

What is the Enneagram?

The Enneagram is a personality system. It asserts that most people fall generally in to one of **Nine Types**. There is diversity within the types and many connections between the numbers regarding both their internal and external functioning. Part of what distinguishes the Enneagram from some other personality systems is that it has a strong component for **personal growth**.

In order to talk about **growth**, it is necessary to talk about **what needs to change**. Many Enneagram teachers will refer to a “**deadly sin**” of each type. Our personalities develop in response to our environment and upbringing. An inseparable part of our personality is how we cope with what causes us pain. We develop many of our negative tendencies as a method of coping with pain in our life.

Interestingly, the Enneagram teaches there are definite connections between our

MANY WHO FIND THEIR NUMBER ON THE ENNEAGRAM WILL HAVE A PAINFUL REALIZATION: “SOMETIMES IN MY LIFE, I HAVE DONE THE RIGHT THINGS FOR THE WRONG REASONS.”

greatest strengths and our **deadly sins**. Something unique about you that is one of your best assets can secretly be a way you are avoiding something unpleasant for you. As you learn about different Enneagram types, when you hear a description of **negative traits** that makes you especially uncomfortable, you may actually be close to discovering your type.

While it might sound negative to reflect on one’s specific weaknesses and transgressions, it provides us with a solid **basis for growth**. It also gives us a better picture of what we can be like when we are healthy and flourishing. You will see some traits

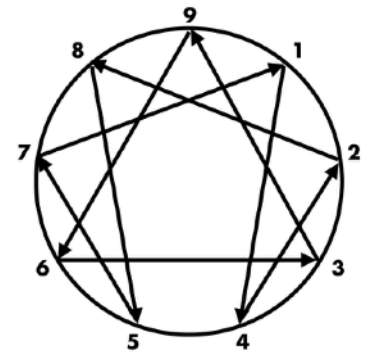
of yourself in every number. In some cases, learning about another number’s way of being may inspire you to become more like them.

Using the Arrows

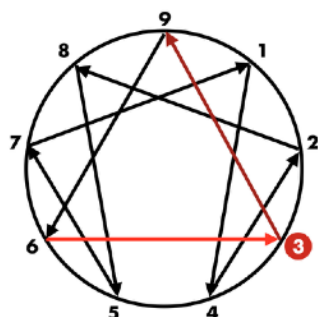
Most Enneagram teachers use the arrows to talk about our **stress** behaviors and our **growth** behaviors. Some will use other terms for the contrast, such as our **integration** and **disintegration** directions. Every number has one number pointing toward it, and another number toward which it is pointing.

The number pointing toward your number is your **growth** or **integration** number. As you look at it, imagine one number feeding in to another. This means that when you are in a time of functioning in a safe and healthy place, you may take on some characteristics of that number. A healthy One, for example, may suddenly be more lively and entertaining like a Seven would be.

The arrow pointing away from your number is pointing toward your **stress** or **disintegration** number. In times of stress and insecurity, you may take on characteristics of the other number until you have moved through the period of stress. This can sometimes go



on for months or years, depending on the nature and length of the stressful time. As you look at the arrow from one, pointing toward the other, think of it **reaching for help** from the other number toward which it is pointing.



For example, a stressed out Three who is normally a Performer may take on characteristics of a Nine, a Peacemaker. A Three is normally preoccupied with how well they are performing, wanting the approval of their work, but caring less about how people feel about them personally. This would mean that in stress the Three would become more reserved, paying more attention to how other people feel, and trying to sort out how they themselves actually feel. Getting in touch with their true emotions as a response to stress actually will help the three to re-engage the world with a better-established personal compass and better sensitivities to others. Most stress behaviors have the potential to provide

the types with **something they are needing to help** them move through the stress period.

Finding Your Number

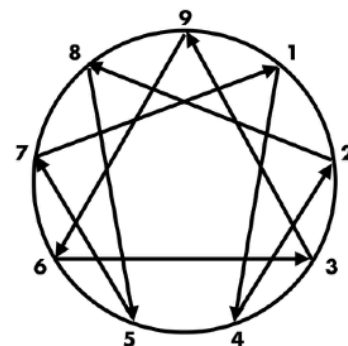
Below we will detail some various ways that Enneagram numbers share traits in common. There are Wings, which are the two numbers next to yours, and there is also a wide assortment of Triads, which group the numbers into typical shared patterns of behavior. Even if you aren't positive about what number you are, you can probably at least find a triad or two into which you believe you fit.

Wings

You will probably find a type on the Enneagram that resembles you, at least in terms of your **inner world of thoughts and motives**. In addition to our stress and growth behaviors indicated by the arrows, every Enneagram type has two **wings**. The wings are the numbers on either side of a particular number. For example, the possible wings of a Nine would be an Eight or a One. Generally, your **inner workings** will be your true number, but the way you engage the world may have strong similarities to one of the types beside you.

If you read through Enneagram descriptions and the basic description of a number sounds pretty much accurate, you may be a number with **balanced wings**. If you read a description and say, "That's how I think, but I don't necessarily act like that," then you may be a number with a **dominant wing**.

For example, a person who is an Eight is a Challenger. Challengers are strong-willed and engaging with



Summary of the Nine Types

Type	Identity	Description	Sin to Avoid	Virtue to Grow
1	The Reformer / Perfectionist	principled, inspiring, purposeful, perfectionistic	Anger , chronically trying to perfect the world and resenting whatever doesn't meet their expectations	Patience , accepting there is more than one way to do things in the world, having more compassion for the world and themselves for being imperfect
2	The Helper	generous, demonstrative, people-pleasing	Pride , believing that others have more needs than they do, and would be lost without the help they provide	Humility that acknowledges their own needs and asks others directly for help and support
3	The Performer / Achiever	adaptable, driven, image-conscious	Deceit , wanting to project images of success so badly that they will deceive others and even themselves	Integrity , learning to project their true selves, knowing they can be loved as they are, and not only for what they can accomplish
4	The Romantic / Individualist / Creative	expressive, dramatic, self-absorbed	Envy , believing that something is lacking within them, and wishing they had the normalcy and happiness of others	Gratitude that cherishes what they have, dwelling on what is present rather than on what is missing
5	The Investigator / Quiet Specialist	perceptive, innovative, secretive, isolated	Avarice / Greed for their energy, time, and resources, hoarding ideas, knowledge, privacy, and space for fear they lack what is needed to engage the world	Generosity when they relax the mindset of scarcity and accept the reality of abundance that they are enough, and can engage meaningfully

Type	Identity	Description	Sin to Avoid	Virtue to Grow
6	The Loyalist / Skeptic	engaging, responsible, anxious, suspicious	Fear that leads them to act out worst-case scenarios in their heads and attach themselves to authority figures and belief systems	Faith that learns to trust their inner conscience to help guide them into good decisions, not needing to have a plan for everything
7	The Enthusiast / Epicurean	spontaneous, versatile, scattered	Gluttony , to avoid pain or feelings of deprivation, they devour experiences, ideas, and the best that life has to offer	Sobriety that is willing to integrate both the joys and sorrows of life, following through on long-term commitments and projects
8	The Challenger / Controller	self-confident, intense, decisive, confrontational, willful	Lust for intensity, projecting strength and power, desiring total control	Chastity , learning to moderate intensity and to practice vulnerability
9	The Peacemaker	receptive, reassuring, complacent, resigned	Sloth , tending to merge with others, even compromising values to avoid conflict and preserve inner peace	Diligence , becoming more assertive and pursuing their life's agenda, even if it produces conflict or arouses their fear of disconnection

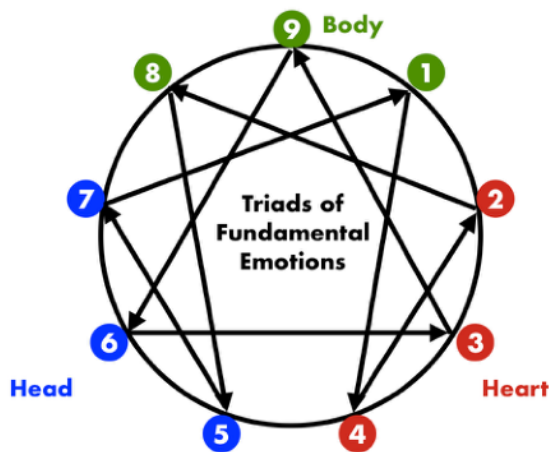
a special place in their hearts for people who are vulnerable. An Eight with a dominant Nine wing (**8w9**) would have an exterior more like a Peacemaker, meaning that this person would be very gentle and pleasant as you meet them, but if they believe you're trying to take advantage of them or someone weaker, you might discover a sleeping bear under the surface who is not afraid to confront you or call you out. If you find an **attitude** that matches your thinking on the Enneagram, but **actions** that are a little less precise, you might look at the numbers beside yours and see if you have a dominant wing that resembles them.

Generally, the Enneagram is described as nine types, but if you add in all the potential wings, this would give you a starting point of **twenty seven** types. The nine provide a simpler starting map, but as you go deeper into yourself, you may find help in learning about the dominant-winged types more specifically.

Triads

Below, we will look at several of the different **triads**. There are many ways that the Enneagram types can be sorted and categorized. Even if you struggle to find a particular number that sounds most like you, you can probably find some of the triads into which you fit.

Emotional Centers



There are three primary emotional centers that provide different types of intelligence. When operating in a time of health, all of us have access to all three centers. But most of us have one center from which we tend to operate.

The **Body** (or Gut) Center

Types 8, 9, 1

These types listen strongly to their bodies and are well **grounded** in the present moment. They tend to act **instinctively** and **decisively**. In times of unbalance, they may try to assert their will over others. For these types, there is

generally **anger** not too far under the surface. The first instinct is to **do something**. They have strong physical boundaries. Types out of touch with their Body Center may feel ungrounded and have trouble asserting themselves.

The **Heart** (or Emotion) Center

Types 2, 3, 4

These types have strong **emotional intelligence** that informs them about the needs and ideas of others. Open to our hearts, we can be **compassionate**, in touch with ourselves, and can release our past hurts. In times of unbalance, these types may look outside themselves for **validation**, and there is usually **shame** not too far under the surface. Their first instinct is to **feel something**. Types out of touch with their Heart Center will have trouble perceiving who they truly are and be cut off from their feelings.

The **Head** Center

Types 5, 6, 7

These types focus on **obtaining knowledge** and support. At their best, these types have powerful inner guidance and can provide clear thinking and planning. In times of unbalance, these types will believe they must seek **security** through other means, rather than trusting what they have internally. **Anxiety** is usually not too far under the surface. Their first instinct is to **think** and **plan**. Types out of touch with their Head Center will tend to have foggy thinking and feel they must rely on external guides rather than internal intuition.

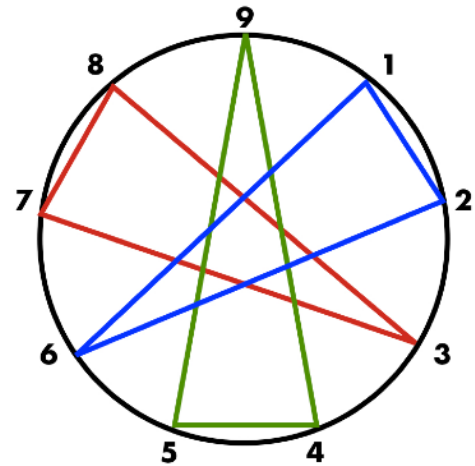
Social Styles Triads

These are called **Horneyan Triads**. They are named by Don Riso and Russ Hudson based on psychologist Karen Horney's descriptions of three prominent social styles that involve moving against, toward, or away from others.

Assertive Triad

Types 3, 7, and 8

Move **against** other types. These tend to be doers who like to get things moving. Assertiveness gives them the easiest time of the styles in confronting and speaking their minds. They have the potential to hurt other people's feelings if they are overly gruff.



Compliant Triad

Types 1, 2, and 6

Move **toward** others. These tend to be dutiful and bring strong cooperation to others. They provide support and assistance. They convey a warm desire to please and can "lean in" to read your needs. Sometimes these types are overly focused on social rules in interactions with the potential of irritating others.

Withdrawn Triad

Types 4, 5, and 9

Move **away from** others. These tend to have a focus that is internal, but also broad and strategic. Interpersonally, these types are thoughtful, self-contained, and generally introverted. Sometimes these types have difficulty speaking up and expressing themselves in social situations, leaving others confused about their needs or desires.

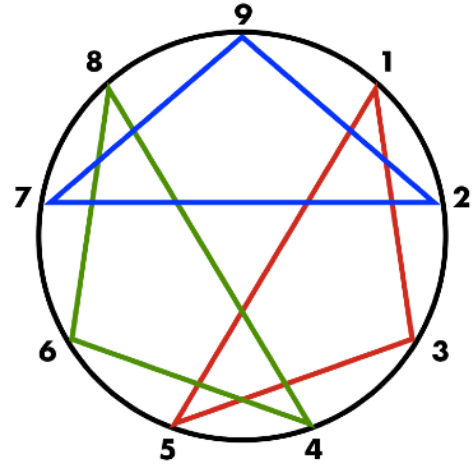
Conflict Resolution Styles

These are called the **Harmonic Triads**, revealing how we go about making peace.

Competency Triad

Types 1, 3, and 5

These are natural problem solvers. When in conflict, they aim to stay civil and strategize to find solutions. They are excellent at long-term planning and are good about staying on track to complete their goals. The downside is that they can be overly focused and emotionally restricted. When we solve conflicts analytically, we avoid either feeling immediate emotions or viewing the situation positively. These types don't always take emotional needs into consideration or broader contexts, making some of their solutions less useful.



Emotional Realness Triad

Types 4, 6, and 8

These types are skilled at drawing out emotions and feelings. In conflict, they first want to process their feelings and hear genuine responses from others, bringing pressing needs to the surface. They want to get the difficult feelings out in the open so they can be processed and the air can be cleared. The downside is that these types can have difficulty moving forward. Addressing feelings is initially useful, but can spin into endless conflict and emotional reactivity, making it hard to move toward solutions.

Positive Outlook Triad

Types 2, 7, and 9

These types can make the best out of a challenge and have a broad view, that the problem isn't as big of a deal as some people are thinking. They help keep people's spirits up when there is stress. The downside is that they sometimes will deny that a conflict is even occurring. Denial makes it hard to air out feelings or to develop solutions to a challenge. Conflict can sometimes get much worse through ignoring it than if it had been acknowledged right away.

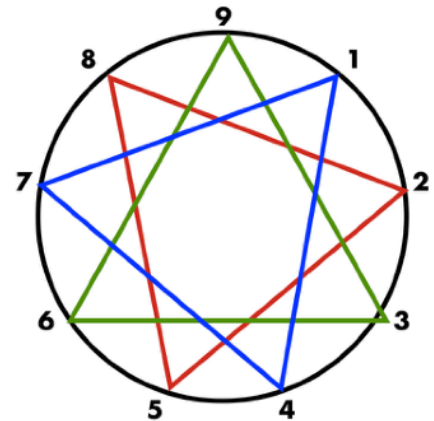
Object Relations Triads

Very early on, all of us develop internal strategies for how we interact with the world. Becoming mindful of our tendency can help us sort out when we are having a genuine engagement or when we are simply acting out of a relational instinct.

Pragmatists

Types 3, 6, 9

They demonstrate three primary ways of blending into and thriving in the world. Threes seek a role in the world that is practical and sustaining. It helps threes to move towards hope, as they are prone to believe their value is only in performance. Sixes seek a safe and secure existence in the world. It helps sixes to move toward faith, as they are prone to suspicion. Nines seek a comfortable position in the world. It helps nines to move toward love, particularly a love of self which allows us to love others from a place of our genuine identity.



Relationists

Types 2, 5, 8

They demonstrate three great moves which occur in all relationships. Twos move toward others to care for their needs. It helps twos to move toward altruism which is showing love from a place of wholeness, and not from a place of wanting the other to provide the wholeness a two may feel is missing. Fives move away from others to gain perspective and reason. It helps fives to move toward connections with others so that the wisdom they manifest is rooted in reality and relationships, and not too disembodied to be useful. Eights declare toward others, asserting what is needful. It helps eights to be open to a fresh perspective from others without bringing a personal agenda or challenge.

Idealists

Types 1, 4, 7

They demonstrate a vision of the way the world *could* be in order for people to flourish. Ones seek a perfect world according to their internal standards, and are frustrated when this does not occur. It helps ones to appreciate differences in life, and embrace that God's divine expression can take many forms in the world. Fours seek a perfect world in which nothing of importance or substance is missing, and are frustrated when much in the world feels trivial or lacking in significance. It helps fours to learn to appreciate the good things that are present, rather than fixating on what is missing in the world. Sevens seek the perfect world that is entirely positive, free of suffering or pain, and tend to jump to something new or positive every time suffering occurs. It helps sevens to embrace all of life, allowing each moment its dignity—even the uncomfortable ones—so that life can be experienced in greater wholeness with the lessons our ups and downs can teach us.

Growing With The Enneagram

What *not* to do:

- Don't use the Enneagram number as an excuse for inaction or staying the same. "I can't help it, because I'm a Five."
- Don't use the Enneagram to categorize people as a way to avoid treating them with respect and dignity. "That's just him/her being a Four. I don't have to take it seriously."
- Don't assume that the Enneagram is the primary or exclusive means by which you grow as a Christian. Obviously, people's lives take different paths, and even if our personalities are similar it doesn't mean that we have to grow in the same ways in the same order. The Enneagram provides generalizations and helpful insights but the most important growth comes from knowing and walking with God.

What you *should* do:

- Have an open mind. The Enneagram won't be a perfect model, but many people have found helpful insights here. You might, too.
- Allow yourself to grow in empathy. As you listen to what it's like to be other people, you may find a deeper well of compassion for them. Most people do what makes sense to them. Understanding how they function can help you know how to love and support them.
- Have the courage to stretch yourself. Some people are highly resistant to identifying with a type because they don't want to be confronted with an area in which they need to grow. If something here resonates with you, try pushing yourself in a new direction and see what happens.

S.N.A.P.

Suzanne Stabile and Ian Morgan Cron recommend what they call the SNAP method for growth. It's great as a proactive discipline and also as a way to focus yourself in times of stress.

STOP

It might be helpful to build into your calendar schedule specific reminders to stop and take 2-3 minutes to become aware of yourself and what God might be doing in your life.

NOTICE

Notice your environment and the effect it is having on you. Are you getting more or less tense? More or less peaceful? What helps you be healthy? What drains you?

ASK

As you notice what is happening and what you are feeling, it is important to check yourself and ask, "Is it true?" Is what I'm feeling an accurate reflection of what's really going on? Am I reading other people correctly, or are my instincts misleading me or causing me to use my time and energy unproductively?

PIVOT

When you take a survey of your situation, yourself, and have a clearer picture of what's really happening, then make a change that is fitting to the situation. Be the version of yourself you choose to be. Don't be stuck on autopilot.

THE DINNER PARTY



Can you find yourself here at the party?

How about your spouse or children? Do these people seem familiar?

RESOURCES

The following resources were all utilized heavily in creating the content for this class.

Berghoef, Kacie, and Melanie Bell. *The Modern Enneagram: Discover Who You Are and Who You Can Be*. Berkeley, CA: Althea Press, 2017. (Note: This is a great entry level read about the Enneagram that approaches the types from several thematic angles, rather than simply working through and describing each of the types. It is secular in its approach.)

Palmer, Helen. *The Enneagram: Understanding Yourself and the Others in Your Life*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991. (Note: This book is a bit older, and probably not where I would start. You'll see any books after it refer to it often. Palmer's greatest contribution in my opinion is her development of the Narrative Tradition of the Enneagram. I'm not using this book as much in class prep, but her method of allowing various Types to talk about their own Types so that others can observe them is a helpful teaching tool that I'll try to utilize.)

Rohr, Richard, and Andreas Ebert. *The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*. New York: Crossroad Pub., 2001. (Note: This is the most in depth resource on the Enneagram from a deliberately Christian angle. It is a dense but very rich read.)
Rohr is a One.

Stabile, Suzanne. *The Path Between Us: An Enneagram Journey to Healthy Relationships*. Westmont, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2018. (Note: Suzanne Stabile is one of the best teachers of the Enneagram. This is a great book for taking your knowledge of the Enneagram toward application in your family. She writes from a Christian perspective.)
Stabile is a Two.

Stabile, Suzanne, and Ian Morgan Cron. *The Road Back to You: an Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery*. Westmont, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2016. I also used the accompanying study guide they published. (Note: If you don't know where to start, this is a terrific first book on the Enneagram from a Christian perspective.)
Stabile is a Two. Cron is a Four.