One: The Achiever. Ones are highly focused and intense people who measure everything — especially themselves and their own performance — by perfectionistic standards. Often presenting the smiling, sociable side of their personalities to the world, they experience great interior pressure to work hard and to be fair, moderate, just, kind, and amiable in the process. They keep a tight reign on all their emotions, especially anger, in order to attain the perfectly acceptable response. An insistent mental voice criticizes them if they do not live up to all these standards; often it causes them to criticize others as well. Ones feel caught in imperfection and so strive to avoid it; they want to feel perfect.

Two: The Helper. Twos have an extraordinary sensitivity to human feeling and need. They focus their attention on responding to the needs of others and are blind to any needs or shortcomings in themselves. Being both perceptive and responsive, they disarm others by creating a safe atmosphere that invites people to be open, honest, and vulnerable. Twos both easily create dependent relationships and come to depend on others' gratitude for their sense of well-being and worth. This emphasis on the interpersonal can easily lead to unfinished projects and/or broken deadlines. Twos feel caught in their own personal needs and so strive to avoid them; they want to feel needed.

Three: The Succeeder. Threes are active, goal-oriented, future-oriented, and work-oriented. Whether or not they themselves are aware of their inner world of feelings and ideas, they usually reveal only the most pleasant and ingratiating aspects of their inner life; thus, they are personable without being personal. Possessing an uncanny ability to read other people's motives even from afar, they use this political ability to find their way around or through other people's needs and agendas in order to secure their own success. Being naturally optimistic, they walk away from negative people and situations. Threes feel caught in failure and so strive to avoid it; they want to feel competent, capable, and successful.

Four: The Individualist. Fours are emotionally sensitive people — first toward themselves, and then toward others. Emotions, both positive and negative, are the lens through which they view the world. This focus on emotions is both a strength and a weakness. The strength lies in their creative sensitivities which lead them to initiate new and original programs and/or innovative ideas that will enhance existing programs. The weakness lies in their tendency to take everything personally and to identify everything that could go wrong with a project before they are able to give their wholehearted support. When their emotions are balanced with objectivity, Fours excel in communication and relational skills. Fours feel caught in their own ordinariness and so strive to avoid it; they want to feel unique.

Five: The Observer. Fives are emotionally distant and reserved people who strive for a dispassionate perspective. While they can feel deeply about life, they detach themselves from their feelings to attain the higher goal of objectivity; thus, their first love is knowledge and information, and their great desire is to distill knowledge into wisdom. By separating feeling from
fact they pierce to the core of an issue; consequently, their mental acuity is often matched only by their tactlessness. They approach life as experts whose dry sense of humor supports them as they connect with a social world in which they feel uncomfortable. Fives feel caught in their own emptiness and so strive to avoid it; they want to feel full of knowledge.

**Six: The Guardian.** Sixes are responsible people who are driven in their activity by an underlying sense of anxiety as well as a desire to be included. Often in a sociable and gracious way, they express these needs as desires for personal contact and reassurance. Sixes have deep needs for group relationships; thus, family and/or a professional, community, or social group become the recipients of their dedication and loyalty. They are information-oriented people who seem always to need one more fact, one more viewpoint to feel confident. They are team players who find independent decision making difficult. Sixes feel caught in personal anxiety and so strive to avoid it; they want to feel secure.

**Seven: The Dreamer.** Sevens are optimistic, happy, and fun-loving idealists who can't admit of problems that can't be solved or situations that can't be fixed. These are often mentally creative people with overactive minds who have difficulty following through on their plans and ideas without the support of others who are more practical. Sevens, who are enthusiastic communicators and socially charming, need to balance their idealism with a heavy dose of realism, focused effort, and fortitude. Their love for others is most evident in their loyalty and thoughtfulness as they generally avoid any direct communication of intimate emotion. Sevens feel caught in the pain of life and so strive to avoid it; they want to feel happy.

**Eight: The Confronter.** Eights concentrate on their own abilities to make things happen; thus they come across as forthright, blunt, firm, and full of life and strength. Some are loud and raucous, others are reserved and proper, but all are direct in communication. They have clearly defined ideas on what is just and use their considerable strength to make the world conform to their ideas, first for themselves and then for others. Eights are organized people who are determined to be in control whenever possible. A tender side lies within them which their own family can tap into, along with anyone they consider to be oppressed. Eights feel caught in their personal weakness and so strive to avoid it; they want to feel strong.

**Nine: The Preservationist.** Nines are easygoing, affable people who are professionally and socially respected. They recoil from conflict of any kind and withdraw into the passive power of silence to ward off what they experience as emotional upheaval. Professionally, these unflappable people prove to be practical, deliberate, and resourceful. They have the resilience to deal with situations that others find too stressful. Because Nines expend nearly all of their energy in the public forum, their private world tends to be neglected both emotionally and physically. In both worlds, they use silence and affability to get along with others. Nines feel caught in turmoil and so strive to avoid it; they want to feel peaceful.
At the simplest level, the Enneagram can be viewed as a personality typing system, but don’t think recognizing and accepting your Enneagram type will strip you of your unique sense of identity or individuality by lumping you together with every other person of the same type. Far from being a narrow one-size-fits-all box, each point has plenty of room for subtleties and variations.

Since it doesn’t simply pigeonhole people, but is a comprehensive and multifaceted system, it takes a bit of effort to fully grasp. Numerous books are now available on the Enneagram, written from various perspectives. This is a very basic overview of the key elements.

Enneagram is a Greek word that means nine points. The Enneagram symbol is composed of a triangle and a hexad within a circle.

The resulting nine points represent nine basic, or core, personality types, each of which has a unique perspective and approach to life. The theory behind the Enneagram is that we each polarize at one of the nine points. We then overdevelop the characteristics associated with that point, while leaving the characteristics associated with the other points undeveloped. So each point also represents a particular type of imbalance. Our core personality type doesn’t change over the course of a lifetime, but as we become aware of our imbalances, we gain the ability to moderate them. We are no longer ruled by them.

Several important three-part divisions within the Enneagram underlie its structure.
CENTERS

The three centers (Doing, Thinking, and Feeling) represent different kinds of intelligence and are sometimes referred to as Centers of Intelligence. Of course we all do things, we all think, and we all feel. But we tend to prefer one type of intelligence over the other two. We all know people who are quick to take action, people who are thoughtful “idea” people, and other people who are emotionally expressive and empathetic.

Each center has a particular issue associated with it, and each of the three types within a center responds to or deals with that issue in a different way.

The Doing center—also referred to as the Body or Instinctual center—relates to physical/material stability and well-being, self-preservation, vitality, action and reaction. Types 8, 9, and 1 are in the Doing center and share the issue of resistance (anger without a focal point).

- 1s resist internal impulses
- 8s resist the environment
- 9s resist both internal impulses and the environment

The Feeling center—also referred to as the Heart or Relational center—relates to emotion/feeling, self-gratification, relationship, sexuality, and empathy. Types 2, 3, and 4 are in the Feeling center and share the issue of image (identity without a focal point).

- 2s seek and project an image externally
- 4s seek and project an image internally
- 3s seek and project an image both externally and internally
The **Thinking** center—also referred to as the Head or Intellectual center—relates to personal power, self-definition, logic, rationality, planning, intelligence, and will. Types 5, 6, and 7 are in the Thinking center and share the issue of **anxiety** (fear without a focal point).

- 5s are anxious about the environment
- 7s are anxious about their inner state
- 6s are anxious about the environment and their inner state

**STANCES**

Another grouping of threes, called the stances, represents the basic attitude or approach we take toward the world and other people. Our stance is most easily understood in terms of our reaction to perceived threats: fight, flight, or submit. The types that share a stance tend to misuse or under-use the same Center of Intelligence (Doing, Thinking, or Feeling), so they have a lot in common with each other.

**Fight:** The **Aggressive** Stance, also called “moving against” is taken by types 3, 7, and 8, all of whom either misuse or under-use the Feeling center. Aggressive types take the direct approach. They move against what gets in the way of their pursuit of:

- 3s: their goals
- 7s: their satisfaction
- 8s: their agenda

**Submit:** The **Compliant** Stance, also called “moving toward” or giving in to others is taken by types 1, 2, and 6, all of whom either misuse or under-use the Thinking center. Compliant types seek an external point of reference. They move toward what will help them earn:

- 1s: righteousness and autonomy
- 2s: attention and approval
- 6s: safety and security

**Flight:** The **Withdrawing** Stance, also called “moving away” or keeping to oneself is taken by types 4, 5, and 9, all of whom either misuse or under-use the Doing center. Withdrawing types go inward to find fulfillment. They move away from what triggers a sense of:

- 4s: something lacking
- 5s: personal inadequacy
- 9s: distress and discomfort
TRIADS

Each point on the Enneagram is connected to two other points, so we are actually triadic beings, and our psyches contain elements of all three types within our triads. Type 2, for example, is actually a 2/5/8. The other triads are 3/6/9 and 1/4/7. Each point within a triad is located in a different center. For the 2/5/8 triad, Type 2 is in the Feeling center, Type 5 is in the Thinking center, and Type 8 is in the Doing center. And each point within a triad takes a different stance. Type 2 takes the Compliant stance, Type 5 takes the Withdrawing stance, and Type 8 takes the Aggressive stance. So we have access to all three center and all three stances.

We move around within our triad based on the situations we’re in and where we are on the continuum from asleep-at-the-wheel to awake-and-aware. Learning how to access the other two types (and centers and stances) is the great balancing act of the Enneagram.

WINGS

In addition, an Enneagram type may have what is called a wing, which means it is strongly influenced by one of the types directly adjacent to it on either side. A Type 2 could have either a 1 wing (represented as 2w1) or a 3 wing (represented as 2w3). Or it could be a straight-up Type 2 with no wing. Imagine the circle of the Enneagram as a dial you can turn to line up with a stationary arrow. You could line up the dial directly at 2, or you could line it up several degrees in either direction. The closer you move the dial toward 1, for example, the more influence Type 1 will have on the 2. The core personality is still 2, but seasoned with a smaller or larger dose of 1.
COPING STYLES

In *The Wisdom of The Enneagram*, Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson describe what they refer to as three Harmonic Groups, which organize the nine types according to their coping styles.

*The Harmonic Groups tell us how we cope with conflict and difficulty: how we respond when we do not get what we want...* *They reveal the fundamental way that our personality defends against loss and disappointment.*

**The Competency Group: Types 1, 3, and 5**

This group deals with conflict or difficulty by putting aside personal feelings and needs and attempting to solve problems logically and objectively. Each of the three types in the Competency group has a particular attitude toward playing by the rules.

1s naturally tend to play by the rules, and they expect others to do so, too.

3s will play by the rules if that works for them, but they’re willing to bend the rules in order to meet their goals or objectives.

5s aren’t interested in following rules. They don’t like being a part of the system, so they prefer to do things their own way.

**The Positive Outlook Group: Types 2, 7, and 9**

This group deals with conflict or difficulty by putting on a pair of rose-colored glasses and thinking positively to reframe disappointment. Each of the three types in the Positive Outlook group has difficulty giving equal attention to both their needs and the needs of others.

2s tend to recognize the needs of others and are happy to roll up their sleeves to tackle others’ problems while pushing their own into the background.

7s tend to be more focused on their own needs and often fail to notice the needs (and problems) of others.

9s try to pay attention to others’ needs, as well as their own, and as a result, they often become overwhelmed, so they tend to tune out instead of responding to either.

**The Reactive Group: Types 4, 6, and 8**

This group deals with conflict or difficulty by reacting emotionally, and they expect an emotional response in return so they can know where others stand. Each of the three types in the Reactive Group has issues around trusting other people.
4s tend to feel like they're on the outside to begin with and are very sensitive to slights and perceived slights (lack of support). They are easily hurt.

6s want to be seen as strong and reliable, but at the same time, they want to feel supported by others. They can get defensive.

8s are comfortable in the supportive role, but they don’t want to need other people, so they keep their guard up to prevent others from getting too close. They are easily angered.

Coping styles provide a lot of insight into interpersonal conflicts. It helps to know what your own tendency is and then to try to understand the other person’s. No coping style is better than the others, and none is effective in all conflict situations. It would be nice to have the full repertoire to choose from each time a conflict arises. But our coping style develops from various aspects of our basic type, and just as our type won’t change over time, neither will our fallback response to conflict. By paying attention to that response, however, we can gain at least a little distance from it. We can learn to be less at the effect of it. We can have an awake moment instead of continuing to cruise along on autopilot.

Enneagram type certainly isn’t the only factor that determines what we do, think, and feel. Our own life experiences, among other things, influence how we see the world and how we understand and relate to it. But the Enneagram provides a clear and powerful lens into the workings of our psyches. It doesn’t stop there, however. It actually shows us a way out of our personal gridlock. While it isn’t magic and won’t take us anywhere all by itself, it lays out a roadmap with a starting point and some targets to aim for. It hands us a compass and sends us off to explore and get to know ourselves and to expand our horizons.

Since all of us live with, love, and are connected to many other people, it’s important to gain an understanding of all the types, not just our own. Unlike many other typology systems, the Enneagram takes account of both the parts (each of us)—which are represented by the points—and the whole (all of us)—which is represented by the circle. It helps us understand the ways in which we are similar to each other, as well as the ways in which we differ.
WHAT DRIVES US?
Brief Sketches of What Motivates the 9 Enneagram Types

1s are compliant to their idealistic obligations, moving toward what will help them earn righteousness and resisting the inner impulses that might lead them astray. To keep their angry impulses out of their awareness, they do the opposite of what they are inclined to do (instead of confronting someone, being nice to him or her; instead of being sexual, becoming puritanical). They tend to be concerned with what is right in front of them (subject, as are the other two Compliant types, to what has been called "the tyranny of the immediate moment"). They tend to play by the rules and expect others to do so, too. *They want to be right, to have integrity and balance, to strive higher and improve others, to be consistent with their ideals, to justify themselves, to be beyond criticism so as not to be condemned by anyone.* Type 1 is called The Good Person, The Achiever, The Reformer, and The Perfectionist.
Keyword: Principle

2s are compliant to their need to be seen as friendly and helpful by others, so they move toward what will help them earn attention and approval. They tend to be concerned with what is right in front of them (subject, as are the other two Compliant types, to what has been called "the tyranny of the immediate moment"). They tend to recognize the needs of others and are happy to roll up their sleeves to tackle others’ problems while pushing their own into the background. Because their own needs make them anxious, they keep them out of their awareness by repressing them. They project their needs onto others (so other people are needy, but they aren't). *They want to be loved, to express their feelings for others, to be needed and appreciated, to get others to respond to them, to vindicate their claims about themselves.* Type 2 is called The Helper, The Giver, The People Pleaser, and The Partner.
Keyword: Persuasion

3s aggressively attempt to maintain both an inner and an outer image of success, moving against anything that prevents them from attaining their goals. To keep failure out of their awareness, they identify with whatever successful mask or role they are playing at the time. They identify with their roles instead of with themselves. Like the other Aggressive types, they tend to hurry through the present and not give much thought to the past. They will play by the rules if that works for them, but they're willing to bend the rules in order to meet their goals or objectives. *They want to feel valuable and worthwhile, to be affirmed, to distinguish themselves, to have attention, to be admired, and to impress others.* Type 3 is called The Performer, The Succeeder, The Motivator, and the Status Seeker.
Keyword: Performance
4s withdraw in order to nurture an internal image of uniqueness, moving away from anything that triggers a sense of something lacking. In order to avoid experiencing the common and ordinary, whenever anything seems bland they turn it into something extraordinary or dramatic. Like the other Withdrawing types, they tend to focus on the past, often feeling victimized by it. They tend to feel like they’re on the outside to begin with and are very sensitive to slights and perceived slights (lack of support). They are easily hurt. They want to be themselves, to express themselves in something beautiful, to find the ideal partner, to withdraw to protect their feelings, to take care of emotional needs before attending to anything else. Type 4 is called The Individualist, The Tragic Romantic, The Artist, and The Sensitive Person.

Keyword: Passion

5s doubt their ability to deal effectively with the external world, so they withdraw into their own minds to avoid coming in contact with anything that might make them feel inadequate. To avoid feeling empty, they isolate themselves in their heads away from their feelings and other people. They focus on their thoughts in order to make themselves feel full and comfortable. They also isolate or compartmentalize one time period—or aspect—of life from another. Like the other Withdrawing types, they tend to focus on the past and often reflect on their prior experiences. They aren’t interested in following rules. They don’t like being a part of the system, so they prefer to do things their own way. They want to be capable and competent, to master a body of knowledge and skill, to explore reality, to remain undisturbed by others, to reduce their needs. Type 5 is called The Observer, The Investigator, The Knowledge-Seeker, and The Thinker.

Keyword: Privacy

Because they are anxious about their inner worlds and the external world, 6s move toward whatever—and whomever—they believe will make them feel safe and secure. 6s are the most anxious of the three Thinking center types. They project onto others their own sense of disobedience and rebellion. Other people are trying to get away with things, and 6s need to monitor their activities and bring them in line with their authority’s principles. Or others are trying to trip them up and trap them. They tend to be concerned with what is right in front of them (subject, as are the other two Compliant types, to what has been called “the tyranny of the immediate moment”). They want to be seen as strong and reliable, but at the same time they want to feel supported by others. They can get defensive. They want to have security, to feel supported, to have the approval of others, to test the attitudes of others toward them, to defend their beliefs. Type 6 is called The Loyalist, The Questioner, The Guardian, and The Devil’s Advocate.

Keyword: Participation
**Farther to Go!**

**7s** want to avoid experiencing the pain that could result from their own thoughts and feelings, so they aggressively move against whatever gets in the way of their happiness and contentment by focusing on external events and activities. To keep pain out of their awareness, they sublimate it and turn it into something interesting or good. They automatically look for the good in everything. So they might celebrate the new life of a deceased loved one rather than mourn their loss. Like the other Aggressive types, they tend to hurry through the present as they make plans for the future. They tend to be more focused on their own needs and often fail to notice the needs (and problems) of others. They want to be happy and satisfied, to have a wide variety of experiences, to keep their options open, to enjoy life and amuse themselves, to escape anxiety. Type 7 is called The Adventurer, The Epicure, The Generalist, and The Enthusiast.

Keyword: **Pleasure**

**8s** aggressively assert themselves against others and the environment, moving against what gets in the way of their pursuit of their agendas. To prevent weakness from showing up in their awareness or persona, they deny any presence of it (the real kings and queens of denial). Like the other Aggressive types, they tend to hurry through the present and not give much thought to the past. They are comfortable in the supportive role, but they don’t want to need other people, so they keep their guard up to prevent others from getting too close. They are easily angered. They want to be self-reliant, to resist their weakness, to have an impact on the environment, to assert themselves, to stay in control, to prevail over others, to be invincible. Type 8 is called The Challenger, The Confronter, The Leader, the Asserter (and a few other things that are unprintable).

Keyword: **Power**

**9s** withdraw so others won’t disturb their inner peacefulness, moving away from anything that triggers a sense of distress and discomfort, whether it’s internal or external. To avoid conflict, they numb their feelings, wants, and preferences. They make everything the same and highlight nothing. They make molehills out of mountains. Like the other Withdrawing types, they are focused on the past and tend to ruminate about what happened, both good and bad. They try to pay attention to others’ needs as well as their own; as a result, they often become overwhelmed so they tune out instead of responding to either. They want to have serenity and peace of mind, to create harmony in their environment, to preserve things as they are, to avoid conflicts and tension, to escape upsetting problems and demands on them. Type 9 is called The Peacemaker, The Preservationist, The Mediator, and the Universalist.

Keyword: **Peace**

For more information, check out [www.NinePaths.com](http://www.NinePaths.com) and search by type number (Type 1, e.g.) to find more information on each type.