's exactly what it is. Try not to become overly defensive towards criticism; try to hear it and judge it objectively.

6. Be Aware of Others. Remember that there are 15 other personality types out there who see things differently than you see them. Most of your problems with other people are easier to deal with if you try to understand the other person's perspective.
7. Be Aware of Yourself. Don't stint your own needs for the sake of others too much. Realise you are an important focus. If you do not fulfill your own needs, how will you continue to be effective and how will others know you are true to your beliefs?
8. Be Accountable for Yourself. Don't waste mental energy finding blame in other's behaviour, or in identifying yourself as a victim. You have more control over your life than any other person has.
9. Assume the Best. Don't distress yourself by assuming the worst. Remember that a positive attitude creates positive situations.
10. When in Doubt, Ask Questions! Don't assume that the lack of feedback is the same thing as negative feedback. If you need feedback and don't have any, ask for it.