

The NF Temperament

NF persons are usually creative, optimistic, verbal, persuasive, outspoken, and good at both writing and speaking. They have a great need for self-expression and communicate with others easily. NFs are good listeners, good at counseling, good in resolving conflicts and making peace. They hate conflict and are unable to operate at peak efficiency when the situation becomes tense and strained. They like face-to-face encounters and are able to read faces and catch non-verbal communications. NFs have deep feelings and are upset if treated impersonally. They find it difficult to handle negative criticism and become discouraged when meeting a negative attitude in others, but they blossom under affirmation. They freely give and need strokes and communicate their own enthusiasm to others. They need acceptance, support, and prefer cooperation rather than competition.

NFs are always searching for meaning, authenticity, and self-identity. They have a great urge for perfection and wholeness and are quite idealistic. They have a hunger for integrity and are willing to make great sacrifices to attain it. Personal growth and development are necessities for both themselves and anyone for whom they feel a responsibility. They are natural rescuers of those in trouble, and this leads to the danger of becoming too involved in others' problems. Both the giving and receiving of spiritual direction are high priorities for them. Therefore, NFs usually make good spiritual directors who help others grow in spirituality and wholeness.

Even though NFs are only about 12% of the total population, as much as half of the persons who make retreats, frequent houses of prayer, and write about prayer and spirituality will be of the NF temperament. Self-improvement, self-development, and self-actualization are the top of the list of their priorities. NFs have a tremendous hunger and thirst for growth in their inner life; and for those who believe in God, this can be satisfied only in prayer, spiritual reading,

and contemplation. They experience a great need for periods of quiet and silence in order to make contact with their inner selves. Questions uppermost in the minds of NFs are ones like: How can I become the person I am supposed to be? and How can I become truly real, authentic, and true to my own unique self?

The NF needs to find meaning in everything and wants to know that what one does makes a difference; that each person can make a unique contribution; that he or she is important; that God loves each one of us unconditionally, as we are now, sins and all. Experiencing a personal relationship with God is the one essential element of any authentic NF spirituality. Therefore, daily prayer and quiet are a must for persons of this temperament.

The NF temperament has a keen interest in the future. NFs are the visionaries of the world; they try to anticipate new directions into which destiny and the will of God are leading them and the world. From this temperament usually come the prophets who seek to read the signs of the times.

Because the NF is always reading between the lines in order to catch the inexpressible, the spiritual, the hidden meaning, this temperament best understands symbols and their use in prayer and liturgy. The parables of Jesus describing God and God's kingdom are typical NF symbols which attempt to illuminate something that cannot be literally expressed in words.

A great many books on prayer are written by NF persons and addressed especially to the NF temperament. Therefore, of all the four basic temperaments, NFs are usually the best cared for spiritually; but they also need this special care, since without spiritual growth and development they wither, fade, and die just like a plant that is not watered, nourished, and tended.