

Balancing Relationships with the Enneagram

The World Health Organization recently forecasted that STRESS will be the greatest cause of disability by the year 2020...and we thought it was already bad enough. In my experience working with people of all ages, it appears that one of the key imbalance meters is centered around relationships. Whether it is relating with ourselves through the thoughts we think or with others in our lives – most of us will admit it can be hard enough to please ourselves let alone trying to understand or get along with others in our lives. It may feel like there is always someone ready to test us and push our buttons. How can we attempt to understand the complexities of relating to others if we are all individuals with our own unique way of looking at the world?

There is a remarkable tool with the ability to shed light on this sometimes overwhelming feat. The Enneagram (any-a-gram) is a personality system with roots dating back 2500 years that describes nine patterns of thinking, feeling and acting in the world. All individuals have one of these nine styles as the preference for how they view and interact in the world.

Over the last 30 years, the Enneagram has been gaining respect from the business community, councilors, coaches, therapists and spiritual teachers worldwide. A search on the internet will result in 1000's of listings for books, teachers, typing instruments or articles.

The Enneagram works by defining the central motivation of each type and then describing the accompanying strengths and challenges that are developed to support this motivation. It is so interesting to discover that when we are stressed in life, the goodness and strength of our type becomes exaggerated and is the expression of our imbalance.

For example, a type 2 on the Enneagram is known as the Helper who is motivated to be needed, appreciated and loved by others in their life. This motivation is supported by developing the skills of empathy, understanding, tuning into the needs of others, being friendly, positive and helpful to others. Most would agree that these are valuable qualities for all people to develop. However if the 2 is not feeling needed, appreciated and loved the tendency is to do more of what you are good at which may show up as the classic “rescuer or meddler” where the only focus becomes a search to be needed and wanted in all they say and do.

The symbol for the Enneagram is shown here with descriptive names and some specific characteristics each type adopts. The beauty of discovering our type is that it provides insights to our habits and creates awareness of what we typically focus on. Once we cultivate the awareness, we can then create real choice in how we think, feel and respond in any situation. Yes – freedom. In fact, the Enneagram even sets out the path of growth for each type by outlining areas to focus on to restore balance. And because we are working at the inner core, the resulting balance is experienced in every area of our life. We can create more success in our health and both personal and professional relationships.

Real freedom and peace can be realized when we truly know ourselves and can also clearly see through the eyes of others. There is choice in every moment. May we all learn to be “take ourselves gently” and allow more joy into each day.

Karen Armstrong
Inside Out

The Enneagram



The Enneagram with the Riso-Hudson Type Names

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| 1 Reformers: | Principled, purposeful, self-controlled & perfectionistic |
| 2 Helpers: | Generous, demonstrative, people-pleasing & possessive |
| 3 Achievers: | Adaptable, excelling, driven & image-conscious |
| 4 Individualists: | Expressive, dramatic, self-absorbed & temperamental |
| 5 Investigators: | Perceptive, innovative, secretive & isolated |
| 6 Loyalists: | Engaging, responsible, anxious & suspicious |
| 7 Enthusiasts: | Spontaneous, versatile, acquisitive & scattered |
| 8 Challengers: | Self-confident, decisive, willful & confrontational |
| 9 Peacemakers: | Receptive, reassuring, agreeable & complacent |