



THE ENNEAGRAM

THE 9 INDIVIDUAL TYPES

THE NINE PERSONALITY TYPES

The Enneagram teaches that there are nine different personality styles in the world, one of which we naturally gravitate toward and adopt in childhood to cope and feel safe. Each type or number has a distinct way of seeing the world and an underlying motivation that powerfully influences how that type thinks, feels and behaves.

If you're like I was, you will immediately object to the suggestion that there are only nine basic personality types on a planet of more than seven billion people. A single visit to the paint aisle at Home Depot to help an indecisive spouse find "that perfect red" for the bathroom walls might quell your remonstrations. As I recently learned, there are literally an infinite number of variations of the color red from which you can select to brighten your bathroom and wreck your marriage at the same time.

In the same way, though we all adopt one (and only one) of these types in childhood, there are an infinite number of expressions of each number, some of which might present in a similar way to yours and many of which will look nothing like you on the exterior— but you are all still variations of the same primary color.

The Enneagram takes its name from the Greek words for nine (ennea) and for a drawing or figure (gram). It is a nine-pointed geometric figure that illustrates nine different but interconnected personality types. Each numbered point on the circumference is connected to two others by arrows across the circle, indicating their dynamic interaction with one another.

Here is a snapshot of the diagram, as well as the names and a quick description of each Enneagram number. For the record, no personality type is better or worse than another, each has its own strengths and weaknesses, and none is gender-biased.

TYPE ONE: The Perfectionist. Ethical, dedicated and reliable, they are motivated by a desire to live the right way, improve the world, and avoid fault and blame.

TYPE TWO: The Helper. Warm, caring and giving, they are motivated by a need to be loved and needed, and to avoid acknowledging their own needs.

TYPE THREE: The Performer. Success-oriented, image-conscious and wired for productivity, they are motivated by a need to be (or appear to be) successful and to avoid failure.

TYPE FOUR: The Romantic. Creative, sensitive and moody, they are motivated by a need to be understood, experience their oversized feelings and avoid being ordinary.

TYPE FIVE: The Investigator. Analytical, detached and private, they are motivated by a need to gain knowledge, conserve energy and avoid relying on others.

TYPE SIX: The Loyalist. Committed, practical and witty, they are worst-case-scenario thinkers who are motivated by fear and the need for security.

TYPE SEVEN: The Enthusiast. Fun, spontaneous and adventurous, they are motivated by a need to be happy, to plan stimulating experiences and to avoid pain.

TYPE EIGHT: The Challenger. Commanding, intense and confrontational, they are motivated by a need to be strong and avoid feeling weak or vulnerable.

TYPE NINE: The Peacemaker. Pleasant, laid back and accommodating, they are motivated by a need to keep the peace, merge with others and avoid conflict.

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