

FREE • TO • BE • ME

Using the Enneagram for Personal Growth

TYPE THREE: The Performer

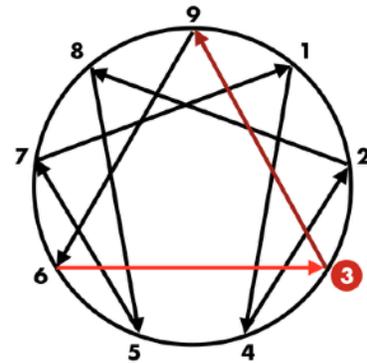
Overview:

Type Threes are performers and achievers. They are capable, multi-talented, and have an incredible ability to rise to whatever occasion they happen to be in. Threes multitask unlike anyone else. Threes are goal-oriented, both short-term and long-term, and they reach many of their goals. They are also generous with others who seek their strategies and advice. When a Three enters the room, they immediately begin reading the situation to discern what kind of a person they need to be, and then they jump into action. Threes tend to have segmented lives, often having several sets of friends, each of who knows them as a different person.

They can keep an enormous number of plates spinning in their life, doing unrelated things back to back or even simultaneously with apparent ease. What they wouldn't want you to know is that occasionally, they get exhausted from all of this. Because Threes are so focused on "the goal" and on impressing people, they sometimes fail to be mindful of the feelings and contributions of others. A temptation for Threes is to cut corners in their work, to do *just enough* for people to be impressed. Likewise, because they are constantly shapeshifting, they may become suspicious of other people, assuming that other people probably do what they do.

Am I A Three?

- Is it important to you that your friends and colleagues perceive you as successful?
- Do you adapt your personality style to whatever person you are around so that you can meet their expectations?
- Do you fear failure much more than you'd ever want anyone to know?
- Can you flip your emotions off quickly in order to get back to your work?
- Without a goal to achieve, do you get restless and bored?



Color: **Traffic Light Yellow**

National Code: **U.S.A.**



Healthy Mascot

Soaring Eagle



Average Mascot

Chameleon



Unhealthy Mascot

Peacock



Scriptural Type Three: Moses, Jacob, Pilate

Moses was an inspiring leader for the people of Israel as they came out of Egypt. It is fitting that a Three would be the one who stepped up boldly to challenge Pharaoh and perform signs on God's behalf when needed. Even though he had initial anxiety about being able to perform well enough, when he was in the situations where he needed to lead, he was able.

Moses sometimes tried to be more than what any one person really could be. His father-in-law had to help him learn to delegate when it came to matters of judging disputes among the Israelites. When the Israelites got to complaining too much, Moses could devolve into less healthy behaviors, such as in Numbers 20 where God told him to speak to a rock. Instead Moses said, "Must we bring you water out of his rock?" and then he struck it twice. The performer in him got him in trouble over that situation.

A healthy Three can get in touch with their emotions and can grow in the area of empathy. In Exodus 32, when Israel had built the Golden Calf while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Law from God, Moses pleaded with God to forgive them, offering himself to be blotted out of God's book, rather than see the people be lost.

Jacob was another possible Type Three in Scripture. The deadly sin of Threes is deceit, and Jacob's name means "heel grabber" (like someone "pulling your leg") and he was called the "deceiver." Jacob tended to become who he needed to become in many situations to get what he wanted. He cooked a good lentil stew that led to him tricking his brother out of his birthright. He worked hard to impress his father-in-law in order to earn his wife. He even wrestled with God on that one strange occasion (Genesis 32), refusing to let the man God until he blessed him.

On the less healthy spectrum, consider **Pilate**. Pilate knew what was just. He knew that Jesus was innocent. But in the moment, he wanted the crowds to approve of him as a leader. So he made a show of washing his hands in front of them, as if he had nothing to do with what was going on. He made sure the people got what they wanted, even when it went against everything he knew to be right.

Threes in Pop Culture

Another unhealthy Three would be **Gaston** from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. He was impressive by anyone's standard. Don't forget the song about all the things Gaston could do better than anyone else. No one does *anything* as well as Gaston. He clearly relishes every bit of praise he can pile up. Of course, on the inside there is a highly insecure person who *needs to be seen* as the best, smartest,



strongest, and most desirable. It is true that many Threes are highly competitive and not someone you would want to have to follow in a public speech or performance.

A Real Life Three's Schedule

Our Youth Minister, Peyton Copeland, I consider to be a *healthy* Three. I asked him to share his standard schedule with me as an example of how a Three can multitask. I know he is presently training for a triathlon which probably shapes this some.

SUNDAY

7-12pm	Church
12-2:30pm	Lunch and Errands
2:30-4:30pm	Workout
4:30-7pm	Lesson planning for the next week
7-9:30pm	Life Group (host, provide dinner, lead discussion)
10pm	Asleep

MONDAY

Until 4:30pm	Work
4:30-5:30pm	Nap
5:30-10pm	Rest day. No workout. Clean the house. Read and paint. ¹

TUESDAY

5:30am	Swim
Until 4:30pm	Work
5pm	Eat Dinner
5:30-8pm	20 mile bike ride, shower, eat
8-10pm	Read and Paint, in bed by 10.

WEDNESDAY

Until 4:30pm	Work
4:30-6pm	5 mile run
6-6:40pm	Eat, Shower
7-9:30pm	Church (elders meetings every other Wednesday)
9:30-10pm	Read and Paint, depending on time available

THURSDAY

5:30am	Swim
Until 3:15pm	Work
3:15-4:30pm	Chess Club
Until 5:30pm	Nap
5:30-8:30pm	15 mile bike ride, shower, and eat
8:30-10pm	Read and Paint

FRIDAY

Until 4:30pm	Work
Until 5:30pm	Nap
Until 6:30pm	Workout (probably a 4-5 mile run)
Until 11pm	Date night

SATURDAY

8-11am	Workout (10-15 mile bike ride, 3-5 mile run) Lunch
1-4pm	Game day with the family
4-6pm	Clean the House
7-9pm	Read and Paint, or Netflix

¹ He clarified for me that when he is reading and painting, he is actually doing both at the same time, listening to audio books while painting miniature D&D figures to use for game day.



Growth for Threes:

Because Threes are often so busy trying to impress everyone, they may lose touch with their real self who is buried several layers down beneath facades. Relationships in their life will often suffer because of their drive to succeed. They may tend to reduce the people around them to extensions of themselves, rather than as stand-alone persons worthy of respect.

For Threes, growth needs to involve cultivating both **hope** and an ability to **be still** in the presence of God. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*

Threes can grow in their appreciation that many of our victories are not anything we've had to achieve, or would even be capable of accomplishing, but they come from God, who gives us our victories. Because Threes want so badly for their strengths and achievements to be noticeable and acknowledged, they can grow by learning to place a higher value on what is unseen and eternal; the reward for which we work which only God can graciously bestow.

If you ask a Three how they are feeling, they may not even know. Threes tend to jump from task to task, and they become healthier when they learn that after achieving one, it is good and fruitful to take time enjoying what they have already accomplished. Threes may have a difficult time learning to practice deeper forms of prayer and contemplation with God, but by growing in the practice they will learn to accept their love as God's children without needing to impress people as much.

Many Threes experience tremendous growth by getting involved in projects that have nothing to do with their personal advancement. Working cooperatively with others toward goals that transcend their personal interests can be a powerful tool for helping them find their true value and identity.

Threes Need To Learn:

- Three of the hardest things a Three can ever say which produce great freedom and healing if they need to be said:
(1) "I've failed." (2) "I was wrong." (3) "I lied."
- Try putting your relationships before your work and "goals" at least once per day. See if your family doesn't notice the difference and thank you for it.
- Stop and appreciate the successes you've already enjoyed without looking ahead for whatever the next hoop is you intend to jump through.
- Allow something to be posted on social media about you that is unflattering. A photo or story you don't like. Do so without trying to spin it in some way that makes you impressive.
- Make a regular spot in your routine to ask yourself how you are feeling, really feeling. The results may surprise you.
- Begin a practice of sitting in silence for ten minutes per day. Learn to be still in the presence of God.

- Work on practicing consistent values in all of your relationships, not giving in to the temptation to change or cut corners in order to blend better where you are presently.
- Learn to enjoy success without connecting it to your value as a human.
- You cannot set goals for other people. You can have mutually agreed-upon goals, but they need to be compatible and realistic for you both.
- You need to become open about who you are with the people you actually want to be close to. This cannot happen if you don't share some of your vulnerabilities.
- Your work is not your identity.

How To Care For The Three In Your Life:

- Because Threes are highly organized, competitive, and productive, they are often exhausted. They need to know it's not their image you love, but what's underneath it.
- Don't assume that they have easy access to their authentic feelings.
- Threes tend to have a future orientation, which means they are distracted during conversations. Whatever you've said has triggered their thoughts about something else they are hoping to pursue in line with what you just mentioned. Don't take their distraction personally.
- They won't be interested in rehashing things from the past.
- If they are not intentional, it will be hard for them to talk about what has happened or is happening in their life at work.
- Threes don't lose well, so it is healthy for them to learn to think in ways that are not so dualistic, less focused on judging things as good or bad, liked or disliked.
- Threes want your approval and praise, and really like when you verbalize it.
- Don't talk too much about negative things. Threes are optimistic and appreciate a positive outlook.
- Avoid over-talking about your relationship.
- Threes come on strong, and need for you to be softer than they are.
- Verbalize to them your understanding of their struggle with image and a need to maintain it. At the same time, avoid encouraging their image-crafting and shape-shifting.
- Threes need to grow in their ability to identify and discuss their feelings. Do that, but after they share a few thoughts, give them a break so they don't have to think about feelings for a while.
- While you should be sure that Threes have regular time for your relationship as part of their schedule, be sure to honor what times they have set aside for working on projects. They don't appreciate interruptions.
- Threes tend to be out of touch with what others are feeling. Give Threes accurate and upfront information about what you need. They desire to meet your needs, but may need help knowing what they are.