

The Dutyfulfiller: ISTJ

As an ISTJ, your primary mode of living is focused internally, where you take things in via your five senses in a literal, concrete fashion. Your secondary mode is external, where you deal with things rationally and logically.

ISTJs are quiet and reserved individuals who are interested in security and peaceful living. They have a strongly-felt internal sense of duty, which lends them a serious air and the motivation to follow through on tasks. Organized and methodical in their approach, they can generally succeed at any task which they undertake.

ISTJs are very loyal, faithful, and dependable. They place great importance on honesty and integrity. They are "good citizens" who can be depended on to do the right thing for their families and communities. While they generally take things very seriously, they also usually have an offbeat sense of humor and can be a lot of fun - especially at family or work-related gatherings.

ISTJs tend to believe in laws and traditions, and expect the same from others. They're not comfortable with breaking laws or going against the rules. If they are able to see a good reason for stepping outside of the established mode of doing things, the ISTJ will support that effort. However, ISTJs more often tend to believe that things should be done according to procedures and plans. If an ISTJ has not developed their Intuitive side sufficiently, they may become overly obsessed with structure, and insist on doing everything "by the book".

The ISTJ is extremely dependable on following through with things which he or she has promised. For this reason, they sometimes get more and more work piled on them. Because the ISTJ has such a strong sense of duty, they may have a difficult time saying "no" when they are given more work than they can reasonably handle. For this reason, the ISTJ often works long hours, and may be unwittingly taken advantage of.

The ISTJ will work for long periods of time and put tremendous amounts of energy into doing any task which they see as important to fulfilling a goal. However, they will resist putting energy into things which don't make sense to them, or for which they can't see a practical application. They prefer to work alone, but work well in teams when the situation demands it. They like to be accountable for their actions, and enjoy being in positions of authority. The ISTJ has little use for theory or abstract thinking, unless the practical application is clear.

ISTJs have tremendous respect for facts. They hold a tremendous store of facts within themselves, which they have gathered through their Sensing preference. They may have difficulty understanding a theory or idea which is different from their own perspective. However, if they are shown the importance or relevance of the idea to someone who they respect or care about, the idea becomes a fact, which the ISTJ will internalize and support. Once the ISTJ supports a cause or idea, he or she will stop at no lengths to ensure that they are doing their duty of giving support where support is needed.

The ISTJ is not naturally in tune with their own feelings and the feelings of others. They may have difficulty picking up on emotional needs immediately, as they are presented. Being perfectionists themselves, they have a tendency to take other people's efforts for granted, like they take their own efforts for granted. They need to remember to pat people on the back once in a while.

ISTJs are likely to be uncomfortable expressing affection and emotion to others. However, their strong sense of duty and the ability to see what needs to be done in any situation usually allows them to overcome their natural reservations, and they are usually quite supporting and caring individuals with the people that they love. Once the ISTJ realizes the emotional needs of those who are close to them, they put forth effort to meet those needs.

The ISTJ is extremely faithful and loyal. Traditional and family-minded, they will put forth great amounts of effort at making their homes and families running smoothly. They are responsible parents, taking their parenting roles seriously. They are usually good and generous providers to their families. They care deeply about those close to them, although they usually are not comfortable with expressing their love. The ISTJ is likely to express their affection through actions, rather than through words.

ISTJs have an excellent ability to take any task and define it, organize it, plan it, and implement it through to completion. They are very hard workers, who do not allow obstacles to get in the way of performing their duties. They do not usually give themselves enough credit for their achievements, seeing their accomplishments simply as the natural fulfillment of their obligations.

ISTJs usually have a great sense of space and function, and artistic appreciation. Their homes are likely to be tastefully

furnished and immaculately maintained. They are acutely aware of their senses, and want to be in surroundings which fit their need for structure, order, and beauty.

Under stress, ISTJs may fall into "catastrophe mode", where they see nothing but all of the possibilities of what could go wrong. They will berate themselves for things which they should have done differently, or duties which they failed to perform. They will lose their ability to see things calmly and reasonably, and will depress themselves with their visions of doom.

In general, the ISTJ has a tremendous amount of potential. Capable, logical, reasonable, and effective individuals with a deeply driven desire to promote security and peaceful living, the ISTJ has what it takes to be highly effective at achieving their chosen goals - whatever they may be.

Jungian functional preference ordering:

Dominant: Introverted Sensing

Auxiliary: Extraverted Thinking

Tertiary: Introverted Feeling

Inferior: Extraverted Intuition

ISTJ Relationships

The ISTJ's word is as good as gold, and they honor their commitments faithfully. They believe that to do otherwise would be nothing less than a breach of honor and trustworthiness. Consequently, they take their vows very seriously, and once they have said "I do", that means they are bound to the relationship until "death do us apart" or otherwise. ISTJs are driven to fulfill their responsibilities and duties, and will do so with tireless effort. They will do their best to meet the obligations presented by the different relationship roles which they play during their lives, i.e. spouse, parent, offspring, etc. They may have difficulty showing warmth, but they frequently feel it in abundance, and most develop the ability to show it through sheer effort. If nothing else, the ISTJ holds the gold medal of all the personality types for Effort. They will put forth tremendous amounts of effort to accomplish goals which are important to them. If healthy relationships are among these goals, you can bet that the ISTJ will do everything that they can to foster and maintain healthy relationships.

ISTJ Strengths

- * Honor their commitments
- * Take their relationship roles very seriously
- * Usually able to communicate what's on their minds with precision
- * Good listeners
- * Extremely good (albeit conservative) with money
- * Able to take constructive criticism well
- * Able to tolerate conflict situations without emotional upheaval
- * Able to dole out punishment or criticism when called for

ISTJ Weaknesses

- * Tendency to believe that they're always right
- * Tendency to get involved in "win-lose" conversations
- * Not naturally in-tune with what others are feeling
- * Their value for structure may seem rigid to others
- * Not likely to give enough praise or affirmation to their loved ones

ISTJs 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

ISTJs are committed, loyal partners, who will put forth tremendous amounts of effort into making their relationships work. Once they have made a commitment to a relationship, they will stick with it until the end. They gladly accept their duty towards fulfilling their role in the relationship. ISTJs are generally willing and able to do anything which they have defined

as a goal. So, if maintaining a good relationship is important to the ISTJ, they are likely to have a good relationship. If they have not added this goal to their internal "list" of duties, they are likely to approach the relationship in their "natural" state, which is extremely practical, traditional, and structured.

ISTJs do not feel threatened by constructive criticism or conflict situations. When faced with criticism, the ISTJ is likely to believe that their point of view is correct. They have a tremendous amount of respect for Facts, and base their opinions on known facts and logic. Consequently, they have a hard time seeing the viability of viewpoints which don't match their own. When the ISTJ gets involved in a disagreement over a point, they usually begin to attempt to recruit the other person over to their own point of view, fully believing that they are right, and that the other individual simply needs to understand the facts of the situation. In such situations, the ISTJ may or may not be right, but their confidence in their own "rightness" can shake the confidence of others involved. This habit can quickly turn conversations into "win-lose" situations, and can present a special problem in intimate relationships. While they may inadvertently shake the confidence of their colleagues with their "I'm right" approach, the same behavior may cause serious issues within their intimate relationships. The ISTJ's constant assertion of "rightness" may send a message to their mates that they do not value their opinions. If the ISTJ has a mate with a strong Feeling preference, they may inadvertently wreak havoc with their self-esteem, since Feeling individuals are extremely sensitive to conflict and criticism, and are especially vulnerable in their intimate relationships.

Since ISTJs make decisions using the Thinking function (rather than Feeling), they are not naturally likely to consider their mates feelings and emotions in daily living. This may be a problem if their mates have the Feeling preference, since Feeling individuals usually expect a lot of positive affirmation, which the ISTJ does not naturally communicate to them. The ISTJ needs to remember that others may need to hear that they are loved and valued, even if the ISTJ doesn't need to hear this themself.

ISTJs are generally very capable and efficient at most things which they endeavor. Consequently, their mates are likely to hold a good amount of respect for them. Daily concerns are likely to be well-provided for by the ISTJ. If other concerns, such as emotional needs, are pointed out to the ISTJ as important issues for their mates, the ISTJ will rise to the occasion and add the task of addressing these needs to the internal "list" of duties. Since the ISTJ is so willing to work hard at issues, and so tireless at performing tasks which they feel should be done, the ISTJ generally makes a wonderful, caring mate who is willing and able to promote a healthy, lasting relationship which is also a partnership.

Although two well-developed individuals of any type can enjoy a healthy relationship, the ISTJ's natural partner is the ESFP, or the ESTP. ISTJ's dominant function of Introverted Sensing is best matched with a partner whose personality is dominated by Extraverted Sensing. How did we arrive at this?

ISTJs 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

ISTJs are faithful and devoted parents who can be counted on to put forth their very best efforts towards raising their children in positive, comfortable, secure homes, and to promote their growth in such a way that they will become secure adults who know their place in life within our society. Such is the greatest goal of an ISTJ parent toward their child.

Along the path towards this goal, the ISTJ expects that their children honor their traditional familial roles. As parents, they demand respect and authority from their children. They willingly accept their parental role of provider and guardian. Once the ISTJ becomes a parent, it becomes a "given" that they will perform all of the duties associated with parenthood, and they will do so without grudge or burden. However, they expect that their children give them their due respect in return, and will have little patience with disrespectful behavior.

When it comes to giving punishment or discipline, the ISTJ will be able to do so when necessary without too much internal trauma. They see it as their duty to teach their children when they've done wrong, and so will administer the punishment in the name of the greater cause of doing their duty towards their children. Not to imply that the ISTJ will enjoy disciplining their children, they simply will put their duties before their personal feelings.

The ISTJ is likely to have a problem giving a lot of positive affirmation and support to their children. Having very high expectations for their own behavior and the behavior of others, the ISTJ often forgets to give praise when praise is due. All children need positive support as they find their place in the world, and this is especially true for children with the Feeling

preference, who benefit tremendously from positive affirmation, and suffer (sometimes tremendously) in its void. The ISTJ who recognizes sensitivity in their child should take special care to give them positive support and affirmation.

The ISTJ will create a consistent, secure environment for their children, with definite roles and boundaries. Although this may at times create division between the parent and child (especially during rebellious adolescence), it will generally promote the child's growth into a secure adult. ISTJ parents will be remembered and honored by their children for being good people who always tried their best, and for putting the needs of their children above their own.

ISTJs as Friends

Although friendships do not rank highest in the ISTJ's list of important relationships (whose duties and obligation to the Family rank above all else), they do have value these relationships and put effort into enhancing and maintaining them. The ISTJ is likely to choose to be around people who have similar interests and perspectives to their own, and are likely to not have much patience with people who are very different from themselves.

Although their usual mode of being is very serious-minded, ISTJs like to have fun and let loose. They like being with Extraverts who are optimistic and fun-minded, although the E's enthusiasm may eventually get on the ISTJ's nerves. ISTJs can get along with most other types, but they especially form solid connections with other Sensing Judgers. The ISTJ's respect for laws and traditions may make them unable to relate well to Sensing Perceiving types, although they admire their carefree ability to live for the moment. And conversely, the Sensing Perceiving types may see the ISTJ's need for structure as too conservative or scheduled for their tastes. ISTJs seem to get along well with Intuitives, although they cannot really relate to some of the Intuitives perspectives.

What does Success mean to an ISTJ?

People with the ISTJ personality type are serious, methodical, analytical, and hard-working. They store knowledge gained from their experiences, and use this knowledge to tackle new problems and ideas. They will work a problem through to its identified conclusion. They work towards defined goals; their analytical objectivity gives them the tendency to make goal-oriented decisions that are not waylaid by the concerns of individuals. They're uncomfortable with ideas that are completely new to them, or that are totally theoretical in nature. Since they have no direct experience with the new concept, they have no tools for knowing how to deal with it or what to think about it. They need to get the framework for a new concept before they're able to deal with it. An experienced ISTJ is usually a very capable person, and makes an excellent manager. ISTJs have great value for the "tried and true" approach, and are reluctant to adopt new systems until direct experience proves the validity of the new system. They internalize and value the rules and structure of the society in which they live, and disapprove of behaviors that go against these rules. ISTJs highly value the cornerstone institutions of society such as Family, Work, and Church. Their hard-working, dedicated nature is especially well-suited for holding up such institutions. An ISTJ's feeling of success depends upon being able to use their experience for the benefit of an institution, and also upon the level of structure and lack of chaos in their life, and in the health and welfare of their family or other social structure.

Allowing Your ISTJ Strengths to Flourish

As an ISTJ, 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 ISTJs will recognize the following characteristics in themselves. They should embrace and nourish these strengths:

- * Their desire to execute known systems against concrete facts makes them happy to chunk through large amounts of routine work.

- * With their respect for rules and order, they value honesty and integrity and seek to live with these ideals.

- * An ISTJ has a "stick to it" attitude. They're not afraid of hard work, and will put forth a great deal of effort towards something that they are interested in. This persistence will help the ISTJ to achieve any identified goal.

- * The ISTJ's value for social structure makes them more interested in being social than is true for many Introverts.

ISTJs who have developed their Extraverted Thinking will complement their interest in their inner world of concrete data with an interest in the welfare of the rest of the world, especially with regards to upholding social systems and traditions. These ISTJs enjoy these very special gifts:

- * They will move beyond an expectation that others should follow rules into a dedication and willingness to work hard to uphold standards themselves.

- * They show a dedication to maintaining personal relationships that lends them a respect for individual differences.

- * They will use their inner store of facts for the benefit of an institution or society in general, rather than to satisfy their own interests.

- * The more they develop their Extraverted Thinking, the better they will become at strategizing. They will be able to brainstorm multiple possible solutions to problems.

- * ISTJs are often uncomfortable with decisions based on values rather than on objective criteria, but the more they develop their Extraverted Thinking, the more likely they will become able to use Introverted Feeling as a positive force rather than strictly a negative one. This will allow them to understand a value judgement that is based on personal perspective rather than social obligation.

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 that are found in ISTJs are due to their dominant Introverted Sensing function controlling the personality to the point that all other functions are being used to defend Sensing demands, rather than for their more balanced purposes. In such cases, an ISTJ may show some or all of the following weaknesses in varying degrees:

- * Excessive love of food and drink
- * Lack of interest in other people, or in relating to them
- * Occasional inappropriate emotional displays
- * General selfish “look after oneself” tendencies
- * Uses judgement to dismiss other’s opinions and perspectives, before really understanding them
- * May judge others rather than themselves
- * May look at external ideas and people with the primary purpose of finding fault
- * May become slave to their routine and “by the book” ways of doing things, to the point that any deviation is completely unacceptable
- * May have difficulty communicating their thoughts and feelings to anyone

Explanation of Problems

Nearly all of the problematic characteristics described above can be attributed in various degrees to the common ISTJ problem of Introverted Sensing overtaking the ISTJ’s personality to the point that all other functions become slaves to Introverted Sensing. A more “whole” personality needs to have a good balance between its dominant and auxiliary functions. For an ISTJ, the dominant Introverted Sensing needs to be well-supported by the auxiliary Extraverted Thinking function. If Extraverted Thinking exists only to support the desires of Introverted Sensing, than neither function is being used to its potential.

Introverted Sensing is a personality function that constantly gathers data and stores it in a sort of informational database to be accessed at will in the future. As the dominant player in a personality, it has the effect of constantly bombarding the psyche with facts to store. As something new is perceived, it is added to the vast warehouse of Introverted Sensing data. Introverted Sensing does not in itself analyze this data for meaning or connection--it just takes it in as information. In order to sort through and make use of this information, a judging function must be applied. It is the judging function that does the analysis and ordering of the data.

When Introverted Sensing is too dominant, or Extraverted Thinking is not developed sufficiently, we see the ISTJ using Extraverted Thinking to order the individual’s world in such a way that Introverted Sensing can reign without

interference. This may include dismissing the importance of relationships, or pushing away anything that threatens the ISTJ's highly introverted way of life. In this manner, Extraverted Thinking is used against the external world, rather than against the ISTJ's internal data. It is a defensive shield, rather than a useful filter.

The better, more "whole" use of Extraverted Thinking for the ISTJ would be to use it to order and evaluate its own rich store of data, and therefore generate useful solutions to problems and efficient systems. Like all types, most ISTJs will show some signs of this kind of weakness. This does not mean that they're hopelessly flawed. The real problems occur when an ISTJ personality has become so imbalanced that its owner is extremely selfish and unable to consider the importance or validity of anyone else's perspective.

Solutions

To grow as an individual, the ISTJ needs to focus on applying their judgement against information that they have gathered, rather than against single facts or ideas coming from others. Before judging, put all new data into the context of existing facts. Working with all of the facts at your disposal will greatly improve your ability to judge effectively, and will reduce the likelihood that you will become offensively reactionary and isolationist.

An ISTJ who is concerned with personal growth will pay close attention to the subject of their judgments, and their motivations for making judgments. Are they judging something external to themselves, or are they judging something within the context of their stored knowledge? Is the motivation for judging something to be able to understand its usefulness in the world, or to dismiss it? Too often, an ISTJ will judge something without properly understanding it, and with the intention of dismissing it. Seek first to understand, then to judge.

Living Happily in our World as an ISTJ

People of all personality types sometimes experience problems dealing with specific aspects of civilization and human interaction. For the ISTJ, problems are generally associated with being unable to tolerate behaviors that go outside perceived norms, and with not putting forth effort to meet others' emotional needs. These problems stem from building up the importance of the ISTJ's inner world and diminishing the importance of the external world. ISTJs who recognize that their knowledge and experience can be enriched by the synergy of other people's knowledge and experience will find that they can be committed to their internal worlds and still have satisfying relationships with others. The key to accomplishing this is development of their highest extraverted function, Extraverted Thinking.

An ISTJ who uses Extraverted Thinking to find fault externally rather than internally may become so strongly opinionated that they form rigid and unreasonable expectations of others. Their hyper-vigilant judgments about the rationality and competence of others may be a very effective way of keeping themselves at an emotional distance from others. This will preserve the sanctity of the ISTJ's inner world and lifestyle, but will reduce a lot of valuable input, arrest the development of their social character, and stagnate the development of the ISTJ's rich store of experiential data. In extreme cases the ISTJ may find him or herself quite alone and lonely.

More commonly, the ISTJ will run into trouble when they try to order and structure the outer world, rather than their inner world. Trying to structure people into a predefined, acceptable system is problematic. The personality types who value the unique individual will be offended by the apparent lack of respect for their person, and people with personality types who follow social values will want to be honoring their own system, rather than being forced to follow yours. Many people experience being controlled or manipulated as a form of suppression, and resist it. Eventually, they may harbor serious resentment against the suppressor.

Specific suggestions:

- * Take care to listen to someone's idea entirely before you pass judgment on it. Ask questions if necessary. Do whatever it takes to make sure that you understand the idea. Try not to begin judging anything until you understand the details.

- * Try to identify the personality type of everyone you encounter frequently in your life. Remember that Intuitives often have a wandering style of expression. Try to exhibit tolerance for this.

- * Before you begin talking to another person, pause for a moment and look at that person. Take in that person's attitude and feelings at that moment. Be aware of the person with whom you are speaking.

Ten Rules to Live By to Achieve ISTJ Success

1. Feed Your Strengths! Do things that allow your excellent organizational and logical abilities to flourish. Explore the worlds of business management, accounting, and medicine.

2. Face Your Weaknesses! See your weaknesses for what they are, and seek to overcome them. Especially, strive to use your judgment against your internal store of knowledge, rather than as a means of disregarding other people's ideas.

3. Talk Through Your Thoughts. You need to step through your vast amount of information in order to put things into perspective. Give yourself appropriate time to do this, and take advantage of discussing ideas with others. Some find that externalizing your thoughts is a valuable exercise, as is expressing your ideas clearly in writing.

4. Take in Everything. Don't dismiss ideas prematurely because you don't respect the person generating the ideas, or because you think you already know it all. After all, everybody has something to offer, and nobody knows everything. As Steven Covey says, "Seek first to understand, and then to be understood."

5. Quench Your Desire to Control Others. Remember that most people do not want to be controlled. Again, turn your controlling tendencies inwardly rather than outwardly. You can only really control yourself.

6. Be Aware of Others. Take time to notice where others are coming from. What is their personality type? How are they currently feeling?

7. Be Accountable for Yourself. Don't blame the problems in your life on other people. Look inwardly for solutions.

8. Be Gentle in Your Expectations, and judge yourself at least as harshly as you judge others.

9. Assume the Best. Don't distress yourself and others by dwelling on the dark side of everything. Just as there is a positive charge for every negative charge, there is a light side to every dark side. Remember that positive situations are created by positive attitudes, and vice versa. Expect the best, and the best will come forward.

10. There is Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself. Sometimes it's necessary to take a risk to initiate change. Don't be afraid to do so when that time comes. In most cases, the obstacles and burdens standing in the way of your goal are not really there--they just exist in your perspective. Change your perspective--change your life.