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Using the Enneagram for Personal Growth

Instinctive Triads

There are many different groupings of three we could use to categorize people. Psychoanalyst Karen Horney has suggested there are three types of people based on how they react to life's conflicts: (1) those who turn **away** from other people, (2) those who

We remember before our God and Father your work produced by **faith**, your labor prompted by **love**, and your endurance inspired by **hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- I Thessalonians 1:3

develop a **hostile** attitude toward people, and (3)

those who turn **toward**

people. Gurdjieff is the thinker who has ascribed different **intelligences** to different parts of the body, which is common in teachings about the Enneagram.

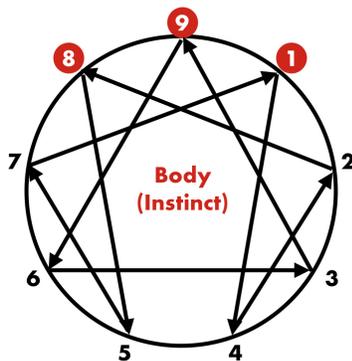
"There are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened.

- Mary Kay Ash

Most commonly, it is taught that the three fundamental triads

of the Enneagram are the **head, heart, and body** (or gut) triads. Each of these types follow a different primary source of motivation for why they do what they do. Each of us can draw from any of the three directions, but we probably have a "go-to" starting point. Below, we'll have a look at each of the three triads.

Body or Gut Triad



Type Eight: The Challenger
Type Nine: The Peacemaker
Type One: The Perfectionist

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **mind**.

- Matthew 22:37

Each of these types is notable for having strong personal boundaries. They react to things quickly and instinctively. Life can tend to feel like a battleground where they're either asserting themselves ("I'm here. Deal with me.") or marking the boundaries of their territory ("Why am I here?").

They are frequently concerned both with power and with justice. They *have* to know who is in charge. They want to know what is theirs to own. They tend to be ruled in some way by aggression. Though outwardly they will typically appear self-confident and strong, inwardly they may be strong self-doubters.

Challenges:

For Eights: Excessiveness, Anger, Dominating, Lustful, Afraid of vulnerability

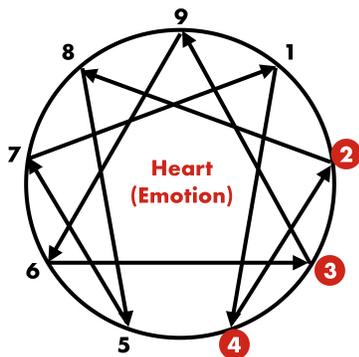
For Nines: Stubborn, Ambivalent, Self-forgetful, Indecisive, Conflict-avoidant

For Ones: Resentment, Rigidity, Judgmental, Non-adaptable, Overly-critical

How Body Types Help:

Body types help us to listen to our instincts. When we listen well to our instincts, we should feel strong, embodied, and present at this moment. If we are out of touch with our instincts, we may feel ungrounded, have difficulty asserting ourselves, and be lost in our ideas and emotions when we need to be decisive.

Growth for body types involves confronting the generic way in which they tend to think of love and relationships. Vulnerability, imperfection, and openness all help them move in the direction of real relationships. They need to show love in ways that are specific, concrete, and personal.



Heart Triad

Type Two: The Helper

Type Three: The Performer

Type Four: The Romantic

Each of these types moves toward other people. In fact, to call them “heart” types is a bit deceptive, because each of them experience themselves relative to the feelings or behaviors of others. They are attuned to touch and taste. They are concerned primarily with their relation to others (“Do you like me?” or “Whom am I with?”).

Life for them is a task to be accomplished. They are concerned with prestige and image, which—in a positive sense—leads to them having a well-developed sense of responsibility. They often tend to think they know what is good for others. They are generally drawn towards forms of religious expression that are closely tied to social warmth. They should flourish in these, but should also learn to be alone with God.

They may tend to fixate on what they will do next, what they don’t have, or what they have not yet attained, and so an area of growth for them is to appreciate and find contentment in themselves and in what is already theirs.

Challenges:

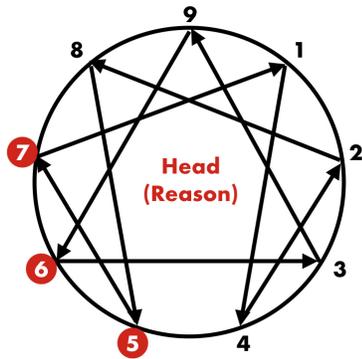
For Twos: Pride, Dependent on others’ approval, Intrusive, Demanding, Privileged

For Threes: Image-driven, Over-worked, Impatient, Competitive, Out of touch with feelings

For Fours: Moody, Withdrawn, Self-absorbed, Over-sensitive, Demanding, Unsatisfied

How Heart Types Help:

Heart types help us pay better attention to the feelings and needs of others. They seek out connections. They have both a strong sense of self but also a strong sense of compassion. They are supportive, empathetic, and enthusiastic problem solvers.



Head Triad

Type Five: The Investigator

Type Six: The Loyalist

Type Seven: The Enthusiast

The head types operate from their brains. Their first move is to *think* something. In a new setting, they'll be asking, "Where am I?" and "How does this all fit together?" They tend to approach life as a riddle or mystery to be solved.

They are great at objectivity, but this sometimes leads them to being detached in some way, often emotionally. They are visual people, in touch with what they see. They have a sense for order and a sense of duty, making sure that they themselves have few needs, allowing space for others.

These types can be intellectual, imaginative, and witty. Because they live so much in their heads, they will need to work at being in touch, both with their emotions and with their physical bodies.

Growth for head types will involve learning to be real, concrete, and physically present, and not just retreating into the safe space of their heads. A move must come from thinking to acting. They will be drawn towards prayer and reflection that involves focusing on specific things to engage their thinking. They can stretch themselves through Christian community, becoming real and open to the feelings and needs of others.

Challenges:

For Fives: Detached, Isolated, Overly intellectual, Withholding, Hoarding

For Sixes: Anxious, Hyper-vigilant, Pessimistic, Contrary, Over-active imagination

For Sevens: Self-absorbed, Dispersed, Uncommitted, Impatient, Unrealistic

How Head Types Help:

Head types provide a healthy invitation to heart and body types to engage their higher thinking. Look at other angles of what is going on. Try to imagine new possibilities. Make sure to plan for what's ahead. At their best, head types are perceptive, respectful, courageous, imaginative, and optimistic.

Whoever can't live alone
should beware community.
Whoever is not in community,
let him beware solitude.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Romans 12:9-14

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. **11** Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. **12** Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. **13** Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. **14** Bless those who bless you; bless, and do not curse.