

## Identifying Your Enneagram Style

### About the Enneagram:

The Enneagram is a model consisting of nine personality styles. At the core of each style is a childhood strategy for interacting with others to feel safe, secure, and positioned to have one's needs met. Starting as toddlers we all faced the problem of how to relate to others, particularly our caregivers, in ways that would lead to us gaining their approval, or being able to anticipate danger, or exerting as much personal control as possible. It's not that we chose these strategies consciously, yet if we stumbled into one or more approaches that worked, those behaviors were reinforced and became more likely over time. By adulthood, we may have developed habitual patterns of assumptions and characteristics that comprise our primary personality style.

It's not that everyone fits cleanly into one style, that the characteristics that define one style are only shared by people with that style, or that these nine styles are all there is. Also, the strategy underlying each of the nine personality styles may no longer "make sense" in terms of meeting the needs it did during our development. As adults the primary style(s) we adopted during our earlier development may even limit us now. Still, our primary style likely feels most comfortable, and at some level feels safest with regard to not being vulnerable to danger, deprivation, or hurt.

The primary goal in learning about the nine Enneagram styles is to better understand yourself, as well others. Remain curious and simply think of the Enneagram as a framework for possible reflection and growth. None of the nine styles are better than the others, and each entails strengths as well as challenges or limitations.

### Directions:

Carefully read the brief descriptions of the first two Enneagram styles and compare them as to which of the pair sounds more like you. It may be that neither does, and that is perfectly fine; just select which one of the two is even a little bit more self-descriptive. Then compare the style you chose (1 or 2) to the description of Style 3. Is the description of Style 3 more like you than the one you chose before? If so, let go of Styles 1 and 2 and compare Style 3 to Style 4. If the style you chose first is more self-descriptive than Style 3, compare it now to Style 4.

Continue the process, each time comparing the style you have read thus far that is most like you to the next one in the list. If you encounter a comparison between two styles and they seem equally accurate for you, keep both in mind and compare them to the next one in the list, always keeping the one that seems most like you (including "ties"). By the end of the comparison process you will have identified the style (or possibly two styles) that most accurately describe your personality patterns.

The goal is not to race through as quickly as possible to get to an "answer," as narrowing down the possibilities marks just the beginning of learning more about yourself and others through the lens of the Enneagram styles. As you read the description of each style, it can be useful to consider whether you know anyone personally who seems to fit the description closely. In that way you begin to picture how each of the styles may represent primary strategies for interacting in the world that have been adopted by others.

Style descriptions begin on the next page.

## Style One:

I am very invested in doing things correctly, or “the right way,” and so I suppose that adults saw me as a “good kid.” I hold high internal standards for behavior, both mine and other peoples’, and so it is easy for me to see what is wrong or incorrect in a situation, as well as how things could be improved. I may come across as demanding or critical, but it is simply difficult for me not to have things done the right way as long as that is possible. I’m hard-working and self-sufficient, and when I say I’ll do something, you can count on it being done to the best of my ability. Integrity is important to me, and I take great satisfaction in assuming responsibility and I really enjoy it when there is a sense of perfection. When others act unfairly or irresponsibly, or don’t pull their own weight, I feel resentful or angry, although I try not to show it (perhaps even to myself). One of my biggest fears would be that what I’ve been doing turns out to be wrong and counter-productive.

Others may see me as some combination of: Responsible, Organized, Diligent, Improvement-Oriented, Self-Controlled, Judgmental, Impatient, Closed-Minded, Rigid

## Style Two:

It is very important to me that I meet other peoples’ needs, and my greatest strength may be a sensitivity to other peoples’ needs—sometimes with people I don’t even know. It is as if I have invisible antennae that sense what others need, often before they do. I like to think of myself as kindhearted, friendly, caring, and generous. Good relationships are important to me, so I work hard at them. Sometimes it is difficult for me to resist helping others, even though I may be personally overwhelmed. I may then feel taken for granted or unappreciated for my efforts, so I can become emotional, resentful, or have my feelings hurt. One of my biggest fears would be that I would drive away my loved ones.

Others may see me as some combination of: Romantic, Helpful, Optimistic, Caring, Self-Sacrificing, Indirect, Overextended, Unassertive

## Style Three:

I am most motivated by a need for success, achievement, and being the best. I like to stay busy, am efficient with my time, and generally do well with whatever I set as a goal. I strongly identify with work and believe that a person’s value is largely based on productivity and accomplishments. Because I am so busy, I often set aside feelings or self-reflection so I can get everything done. I can get frustrated with people who do not use my time well or who do not pull their own weight. Although I’m a competitor, I also can be a good team player (although I often lead the team!). One of my biggest fears would be that I’m failing or being a fraud.

Others may see me as some combination of: Efficient, High Energy, Ambitious, Image-Conscious, Impatient, Overly Driven

## Style Four:

I am very invested in the depth of relationship with the people who are most important to me. So, I am a sensitive person who finds richness and meaning in close, authentic relationships. I also tend to be drawn to the arts in at least some forms, and value being creative (or at least distinctive). I often feel that others do not really understand me, to which I may react strongly with disappointment, anger or sadness. I am happiest when I feel special and deeply connected to others, although I value alone time. I am also willing to experience the sadder parts of life, and sometimes mull over sadness in my mind in ways that feel comfortable or familiar to me. I can be very aware of what's missing in life. One of my biggest fears would be that I'm ruining my life and wasting opportunities.

Others may see me as: Creative, Expressive, Idealistic, Passionate, Longing, Envious, Moody

## Style Five:

I am highly motivated by gaining knowledge, understanding, and engaging in analysis. I thrive on learning about topics that interest me, as well as time alone to recharge my energy or be inside my own head. I enjoy observing situations rather than being at the center of attention, and I do not like having too many demands placed on me. I'm a private person who likes to reflect on my experiences when I'm by myself so I can enjoy, understand, and sometimes relive them. Because I have such an active mental life, I am rarely bored when alone. I would like to live a simple, uncomplicated life and be as self-sufficient as possible. One of my biggest fears would be that I end up out of place and dependent on others.

Others may see me as some combination of: Objective, Planner, Knowledgeable, Emotionally Stable, Self-Absorbed, Withholding, Emotionally Detached, Unassertive

## Style Six:

I am very invested in creating conditions of safety and security, both for myself as well as my loved ones. I have a sharp analytical mind, which goes into higher gear when I think there is a possible threat or foreseeable problem. I often scan my environment to determine whether there is a danger looming, and I'm good at anticipating where troubles might arise. I like to know the rules so that I know what to expect and can think of solutions to possible problems. My curious mind also allows me to access insights or intuition about people and situations, so it can be difficult for me to trust people or just go with the flow. I tend to be suspicious of authority and it may be difficult to earn my trust or commitment, but once you have it, I am very loyal. I may either avoid danger or approach it head on so that it no longer has power over me. One of my biggest fears would be doing something that ultimately harms my security.

Others may see me as some combination of: Loyal, Responsible, Analytical, Strategic, Questioning, Pessimistic, Paranoid, Worrier

## Style Seven:

I am strongly motivated by positive possibilities and freedom to do things my way. I am an optimistic and playful person who enjoys coming up with new and interesting things to do. I have a very active mind that quickly moves back and forth between different ideas. I like to get a global picture of how ideas fit together, and I get excited when I can connect concepts that do not appear to be related at first. I have a lot of energy to devote to things that interest me, but I have a difficult time sticking with mundane or repetitive tasks. So, I've been accused of procrastinating or not following through on things. If something gets me down, I prefer to shift my attention to more pleasant things. Having multiple options or flexibility is important to me, otherwise I feel restricted or boxed in. One of my biggest fears would be getting trapped in a situation that is miserable or painful.

Others may see me as some combination of: Synthesizer, Adventurous, Engaging, Pleasure-Seeking, Unfocused or Scattered, Rebellious, Unreliable, Self-Absorbed

## Style Eight:

I am strongly focused on gaining and maintaining a sense of personal control over what is happening in my life. I place a high value on being strong, honest, straightforward, and dependable. I like strength and directness in others and I can usually tell when someone is being devious or less than honest. I will protect innocent people when an injustice has been done, yet I have trouble tolerating weakness in others. If I do not agree with those in authority, or if no one is taking charge, I will step in to lead or take control. It's difficult not to express my feelings when I'm angry, and I'm usually quick to stick up for friends and family. One of my biggest fears would be that others turn against me, or that others end up controlling me.

Others may see me as some combination of: Assertive, Strategic, Self-Confident, Independent, Intimidating, Impatient, Vengeful, Domineering

## Style Nine:

I strongly value achieving and maintaining a calm, peaceful environment in my life. Because I can usually see and appreciate all points of view, I tend to be good at helping people resolve their differences. This ability to grasp the advantages of all sides tends to lead me to being accepting and nonjudgmental but also makes me indecisive sometimes (not easy to take a stand). I do not like conflict and it takes a lot for me to show my anger directly. I enjoy engaging in many activities so figuring out my priorities can be a challenge. Also, I may become so completely involved in an activity that I forget about something else I'm supposed to be doing. I tend to be easygoing and likable and seek a comfortable, harmonious, and accepting life. One of my biggest fears would be that losing connection to others and being confronted with having to face my own problems.

Others may see me as some combination of: Inclusive, Adaptable, Patient, Conflict-Avoidant, Indecisive, Unfocused, Self-Neglecting