

If you are examining yourself, there are many tools you may use to do so. There are many tools, such as Myers-Briggs, to examine your personality type. The Enneagram is different. It is a tool for examining how you look at and cope with the world.

Although the origins of the Enneagram are shrouded in mystery, it has a relationship to ancient Sufi oral traditions. The word Enneagram means nine drawing as the tradition looks at nine coping types. The geometric shape used in Enneagram analysis was first brought to Europe by George Gurdjieff in the 1920s. This work introduced into the Americas by Oscar Ichazo.

Many instructors of the Enneagram structure begin by using the Sufi technique of describing the type of “idiot” you are. It may be a challenge for new students of the Enneagram to look at the challenges of each type before the other more positive features are identified. This technique is a support for seeing your basic type rather than the beneficial characteristics you have developed since early childhood.

A brief summary of the nine types follows. For more information, seek out a qualified instructor who has had significant training. Also consider a book such as *Enneagram Made Easy, Enneagram: Journey to a New Life, or Enneagram Journey of Self-Discovery*.

The character flaw that most typifies type 1 is Anger and Perfectionism. Type 1s do not think that they are angry. Being angry is not being perfect so they repress their anger. They see potential in everyone. When they suggest methods of helping people meet their potential, others may respond by feeling judged. Type 1s have a deep seated critical nature. Although it does find focus on others, type 1s have an intensely self-critical nature. This tendency leaves them overly sensitive to criticism from others. Type 1 people are centered in their gut. They depend on the reactions of their physical body to make decisions more than their emotions or intellect. In order to develop most efficiently, type 1s need to take on the beneficial characteristics of type 7s and avoid the pitfalls of type 4s.

The passion in type 2 people stems from pride. To most people, this pride is not visible. It is covered by the desire type 2s have to nurture others. They love and care for others and in return expect love in return. They don't see their own needs. In fact, many believe that they don't need anything from anyone. Pride is the result. They see themselves in relation to others. These people tend to be very empathetic. Type 2s tend to use superlatives when they describe others. They intensely want to be liked. Type 2s are centered in their emotions and thus may be prone to anxiety. Type 2s may benefit from developing the good aspects of type 4s and avoiding the negative aspects of type 8s.

Billy Crystal described type 3s when he said, “It's better to look fabulous than to be fabulous.” Type 3s feel that they need to look good. This desire is different than that of type 1s who feel they need to actually be good. A type 3 can walk all over others if they do not master their nature. They may also listen to ideas of others then identify them as their own. They often know what is necessary to get the job done. The result of a type 3s desire to look good is that they have the flaw of being deceitful. They feel that they must earn love through an image of success. Type 3s unconsciously adapt to the role of the epitome of success. These efficient and competitive people may come off as having a used car salesman personality. Type 3s develop best when they support growth of the good characteristics of 6s in themselves. Slipping into the negative characteristics of 9s may come easily. Type 3s are in the core of the heart center and thus emotionality is such a core aspect of their being that they may not notice that it is not central to others. This dichotomy may lead them to being slightly disconnected.

A type 4 has a big personality. They cope with the world by treating every issue as though it is a big issue. Every joy in their life is huge. Every trial in their life is gigantic. If type 4s had a the song it might be, “Nobody knows the troubles I've seen.” They have a tendency to have periods of melancholy or depression. This depression is because they feel they are unique and different and no one else could possibly understand how big their issues are. These drama queens have the passion we call envy. They see happiness or wholeness in others and but perpetuate a sense of inner scarcity rather than dealing with the root problem. They also tend to be artistic and appreciate beauty. Type 4s benefit from using some of the aspects type 1s use to promote growth. They should avoid developing the negative aspects

of type 2s. Type 4s are also in the heart center, possibly leading to anxiety.

A fox in the den may be the animal archetype that best describes the coping methods used by Type 5s. These people look at the world but do not become overly involved with it. They are at times loners. They are afraid of being empty and try to hold on to aspects they feel make them able to more confidently negotiate the world. They take in information or even possessions but do not give out information or let go of possessions easily. Although they may not be greedy, this holding on leads to the character flaw of avarice. Many type 5s are introverted. If they are forced to be extroverted, they can find it exhausting. Type 5s live their lives in their heads. In fact, when you ask them what they feel, they may respond with what they think. These intensely private people may not even share what they think. They compartmentalize their work and private lives. They even compartmentalize their inner and outer lives to some degree. Type 5s need to share what they have with the world. They need to become involved in the world in a manner similar to type 8s. They have a tendency to develop the negative characteristics of type 2s.

There are people for whom loyalty is the most important feature. This loyalty has a flip side of passionate fear. They cling to what authorities say. They follow and enforce the rules. These people are often found in government or church. They believe that if you don't like the rules, you should work from the inside to get them changed. You don't just disobey them. These people may also be found among the loyal opposition to established rules. They may feel a higher law is not being served. Kids in gangs who do things they know are wrong because the authorities and rules of their gang tell them to do so may also be type 6s. Type 6s, like type 5s, are in the head center. Type 6s tend to be disconnected from their own intellect at times. The need structure and a sense of safety. They like knowing what they are supposed to do rather than figuring it out themselves. Type 6s are the least likely of any Enneagram type to be able to identify themselves. Type 6 people grow best if they develop some of the characteristics of type 9 people. They should also avoid developing the negative characteristics of type 3s.

You may know and enjoy the presence of a type 7. He or she may have held an audience rapt with a hilarious story at your last party. Type 7s are very pain averse. They seek out the aspects of life that are fun and happy. They may eventually wear thin after you have heard the same great story told for the fifth or sixth time. Their coping methods may also wear thin on them because they sometimes get tired of being "on" all the time. Their need to gather as much happiness as possible is a sign of their passion, gluttony. In fact, type 7s often have a sense of entitlement or even hedonism. Type 7s could benefit from developing the thoughtfulness of type 5s. They should avoid development of the challenges that type 1s face. Although they are in the head center, type 7s primarily use their intellect to plan the next big adventure.

Many people cope with a difficult unjust world by fighting for justice. They fight passionately for the rights of the underdog. If there is a power gap, these type 8s rush to fill it. This may lead to them taking over a situation. They will, however, run things well. Type 8s have a fear of appearing weak. They compensate by dominating people with the strength of their personalities. They will always believe that their behavior is justified. Even though they have good intentions with their desire to use force in their life, their coping method indicates a lust for power. Type 8s must learn moderation. They don't tend to respect people who back down from them. In fact, they respect a worthy opponent. Type 8s don't just want power for power's sake. They want it to set the world right. Type 8s who develop the nurturing aspects of type 2s have the most growth. Those who sink into the negatives found in type 5s may flounder. Type 8s are gut centered people who have a large presence even if found in a small body.

A contrast to the force used in the life of type 8s is clearly seen by the inertia that typifies the coping skills used by type 9s. These people are laid back and peaceful. They avoid conflict at all costs. They deal with their anger by disconnecting from it or by becoming passive aggressive. Because they take a great deal of stimulus to initiate action, their character flaw is called sloth. These people may like

repetitive tasks. Their desire to belong may cause them to be a social chameleon. Type 9s are great peacemakers. They are supported in their growth by looking to the strengths of type 3s. Some aspects of type 6s may be detrimental. Type 9s are in the gut center and thus may have anger, but they are unlikely to be aware of it. Much of their anger is repressed.

These notes come from a class taken at Johnson City Osteopathic Medicine. It was taught by a mercy nun, Sister Connie. If you are interested in future classes, contact Johnson City Osteopathic Medicine at (423) 722-9355.

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