

## **Brief Descriptions of the Enneagram Types**

### **A VERY BRIEF TOUR OF THE TYPES**

Each type has both a number and a name. The name describes the primary characteristic of the type, but doesn't really begin to explain the complexity that is contained within a type. The names are merely shortcuts that provide language for us that can be a tool for understanding.

Type ONE is the Reformer or the Perfectionist. This type is principled and ethical. They see the world in terms of right and wrong and they strive to be right. They have a strong sense of "mission" and a deep need to fight for what is right. They are idealistic, organized and fastidious. They have high standards and they demand high standards of others.

Type TWO is the Helper. Helpers are warm and affectionate. They are driven by relationship and connection. Twos are generous and friendly and extremely open-hearted. Their primary focus is on giving to others, yet they often have difficulty giving to self and acknowledging their own needs.

Type THREE is the Achiever or the Performer. This type is focused on achievement, image and "product." Threes are ambitious and success oriented

and they tend toward competitiveness. They are energetic and charming. Threes are "going somewhere" and they are anxious to get there.

Type FOUR is the Tragic Romantic or the Individualist. Fours are creative, often introspective and full of a variety of moods. Fours often feel different or special and express this through withholding and withdrawal. Fours have a unique flourish and style and express their deep inner world through beauty.

Type FIVE is the Investigator or the Observer. Fives are generally withdrawn and introverted. They have rich inner lives that they often do not enjoy sharing with others. They are intense and curious. They live inside their heads and their imaginations. Fives can be eccentric and innovative.

Type SIX is the Loyalist. The Loyalist is focused on safety at all times. Sixes offer loyalty to others, but only after sufficient testing has been done. They are cautious, even anxious and work hard to ensure safety at all times. Sixes focus on “worst case scenarios” and then work hard to make sure that everyone is safe.

Type SEVEN is the Enthusiast or the Epicure. This type is a study in motion. Sevens seek out the best of everything and move forward relentlessly to pursue the new and different. They struggle with routine. Sevens love the novel and retain a childlike quality into adulthood. They often sacrifice depth and connectedness for impulsiveness and fascination.

Type EIGHT is the Boss or the Challenger. Eights are powerful and domineering and protective. Eights are fierce and assertive. They prefer to be both in control and “right.” They are sensual and earthy and often very family-oriented.

Type NINE is the Peacemaker or the Mediator. Nines are mellow and non-confrontational. They avoid conflict and focus on group harmony. They easily forget their own needs and “fall asleep” to what is important for them. Peace is valued above all else.

### **MOVEMENT BETWEEN NUMBERS**

Each number has a movement pattern during times of stress or times of greater health. This is often referred to as “moving within a triad.” This concept refers to the idea that numbers do not function in isolation from one another. Each type moves one specific direction during times of health and another direction during times of stress. This movement to demonstrating the qualities of another enneagram number can be diagnostic, both for clinicians and individuals. For example, when Twos are stressed, they act like Eights. This “eight like” behavior can be a doorway into personal growth. As we become healthier, we demonstrate fewer behaviors of our stress point and more of the behaviors and attitudes of our health point. If we again use Two as an example, a healthy two embodies more of the attitude of a Four, with a greater focus on self care and introspection. Triads provide concrete tools for self awareness and personal growth.

## **THEME BASED TRIADS**

In addition to personal triads that are the natural flow of our personalities during times of stress or health, there are “themed triads” that help us to understand another level of grouping enneagram numbers.

The Instinctive Triad (types Eight, Nine and One) experience the world through anger or rage. They are often called “gut types” because they experience the world through their bodies first. These types focus on maintaining resistance to the world through boundaries and physical tension.

The Feeling Triad (types Two, Three and Four) experience the world through their hearts and their connection to others. They are “image” points, who see themselves as they believe others see them. Their primary issue is shame and they strive to create identities of connection and attachment that help them to feel safe. They see the world through the lens of feelings.

The Thinking Triad (types Five, Six and Seven) experience the world through a lens of fear and anxiety. This triad thinks first and then plans for ways to stay safe and secure.

In addition to these triads, there are triads that describe our social styles in the enneagram tradition. These triads are called Hornevian Groups. The three stances are: being compliant, being assertive or withdrawing. Types One, Two and Six are compliant. They earn acceptance through being easy to deal with. Types Seven, Eight and Three are assertive. They earn acceptance through going after what they want. Types Four, Five and Nine are withdrawn. They earn acceptance by pulling back from tension and attempting to disappear. The compliant group seeks attention and validation. The assertive group seeks autonomy and control. The withdrawn group seeks security and safety.

Yet another tool for studying the enneagram involves triads that group positive outlook, competency and reactivity. The positive outlook group includes types Two, Seven and Nine. These types use a positive “spin” to defend against disappointment. By seeing “the bright side of things,” these types avoid their inner feelings of sadness and despair. The

competency group includes types Three, One and Five. These types deal with difficulties by detaching from feelings and focusing on logic, reason and competence. Efficiency and accomplishments help this group to feel stable and to separate themselves from possible disappointment. The reactive group is type Four, Six and Eight. These types vacillate between the need to parent and the need to rebel. They deal with negative feelings by acting – they move closer or away, depending on the situation.