



Understanding Others in Conflict

Conflict, of course, rarely exists in isolation—it involves other people. The last two letters in your type are sometimes referred to as the “conflict pair” and provide insight into how you may approach conflict. Gaining that insight for each conflict pair can increase your sensitivity and skill in working through issues with others.

FJ Conflict Pair (ISFJ INFJ ESFJ ENFJ)

FJs are likely to be viewed in conflict as needing and seeking harmony. Others typically see them as being warm and caring, and at times uncomfortable with the tension associated with conflict. For FJs, conflict tends to arise when their core beliefs or values are being challenged. Their primary concern during conflict is the well-being of the relationships between those involved. At times this can lead them to ignore signals of conflict in the hope that it will go away or to brush conflict under the rug to avoid dealing with the painful issues that may come up. Once engaged in a conflict, FJs can be intense and emotional and will encourage others to share their feelings and opinions in the hope that this will lead to a resolution. Typically they will equate success in a conflict with the relationships remaining intact and there being no lingering bitterness.

FJ Conflict Pair Summary

- Likely cause of conflict: Challenges to beliefs
- Desired outcome: Intact relationships
- Deal with emotions by: Including them
- Others' impression: Seeker of communication and harmony
- Satisfied when: There is no lingering bitterness

TP Conflict Pair (ISTP INTP ESTP ENTP)

TPs are likely to be viewed in conflict as being critical and prepared to question anything relating to the conflict or the people involved. Others typically see them as being comfortable playing the role of devil's advocate or championing the underdog. For TPs, conflict tends to arise around issues of trust and personal credibility. Instances that challenge these concepts tend to be at the core of their conflicts. When involved in a conflict, they are driven to find a way to navigate through the issues. While aware of the emotions involved, they prefer to set these aside so as to allow a healthy and hearty debate. However, this may be done without due regard for others' feelings, resulting in TPs' being perceived as a catalyst or creator of conflict. Their attitude toward conflict fluctuates between seeing it as a waste of time and considering it a useful mechanism for working through issues. For them, success in a conflict is about seeking to clarify the situation. As a result, they often subsequently review and analyze matters.

TP Conflict Pair Summary

- Likely cause of conflict: Challenges to trust
- Desired outcome: Defined process or progression
- Deal with emotions by: Excluding them
- Others' impression: Catalyst of or contributor to conflict
- Satisfied when: The outcome can subsequently be analyzed

TJ Conflict Pair (ISTJ INTJ ESTJ ENTJ)

TJs are likely to be viewed in conflict as being rational, offering critical commentary and demonstrating a keen ability to make decisions based on the information at hand. Others typically see them as cool-headed, analytical, and clear thinking. For TJs, conflict tends to arise around authority issues. Questioning of hierarchy, reporting lines, seniority, and decision-making roles can be a red flag for them. When they are involved in a conflict, their primary need is for closure or resolution—to have it over and done with. They may tend to overlook the emotional content in conflict even though strong emotion does exist. Their engagement can shift from easygoing and agreeable to intense and seemingly angry, all within the same situation. This paradox could be the root of the changeable intensity those with TJ preferences can show—holding back emotion for a time, then having it burst out, albeit for a short period. Success in a conflict is measured not by whether their particular viewpoint prevails, but by the clear identification of a viewpoint as a way forward.

TJ Conflict Pair Summary

- Likely cause of conflict: Challenges to authority
- Desired outcome: Closure or resolution
- Deal with emotions by: Denying they exist
- Others' impression: Detached or aggressive adversary
- Satisfied when: Conflict is over

FP Conflict Pair (ISFP, ESFP, INFP, ENFP)

FP's are likely to be viewed in conflict as someone who seeks to hear all sides of the story. Others typically see you as someone who is accepting of disparate views and committed to your own values. For FPs, conflict issues tend to involve something they are passionate about, be it a value or people who are important to them. While you would not typically want to engage in conflict, you accept that it is necessary when you care so much about who or what is involved. Throughout a conflict, you have a strong need to include the opinions and feelings of everyone. You are naturally sensitive to any conflict around you. Success for you is achieved when you or others create a safe environment to allow an exploration of all viewpoints.

FP Conflict Pair Summary

- Likely cause of conflict: Challenges to values
- Desired outcome: Respectful listening
- Deal with emotions by: Accepting them
- Others' impression: Someone who includes others' values and concerns
- Satisfied when: There is open exploration

Tips for Dealing with Other Conflict Styles

FPs—ISFPs, INFPs, ESFPs, ENFPs

- Understand that while FPs typically dislike conflict, they are often in no rush to reach closure as they appreciate the time needed to listen to everyone
- Remember that they may not want to be tied down by a set procedure
- Keep in mind FPs' need to hear from others acceptance of their core values
- Remember that they have difficulty with others offering a logical analysis that appears to overlook the possible negative impact on others
- Remember that for FPs, including others is often more important than the issue
- Keep in mind that the amount of time FPs spend exploring people's concerns can be frustrating for TJs, whom they perceive as impatient to move on
- Remember that their intention is to have everyone's opinions, feelings, and values respected

TPs—ISTPs, INTPs, ESTPs, ENTPs

- As TPs' tolerance of conflict situations is higher than that of most people, don't be surprised if they see conflict as a challenge or as healthy
- Remember that the process of addressing the conflict is as important as the outcome
- Keep in mind that TPs' comfort with exploring means they will be in no rush to reach closure
- Understand that TPs will express feelings only when they are sure everyone present can be trusted
- Be careful not to get overly frustrated with your perception of TPs changing the rules of engagement
- Remember that TPs are acutely aware of where the power lies in any situation and will fluctuate between needing to have access to the power and supporting the underdog
- Remember that their intention is to ensure the conflict has been explored from all angles

FJs—ISFJs, INFJs, ESFJs, ENFJs

- Remember that FJs typically view conflict as a difficult or negative experience
- Understand that for FJs, everyone's feelings are important
- Keep in mind that their rush to closure is likely motivated by a desire to make sure no one gets hurt rather than an objective assessment that everything is sorted out
- Understand that it is only after FJs are certain everyone's concerns and feelings have been given attention that they can begin to look at other factors
- Keep in mind that ongoing ill will may prevent them from moving on easily
- Be prepared to answer questions about how you are feeling, as it is important for FJs to know this
- Remember that their intention is to make sure no one leaves with any lingering bitterness

TJs—ISTJs, INTJs, ESTJs, ENTJs

- Remember that most TJs believe they are right and may be stubborn when confronting an alternate point of view
- All will want a quick resolution, but don't brush aside important matters solely to move on
- Keep in mind that your objectivity will allow all to find a way out of a conflict but may not limit its underlying emotional impact
- Encourage everyone to give time to listen to each viewpoint
- Don't interpret succinct responses as being abrupt or disrespectful
- Remember that it will be difficult to create an environment in which it is safe to express emotions
- As TJs believe that once a conflict is over, it's over, don't miss opportunities to say what you need to say