

THE ROAD BACK TO YOU



CRON & STABILE



THE ROAD BACK TO YOU

AN ENNEAGRAM JOURNEY

TO SELF-DISCOVERY

IAN MORGAN CRON

Author of Chasing Francis

SUZANNE STABILE

THE ROAD BACK TO YOU

THE ENNEAGRAM'S UNCANNY accuracy in describing how human beings are wired, both positively and negatively, has spiked its popularity in recent years. Although others have explored its connections with Christian spirituality, not until Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile forged the approach in this book has there been such a practical, comprehensive and approachable way of accessing Enneagram wisdom.

The Road Back to You is rooted in this approach to formation, which Thomas Merton described as the one challenge on which all of life rests: to discover our true selves in discovering God, and to find more of God in finding more of our true selves. As you discover yourself in a new way on this Enneagram journey, you'll also find that you are paving the way to the wiser, more compassionate person you want to become.

Ian Morgan Cron

is a best-selling author, nationally recognized speaker, Enneagram teacher, counselor, Dove Award-winning songwriter and Episcopal priest. His books include the novel *Chasing Francis* and the spiritual memoir *Jesus, My Father, the CIA, and Me*. Ian draws on an array of disciplines—from psychology to the arts, Christian spirituality and theology—to help people enter more deeply into conversation with God and the mystery of their own lives. He and his wife, Anne, live in Nashville, Tennessee.



Suzanne Stabile

is a highly sought-after speaker, teacher, internationally recognized Enneagram master teacher, and the author of *The Path Between Us*. Along with her husband, Rev. Joseph Stabile, she is cofounder of Life in the Trinity Ministry, a nonprofit, nondenominational ministry committed to the spiritual growth and formation of adults. They have many audio resources available, including *The Enneagram Journey* curriculum. Their ministry home, the Micah Center, is located in Dallas, Texas.



IGNORANCE IS BLISS — EXCEPT IN SELF-AWARENESS.

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOURSELF CAN HURT YOU— and your relationships, and how you make your way in the world. It can also keep you in the shallows with God. Do you want help figuring out who you are and why you repeatedly stumble into the same self-defeating patterns? Consider the ancient personality type system called the Enneagram.

This unique, narrative-based approach allows you to see and experience the world through the eyes of people who represent each of the Enneagram types. That it's funny and full of stories means you'll keep turning the pages long after you read the chapter on your own number. Beginning with the changes you can start making today, the wisdom of the Enneagram can help you get on the road that will lead you to your best and truest self.

★ Starred review, *Publishers Weekly*: "Witty, energetic voice."

"This book makes the Enneagram easy to understand, with helpful stories, humor, warmth and clear language. I'll need a case, at least."

SHAUNA NIEQUIST
author of *Bread & Wine*

"The Road Back to You will open your eyes to the depths of your heart."

MICHAEL HYATT
coauthor of *Living Forward*

"A book full of wisdom, discernment and humor."

MAKOTO FUJIMURA
author of *Silence and Beauty*

"If you want to better understand yourself and those in the world around you, this insightful and brilliant book is a perfect place to begin."

WM. PAUL YOUNG
author of *The Shack*

"The Enneagram has been a vital tool in my own personal journey of self-discovery, and The Road Back to You does a great job of making this ancient tool accessible for the modern Christian."

MICHAEL GUNGOR
singer-songwriter

"A winsome and thoughtful primer!"

MARK BATTERSON
National Community Church

"You couldn't ask for a better introduction to the Enneagram than what's found in this book and you couldn't ask for better guides than Cron and Stabile."

NADIA BOLZ-WEBER
author of *Accidental Saints*

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A CURIOUS THEORY OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN

One Saturday morning, my cell phone rang at 7:00 a.m. Only one person in the world dares call me at that hour.

"Is this my youngest son, Ian?" my mother said, pretending to be unsure she'd called the right number.

"Yes, it's me," I said, playing along.

"What are you working on?" she asked.

At that moment I wasn't working on anything. I was standing in the kitchen in my boxers wondering why my Nespresso was making end-of-life noises and imagining all the sad ways an early morning conversation with my mother could end if my coffeemaker broke and I was deprived of my day's first cup.

"I'm thinking about writing a primer on the Enneagram," I said, gratefully watching a black stream of coffee love fill my mug.

"The sonogram?" she shot back.

"No, I said the—"

"The anagram?" she said, firing a second round before I could stop her.

"Enneagram. *Enneagram*!" I repeated.

"What's the any-a-gram?" she said.

My mother is eighty-two years old. For sixty-seven of those years she has smoked Pall Malls, successfully avoided exercise and

eaten bacon with impunity. She has never needed glasses or a hearing aid and is so spry and mentally acute you'd think nicotine and inactivity were the keys to a long and happy life. She'd heard what I said the first time.

I smiled and continued with one of my Enneagram elevator speeches. "The Enneagram is an ancient personality typing system. It helps people understand who they are and what makes them tick," I said.

There was a long, utterly airless silence on the other end of the phone. I felt like I had been suddenly flung wildly into a black hole in a far-off galaxy.

"Forget the angiogram. Write a book about going to heaven and coming back," she said. "Those authors make money."

I winced. "They also have to die first."

"Details," she purred, and we laughed.

My mother's tepid response to the idea of my writing a book about the Enneagram gave me pause. I had my own reservations about the project as well.

When my grandmother didn't know what to make of something she would say it was "novel." I suspect that's how she'd describe the Enneagram. No one knows for certain when, where or who first came up with the idea for this map of the human personality. What is clear is that it's been a work in progress for a long time. Some trace its origins back to a Christian monk named Evagrius, whose teachings formed the basis for what later became the Seven Deadly Sins, and to the desert mothers and fathers of the fourth century, who used it for spiritual counseling. Some say that elements of the Enneagram also appear in other world religions, including Sufism (the mystical tradition within Islam) and Judaism. In the early 1900s an undeniably strange teacher named George Gurdjieff used the ancient nine-pointed geometric figure, or enneagram, to teach esoteric subjects unrelated to personality types. (I know, I know: if I end

the story here I could add Harrison Ford and a monkey and have the backstory for an Indiana Jones movie. But wait, the plot thins!)

In the early 1970s a Chilean named Oscar Ichazo happened upon the Enneagram and made significant contributions, as did one of his pupils, an American-trained psychiatrist named Claudio Naranjo, who developed it further by weaving insights drawn from modern psychology into it. Naranjo brought the Enneagram back to the United States and presented it to a small group of students in California, including a Catholic Jesuit priest and educator on sabbatical from Loyola Seminary named Father Robert Ochs.

Impressed with the Enneagram, Ochs returned to Loyola, where he taught it to seminarians and priests. It soon became known among clergy, spiritual directors, retreat leaders and laypeople as a helpful aid to Christian spiritual formation.

If its sketchy origins weren't enough to spook the mules, there is no scientific evidence that proves the Enneagram is a reliable measurement of personality. Who cares that millions of people claim it's accurate? Grizzly Man thought he could make friends with bears, and we know how that turned out.

So what led me to believe that writing a book about an archaic, historically questionable, scientifically unsupported personality typing system was a good idea?

To answer this question I need to introduce you to a tall, bespectacled monk with knowing eyes and a tenderhearted smile named Brother Dave.



For ten years I served as the founding pastor of a church in Connecticut. I loved the people, but by year seven our average Sunday attendance was running five hundred people, and I was running out of gas. It was clear the church needed a pastor with different gifts, someone who was more a steady-at-the-helm type than an entrepreneurial spirit like me.

For three years I tried everything short of surgery to transform myself into the kind of leader I thought the church needed and wanted me to be, but the project was doomed from the start. The harder I tried, the worse things became. I made more missteps than a guy running through a minefield wearing clown shoes. There was no shortage of confusion, hurt feelings and misunderstandings by the time I left. For me, the end was heartbreaking.

Following my departure I felt disillusioned and confused. Eventually a concerned friend encouraged me to see Br. Dave, a seventy-year-old Benedictine monk and spiritual director.

I first laid eyes on Br. Dave, in his black habit and sandals, standing on the grass-covered roundabout at the end of the monastery driveway waiting to greet me. Everything from the way he used both his hands to grasp mine to the way he smiled and said, "Welcome, traveler, can I make you coffee?" told me I'd come to the right place.

There are monks who pass their days in their monastery's gift shop selling votive candles and giant wheels of homemade cheese, but Br. Dave isn't one of them. He is a wise spiritual director who knows when to console and when to confront.

During our first few sessions Br. Dave listened patiently as I rehearsed the litany of miscalculations and mistakes I'd made in my ministry that in hindsight baffled me. Why had I said and done so many things that seemed right at the time but, looking back, were clearly senseless and at times hurtful to myself and others? How could someone have that many blind spots and still be allowed to drive a car? I felt like a stranger to myself.

By our fourth session I had begun to sound like a lost, half-crazed hiker looking for the path out of a forest while loudly debating with himself how the heck he came to be lost in the first place.

"Ian," Br. Dave said, interrupting my meander, "why are you here?"

"I'm sorry?" I said, as if someone had just tapped me on the shoulder and awakened me from a daydream.

He smiled and leaned forward in his chair. "Why are you here?"

Br. Dave had a knack for posing questions that on the surface seemed almost insultingly simple until you tried to answer them. I looked out the leaded windows lining the wall behind him. Through them I saw a giant elm, the tips of its branches bending toward the earth under the weight of the wind. I struggled to find words to express what I wanted to say but couldn't. The words that came to me weren't my own, but they perfectly captured what I wanted to express.

"I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate," I said, surprised a guy who regularly had trouble remembering his cell number could pull Paul's words from Romans 7 out of his hat.

"I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway," Br. Dave responded, quoting a verse from the same chapter.

For a moment we sat in silence, considering Paul's words as they spun and glimmered in the air between us like motes in a shaft of sunlight.

"Br. Dave, I don't know who I am or how I got into this mess," I confessed, finally breaking the reverie. "But I'd be grateful if you could help me figure it out."

Br. Dave smiled and sat back in his chair. "Good," he said. "Now we can begin."



At our next meeting Br. Dave asked, "Are you familiar with the Enneagram?"

"A little," I said, shifting in my seat. "But it's kind of a crazy story."

Br. Dave winced and laughed as I told him about my first encounter with it in the early 1990s, when I was a graduate student at a conservative seminary. While on a weekend retreat I came across

a copy of Fr. Richard Rohr's book *Discovering the Enneagram: An Ancient Tool for a New Spiritual Journey*. In it Rohr describes the traits and underlying motivations that drive each of the Enneagram's nine basic personality types. Based on my life experience and what I'd learned in my training to become a counselor, Rohr's descriptions of the types were uncannily accurate. I felt sure I had stumbled on an amazing resource for Christians.

On Monday morning I asked one of my professors whether he'd ever heard of it. From the look on his face you'd have thought I'd said *pentagram*. The Bible condemns incantations, sorcery, horoscopes and witches, he said—none of which I recalled being mentioned in the book—and I should throw it away immediately.

At the time I was a young, impressionable evangelical, and though my gut told me my professor's reaction bordered on paranoid, I followed his advice—except the bit about throwing the book in the garbage. For bibliophiles, this is the unpardonable sin that grieves the Holy Spirit. I knew exactly which shelf held my dog-eared copy of Rohr's book in the bookcase in my study.

"It's too bad your professor discouraged you from learning the Enneagram," Br. Dave told me. "It's full of wisdom for people who want to get out of their own way and become who they were created to be."

"What does 'getting out of your own way' entail?" I asked, knowing how many times I'd wanted to do just that in my life but didn't know how.

"It has to do with self-knowledge. Most folks assume they understand who they are when they don't," Br. Dave explained. "They don't question the lens through which they see the world—where it came from, how it's shaped their lives, or even if the vision of reality it gives them is distorted or true. Even more troubling, most people aren't aware of how things that helped them survive as kids are now holding them back as adults. They're asleep."

"Asleep?" I echoed, my face registering confusion.

Br. Dave briefly gazed at the ceiling and frowned. Now he was the one searching for the right combination of words that would unlock the answer to a seemingly simple question.

"What we don't know about ourselves can and will hurt us, not to mention others," he said, pointing his finger at me and then at himself. "As long as we stay in the dark about how we see the world and the wounds and beliefs that have shaped who we are, we're prisoners of our history. We'll continue going through life on autopilot doing things that hurt and confuse ourselves and everyone around us. Eventually we become so accustomed to making the same mistakes over and over in our lives that they lull us to sleep. We need to wake up."

Waking up. There wasn't anything I wanted more.

"Working with the Enneagram helps people develop the kind of self-knowledge they need to understand who they are and why they see and relate to the world the way they do," Br. Dave continued. "When that happens you can start to get out of your own way and become more of the person God created you to be."

After learning his afternoon appointment had canceled, Br. Dave spent extra time with me to talk about the importance of self-knowledge on the spiritual path. How, as John Calvin put it, "without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God."

"For centuries great Christian teachers have said knowing yourself is just as important as knowing God. Some people will say that's feel-good psychology when actually it's just good theology," he said.

For a moment I thought about all the Bible teachers and pastors I knew who had done things that had blown up their lives and their ministries, often on an epic scale, because they didn't know themselves or the human capacity for self-deceit. They studied and knew the Bible inside and out, but not themselves. I thought of how many Christian marriages I'd seen fall apart largely because neither spouse understood the inner splendor and brokenness of their own souls.

Then I thought about myself. I had always believed I was more self-aware than the average person, but if the last three years had taught me anything it was that I had plenty of growing to do in the self-knowledge department.

Br. Dave looked at his watch and slowly stood up. "I'm away leading retreats for the next month," he announced, stretching to get the blood flowing again after our nearly two-hour seated conversation. "In the meantime, dust off your copy of Rohr's book and reread it. You'll appreciate how he looks at the Enneagram more through the lens of Christian spirituality than psychology. I'll email you the names of a few other books you can read as well."

"I really can't thank you enough," I said, rising from my chair and slinging my backpack over my shoulder.

"We'll have plenty to discuss the next time we meet," Br. Dave promised, embracing me before opening his office door to let me out. "God's peace!" I heard him call down the hallway after me.



Since I was on a long-overdue three-month sabbatical with more time than I knew what to do with, I took Br. Dave's advice to heart and threw myself into learning the Enneagram. For weeks, nearly every morning I walked to the coffee bar at the end of our block and pored over the books he had recommended, taking notes in my journal. At night, I gave a report of everything I was learning from the Enneagram to my wife, Anne. Intrigued, she began to read up on it as well. In that season of our lives together, we had some of the richest, most meaningful conversations in all of our marriage.

Do we *really* know ourselves? How much does our past interfere with our present? Do we see the world through our eyes or through those of the children we were? What are the hidden wounds and misguided beliefs we pick up as kids that continue to secretly

govern our lives from the shadows? And how exactly would wrestling with questions like these help us better know God?

These were some of the questions I eagerly lobbed at Br. Dave when he returned from his travels. Sitting in his office, I described for him a handful of the many “aha” moments I had experienced while studying the Enneagram.

“How did you feel when you discovered your type?” Br. Dave asked.

“Well, it wasn’t all ‘hats and horns,’” I said. “I learned some painful things about myself.”

Brother Dave turned around and grabbed a book off his desk and flipped to a page marked by a red sticky flag. “To know oneself is, above all, to know what one lacks. It is to measure oneself against Truth, and not the other way around. The first product of self-knowledge is humility,” he said.

“That sums it up pretty well,” I said, chuckling.

“It’s Flannery O’Connor,” Br. Dave said, closing the book and placing it back on his desk. “There’s not a lot she doesn’t sum up well.”

“And Anne?” he continued. “What’s it been like for her?”

“One night she read a description of her type to me in bed and she cried,” I said. “She’s always struggled to find words to describe what it’s like to live inside her skin. The Enneagram’s been a gift to her.”

“Sounds like you’re both off to a good start,” Br. Dave said.

“It’s been incredible. What we’ve learned from the Enneagram so far has already begun changing the way we think about marriage, friendships and parenting,” I said.

“Just remember, it’s only one tool to help you deepen your love for God and others,” Br. Dave cautioned. “There are plenty of others. What’s important is the more you and Anne grow in self-knowledge, the more you’ll become aware of your need for God’s grace. Not to mention, you’ll have more compassion for yourselves and other people.”

“I want to read you this Thomas Merton quote I found,” I said, leafing through the pages of my journal.

Br. Dave rubbed his hands together and nodded. "Ah, Merton, now you're swimming in deep waters," he smiled.

"Here it is," I said, finding the page where I had written down the quote. I cleared my throat. "Sooner or later we must distinguish between what we are not and what we are. We must accept the fact that we are not what we would like to be. We must cast off our false, exterior self like the cheap and showy garment that it is . . ." I slowed, surprised by the knot in my throat that was making it hard for me to continue.

"Go on," Br. Dave said quietly.

I took a deep breath. "We must find our real self, in all its elemental poverty, but also in its great and very simple dignity: created to be the child of God, and capable of loving with something of God's own sincerity and his unselfishness."

I closed my journal and looked up, flushing from embarrassment at how emotional I had become.

Br. Dave tilted his head to one side. "What was it Merton said that moved you?"

I sat quietly, uncertain how to answer. The monastery's church bells rang outside, calling the monks to prayer.

"I feel like I've been asleep for a long time, but maybe now I'm beginning to wake up," I said. "At least I hope so."

Whenever I said something Br. Dave thought was significant he'd pause to close his eyes and reflect on it. This was one of those times.

Br. Dave opened his eyes. "Before you go, can I pray a blessing for you?" he said.

"Sure," I replied, sliding forward in my chair to get close enough for Br. Dave to wrap both his hands around mine.

May you recognize in your life the presence, power, and light of your soul.

May you realize that you are never alone, that your soul in its brightness and belonging connects you intimately with the rhythm of the universe.

May you have respect for your individuality and difference.

May you realize that the shape of your soul is unique, that you have a special destiny here, that behind the façade of your life there is something beautiful and eternal happening.

May you learn to see your self with the same delight, pride, and expectation with which God sees you in every moment.

“Amen,” Br. Dave said, squeezing my hands.

“Let it be so,” I whispered, squeezing his hands in return.



Br. Dave's blessing made a difference in my life. Over the years my work with the Enneagram has helped me to see myself “with the same delight, pride, and expectation with which God sees me in every moment.” Learning and now teaching the Enneagram has shown me something of the “crooked timber” from which my and others people's hearts are made. The self-understanding I have gained from it has helped me put an end to a few childish ways and become a more spiritual adult. I'm certainly not there yet, but now and again I sense the immediacy of God's grace and for an instant catch a glimpse of the person I was created to be. In the spiritual life that's no small thing.

A few years after my encounter with Br. Dave I accepted an invitation from a woman named Suzanne Stabile to speak at a conference she was hosting at Brite Divinity School. We instantly connected and knew that if left unsupervised by responsible adults, we could get into all kinds of trouble if we became friends.

So we became friends.

When Suzanne told me our mutual friend Richard Rohr had been her spiritual mentor for years and had personally trained her in the Enneagram, I became curious and decided to attend one of her workshops. After an hour of listening to her lecture, I knew Suzanne wasn't just an Enneagram teacher—she was a ninja-level-

Mr. Miyagi-from-*The Karate-Kid* kind of Enneagram teacher. To my good fortune Suzanne picked up where Br. Dave had left off in my life years earlier, kindly taking me on the next leg of my journey toward understanding and applying the wisdom of the Enneagram to my life as a Christian.

Many of the insights and anecdotes on these pages were taken from Suzanne's lectures, while others come from my own life and from what I have learned over the years by attending workshops and studying countless books by renowned Enneagram teachers and pioneers such as Russ Hudson, Richard Rohr, Helen Palmer, Beatrice Chestnut, Roxanne Howe-Murphy and Lynette Sheppard, to name a few. More than anything, however, this book is the product of my and Suzanne's deep affection and respect for one another. It's the only way we know how to throw our two cents of experience and knowledge toward the effort to create a kinder, more compassionate world. We hope it succeeds. If it doesn't, well, we still had a blast doing it.

To be clear, I am not a foamy-mouthed Enneagram zealot. I do not stand uncomfortably close to people at cocktail parties and tell them I was able to guess their Enneagram number based on their choice of footwear. People who do that are an evil begging to be overcome.

But even if I'm not a fanatic, I am a grateful student. To borrow a quote from the British mathematician George Box, "All models are wrong, but some are useful." That's how I see the Enneagram. It is not infallible or inerrant. It is not the be-all and end-all of Christian spirituality. At best, it is an imprecise model of personality . . . but it's *very useful*.

That said, here's my advice. If you find that this book supports you on your spiritual path, great. If not, don't throw it away. Put it on your bookshelf instead. It might come in handy one day. Life hands us a challenging syllabus. We need all the help we can get.

FINDING YOUR TYPE

Neuroscientists have determined the brain's dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is associated with decision making and cost-benefit assessments. If MRI brain scans had been performed on my friends and me one summer's night when we were fifteen, they would have revealed a dark spot indicating a complete absence of activity in this region of our brains.

That particular Saturday night a group of us got the brilliant idea that streaking a golf banquet at an exclusive country club in my hometown of Greenwich, Connecticut, was a wise decision. Other than certain arrest for indecent exposure, there was only one problem: Greenwich isn't a big town, and it was likely someone we knew would recognize us. After several minutes of deliberation we decided our friend Mike should run home and return with ski masks for each of us.

And so at roughly 9:00 p.m. on a warm August night, six naked boys in ski masks, several of which were adorned with pom-poms, sprinted like startled gazelles through a beautiful oak-paneled room full of bankers and heiresses. The men clapped and cheered for us while the bejeweled women sat frozen in shock. We had hoped for the opposite reaction, but there was not ample time to stop and express our disappointment.

And that would have been the end of it if it weren't for my mother. "What did you and the guys do last night?" she asked the next morning as I walked into the kitchen and rummaged through the fridge.

"Not much. We hung out at Mike's, then crashed around midnight."

My mother is normally chatty, so I was puzzled when she didn't ask how my friends were doing or what my plans were for the rest of the day. I instantly had an uneasy feeling.

"What did you and Dad do last night?" I said brightly.

"We went as guests of the Dorfmanns to their club's golf banquet," she replied in a tone that was one part sugar, one part steel.

Most people don't ever anticipate that a sudden change in cabin pressure might occur in their home, triggering the hope that an oxygen mask would fall from somewhere overhead to replace the air that shock has just sucked out of their lungs.

"A ski mask?" she demanded, her voice rising as she strolled toward me like an angry Irish cop patting his truncheon in the palm of his hand. "*A ski mask?*"

The tip of her nose was no more than an inch from my own. "I could pick your scrawny butt out of a lineup in the dark," she whispered menacingly.

I tensed, wondering what was coming next, but the storm passed as abruptly as it rolled in. My mother's face relaxed into a sly grin. She turned on her heels and said over her shoulder as she walked out of the kitchen, "You're lucky your father thought it was funny."



This was not the first time I wore a mask to protect myself—far from it.

Human beings are wired for survival. As little kids we instinctually place a mask called personality over parts of our authentic self to protect us from harm and make our way in the world. Made up of innate qualities, coping strategies, conditioned reflexes and defense mechanisms, among lots of other things, our personality helps us know and do what we sense is required to please our parents, to fit in and relate well to our friends, to satisfy the expectations of our

culture and to get our basic needs met. Over time our adaptive strategies become increasingly complex. They get triggered so predictably, so often and so automatically that we can't tell where they end and our true natures begin. Ironically, the term *personality* is derived from the Greek word for mask (*persona*), reflecting our tendency to confuse the masks we wear with our true selves, even long after the threats of early childhood have passed. Now we no longer have a personality; our personality has us! Now, rather than protect our defenseless hearts against the inevitable wounds and losses of childhood, our personalities—which we and others experience as the ways we predictably think, feel, act, react, process information and see the world—limit or imprison us.

Worst of all, by overidentifying who we are with our personality we forget or lose touch with our authentic self—the beautiful essence of who we are. As Frederick Buechner so poignantly describes it, “The original, shimmering self gets buried so deep that most of us end up hardly living out of it at all. Instead we live out all the other selves, which we are constantly putting on and taking off like coats and hats against the world’s weather.”

Though I’m a trained counselor, I don’t know exactly how, when or why this occurs, only that this idea of having lost connection with my true self rings true with my experience. How many times while spying my children play or while gazing up at the moon in a reflective moment have I felt a strange nostalgia for something or someone I lost touch with long ago? Buried in the deepest precincts of being I sense there’s a truer, more luminous expression of myself, and that as long as I remain estranged from it I will never feel fully alive or whole. Maybe you have felt the same.

The good news is we have a God who would know our scrawny butt anywhere. He remembers who we are, the person he knit together in our mother’s womb, and he wants to help restore us to our authentic selves.

Is this the language of the therapeutic under the guise of theology? No. Great Christian thinkers from Augustine to Thomas Merton would agree this is one of the vital spiritual journeys apart from which no Christian can enjoy the wholeness that is their birthright. As Merton put it, “Before we can become who we really are, we must become conscious of the fact that the person who we think we are, here and now, is at best an impostor and a stranger.” Becoming conscious is where the Enneagram comes in.

The goal of understanding your Enneagram “type” or “number”—the terms are used interchangeably in this book—is not to delete and replace your personality with a new one. Not only is this not possible, it would be a bad idea. You need a personality or you won’t get asked to prom. The purpose of the Enneagram is to develop self-knowledge and learn how to recognize and dis-identify with the parts of our personalities that limit us so we can be reunited with our truest and best selves, that “pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven,” as Thomas Merton said. The point of it is self-understanding and growing beyond the self-defeating dimensions of our personality, as well as improving relationships and growing in compassion for others.

THE NINE PERSONALITY TYPES

The Enneagram teaches that there are nine different personality styles in the world, one of which we naturally gravitate toward and adopt in childhood to cope and feel safe. Each type or number has a distinct way of seeing the world and an underlying motivation that powerfully influences how that type thinks, feels and behaves.

If you’re like I was, you will immediately object to the suggestion that there are only nine basic personality types on a planet of more than seven billion people. A single visit to the paint aisle at Home Depot to help an indecisive spouse find “that perfect red” for the bathroom walls might quell your remonstrations. As I recently learned,

there are *literally* an infinite number of variations of the color red from which you can select to brighten your bathroom and wreck your marriage at the same time. In the same way, though we all adopt one (and only one) of these types in childhood, there are an infinite number of expressions of each number, some of which might present in a similar way to yours and many of which will look nothing like you on the exterior—but you are all still variations of the same primary color. So don't worry, Mom didn't lie. You are still her special little snowflake.

The Enneagram takes its name from the Greek words for nine (*ennea*) and for a drawing or figure (*gram*). It is a nine-pointed geometric figure that illustrates nine different but interconnected personality types. Each numbered point on the circumference is connected to two others by arrows across the circle, indicating their dynamic interaction with one another.

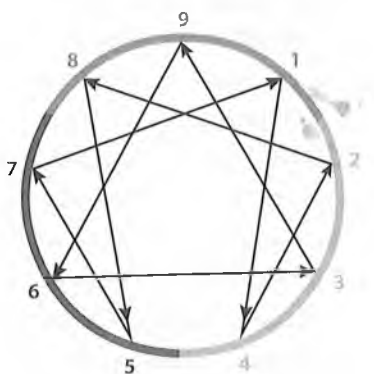


Figure 1. The Enneagram diagram

If you haven't already jumped ahead in this book to begin figuring out which number you are, figure 1 is a snapshot of the diagram. I've also listed the names and a quick description of each Enneagram number. For the record, no personality type is better or worse than another, each has its own strengths and weaknesses, and none is gender-biased.

TYPE ONE: The Perfectionist. Ethical, dedicated and reliable, they are motivated by a desire to live the right way, improve the world, and avoid fault and blame.

TYPE TWO: The Helper. Warm, caring and giving, they are motivated by a need to be loved and needed, and to avoid acknowledging their own needs.

TYPE THREE: *The Performer*. Success-oriented, image-conscious and wired for productivity, they are motivated by a need to be (or appear to be) successful and to avoid failure.

TYPE FOUR: *The Romantic*. Creative, sensitive and moody, they are motivated by a need to be understood, experience their oversized feelings and avoid being ordinary.

TYPE FIVE: *The Investigator*. Analytical, detached and private, they are motivated by a need to gain knowledge, conserve energy and avoid relying on others.

TYPE SIX: *The Loyalist*. Committed, practical and witty, they are worst-case-scenario thinkers who are motivated by fear and the need for security.

TYPE SEVEN: *The Enthusiast*. Fun, spontaneous and adventurous, they are motivated by a need to be happy, to plan stimulating experiences and to avoid pain.

TYPE EIGHT: *The Challenger*. Commanding, intense and confrontational, they are motivated by a need to be strong and avoid feeling weak or vulnerable.

TYPE NINE: *The Peacemaker*. Pleasant, laid back and accommodating, they are motivated by a need to keep the peace, merge with others and avoid conflict.

Maybe now you're starting to get an idea of which of the nine types you belong to (or which one explains your seventy-year-old

"A humble self-knowledge is a surer way to God than a search after deep learning."

THOMAS À KEMPIS

uncle who still dresses up like Yoda and attends Star Wars conventions). But the Enneagram is more than a piddling list of clever type names, so that's just the beginning. In the following chapters we'll learn not only about each

number in turn but also about how those numbers relate to others. Don't be discouraged if the terminology or the diagram, with its

lines and arrows ricocheting around, looks confusing. I promise it will make sense to you in short order.

TRIADS

The nine numbers on the Enneagram are divided into three triads—three in the Heart or Feeling Triad, three in the Head or Fear Triad, and three in the Gut or Anger Triad. Each of the three numbers in each triad is driven in different ways by an emotion related to a part of the body known as a center of intelligence. Basically, your triad is another way of describing how you habitually take in, process and respond to life.

The Anger or Gut Triad (8, 9, 1). These numbers are driven by anger—Eight externalizes it, Nine forgets it, and One internalizes it. They take in and respond to life instinctually or “at the gut level.” They tend to express themselves honestly and directly.

The Feeling or Heart Triad (2, 3, 4). These numbers are driven by feelings—Twos focus outwardly on the feelings of others, Threes have trouble recognizing their own or other people’s feelings, and Fours concentrate their attention inwardly on their own feelings. They each take in and relate to life from their heart and are more image-conscious than other numbers.

The Fear or Head Triad (5, 6, 7). These numbers are driven by fear—Five externalizes it, Six internalizes it, and Seven forgets it. They take in and relate to the world through the mind. They tend to think and plan carefully before they act.

Chapter order. Speaking of triads, if you look at the table of contents you will notice we have chosen not to describe the types in numerical order but to group and discuss them in the context of their respective triads: Eight, Nine and One are together; then Two, Three and Four; and finally Five, Six and Seven. The reason we chose to order the chapters like this is to help you see the important ways in which each number compares to its fellow

“triadic roommates.” If anything, this will not only make the Enneagram easier to understand but also aid you in your search for your number.

WING, STRESS AND SECURITY NUMBERS

One of the things I love about the Enneagram is that it recognizes and takes into account the fluid nature of the personality, which is constantly adapting as circumstances change. There are times when it's in a healthy space, times when it's in an okay space, or times when it's downright nuts. The point is, it's always moving up and down on a spectrum ranging from healthy to average to unhealthy depending on where you are and what's happening. At the beginning of each chapter I'll briefly describe in broad terms how each number typically thinks, feels and acts when they're camped out in a healthy, average and unhealthy space within their type.

Look at the Enneagram diagram and you'll see that each number has a dynamic relationship with four other numbers. Each number touches the two on either side, as well as the two at the other end of the arrows. These four other numbers can be seen as resources that give you access to their traits or “juice” or “flavor,” as I like to say. While your motivation and number never change, your behavior can be influenced by these other numbers, so much so that you can even look like one of them from time to time. As you'll see in each chapter, you can learn to move deliberately around the circle, using these for extra support as needed.

Wing numbers. These are the numbers on either side of your number. You may lean toward one of these two wing numbers and pick up some of its characteristic energy and traits. For example, my friend Doran is a Four (the Romantic) with a Three wing (the Performer). He is more outgoing and more inclined to perform for recognition than a Four with a Five wing (the Investigator), who is more introverted and withdrawing.

Stress and security numbers. Your stress number is the number your personality moves toward when you are overtaxed, under fire, or in the paint aisle at Home Depot with an equivocating friend or partner. It's indicated by the arrow pointing *away* from your number on the Enneagram diagram in figure 2.

For example, normally happy-go-lucky Sevens move toward and take on the negative qualities of the One (the Perfectionist) in stress. They can become less easygoing and adopt more black-and-white thinking. It's important for you to know the number that you go to in stress so that when you catch it activating you can make better choices and take care of yourself.

Your security number indicates the type your personality moves toward and draws energy and resources from when you're

feeling secure. It is indicated by the arrow pointing *toward* your number on the Enneagram. For example, Sevens take on the positive qualities of Five when they're feeling secure. That means they can let go of their need for excess and embrace the notion that less is more.

Spiritually speaking, it's a real advantage to know what happens to your type and the number it naturally goes to in stress. It's equally valuable to learn the positive qualities of the number you instinctively move toward in security as well. Once you become familiar with this material you can know and catch yourself when you're heading in the direction of a breakthrough or a breakdown, and make wiser choices than in the past. There's a lot to this topic of security and stress, but because this book is a primer we'll only cover the basics. Just know there is much more to learn about it.

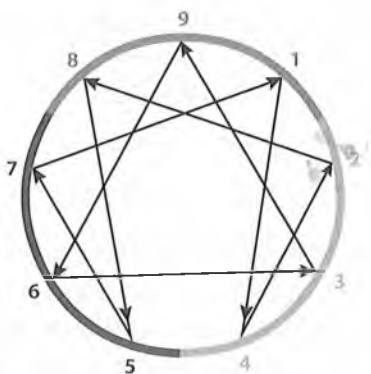


Figure 2. Stress and security arrows

DISCOVER YOUR DEADLY SIN

It may sound like something from a medieval morality play, but each number has a deadly sin associated with it, and in each chapter Suzanne and I will be diving deeper into what that looks like. For some, the word *sin* evokes terrible memories and feelings. Sin as a

"It is my belief no man ever understands quite his own artful dodges to escape from the grim shadow of self-knowledge."

JOSEPH CONRAD

theological term has been weaponized and used against so many people that it's hard to address the subject without knowing you're possibly hurting someone who has "stood on the wrong end of the preacher's barrel," so to speak.

But as a weathered sinner and recovering alcoholic with twenty-eight years of sobriety, I know that not facing the reality of our darkness and its sources is a really, really bad idea. Trust me, if you don't, it will eventually come out of your paycheck at the end of the month.

Bearing sensitivities in mind, allow me to offer a definition of *sin* I have found helpful and one we might use together in our conversation. Richard Rohr writes, "Sins are fixations that prevent the energy of life, God's love, from flowing freely. [They are] self-erected blockades that cut us off from God and hence from our own authentic potential." As someone who goes to a church basement several mornings a week to meet with others who need support to stay away from just *one* of my many fixations, this definition rings true. We all have our preferred ways of circumventing God to get what we want, and unless we own and face them head-on they will one day turn our lives into nettled messes.

Every Enneagram number has a unique "passion" or deadly sin that drives that number's behavior. The teachers who developed the Enneagram saw that each of the nine numbers had a particular weakness or temptation to commit one of the Seven Deadly Sins, drawn from

the list Pope Gregory composed in the sixth century, plus fear and deceit (along the way a wise person added these two, which is nice because now no one needs to feel left out). Each personality's deadly sin is like an addictive, involuntarily repeated behavior that we can only be free of when we recognize how often we give it the keys to drive our personality. Again, don't think the term *deadly sin* sounds too early Middle Ages to still be relevant. It's timeless and important wisdom! As long as we are unaware of our deadly sin and the way it lurks around unchallenged in our lives we will remain in bondage to it. Learning to manage your deadly sin rather than allowing it to manage you is one of the goals of the Enneagram.

There are other personality typing systems or inventories like the Myers-Briggs or the Five Factor test that are wonderful but exclusively psychological in orientation. There are others that describe and encourage you to embrace who you are, which isn't very helpful if who you are is a jerk. Regardless, only one of these instruments addresses the fact that we are spiritually mottled creatures. The Enneagram is not exclusively psychological, nor is it feel-good, self-help pabulum when taught correctly. (By the way, if my "self" could have helped my "self," don't you think my "self" would have done it by now?) The true purpose of the Enneagram is to reveal to you your shadow side and offer spiritual counsel on how to open it to the transformative light of grace. Coming face-to-face with your deadly sin can be hard, even painful, because it raises to conscious awareness the nastier bits about who we are that we'd rather not think about. "No one should work with the Enneagram if what they seek is flattery. But no one should fail to do so if what they seek is deep knowing of self," as David Benner cautions. So, bravely on!

Here's a list of the Seven Deadly Sins (plus two) and the number to which each correlates, as well as a brief description of them (see figure 3). The descriptions are drawn from Don Riso and Russ Hudson's *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*.

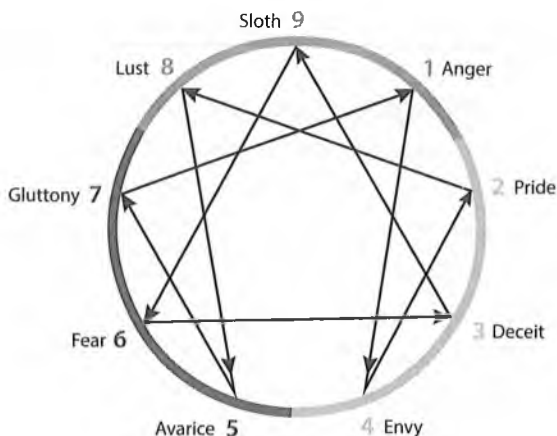


Figure 3. Sins correlating to each number

ONES: Anger. Ones feel a compulsive need to perfect the world. Keenly aware that neither they nor anyone else can live up to their impossibly high standards, they experience anger in the form of smoldering resentment.

TWOS: Pride. Twos direct all their attention and energy toward meeting the needs of others while disavowing having any of their own. Their secret belief that they alone know what's best for others and that they're indispensable reveals their prideful spirit.

THREES: Deceit. Threes value appearance over substance. Abandoning their true selves to project a false, crowd-pleasing image, Threes buy their own performance and deceive themselves into believing they *are* their persona.

FOURS: Envy. Fours believe they are missing something essential without which they will never be complete. They envy what they perceive to be the wholeness and happiness of others.

FIVES: Avarice. Fives hoard those things they believe will ensure they can live an independent, self-sustaining existence. This withholding ultimately leads to their holding back love and affection from others.

SIXES: Fear. Forever imagining worst-case scenarios and questioning their ability to handle life on their own, Sixes turn to authority figures and belief systems rather than God to provide them with the support and security they yearn for.

SEVENS: Gluttony. To avoid painful feelings, Sevens gorge themselves on positive experiences, planning and anticipating new adventures, and entertaining interesting ideas. Never satisfied, the Seven's frenzied pursuit of these distractions eventually escalates to the point of gluttony.

EIGHTS: Lust. Eights lust after intensity. It can be seen in the excessiveness they evidence in every area of life. Domineering and confrontational, Eights present a hard, intimidating exterior to mask vulnerability.

NINES: Sloth. For Nines, sloth refers not to physical but to spiritual laziness. Nines fall asleep to their own priorities, personal development and responsibility for becoming their own person.

THE NINE TYPES IN CHILDHOOD

It's staggering to think how many messages our uncritical minds and hearts pick up and internalize in childhood, and how many hours and dollars we later spend on therapists trying to pick them out of our psyches like burrs from the coat of a sheepdog. Some messages and beliefs we unconsciously take in as kids are life giving, while others wound. Most of us unknowingly surrender our lives to the messages that most perforate our beauty. We should remind ourselves of this more often. We would be kinder to each other if we did.

In the chapters that follow we'll take a look at how each number tends to play out in childhood, with Twos learning to happily give up their Cheez-Its at lunch to buy love and Fives observing the other kids' play before tentatively deciding to join in. These kids are reflecting both their natural tendencies and the mask they are unconsciously hoping will protect them. They are growing into their number.

The good news is that there are healing messages that we can choose to change the direction of our thoughts, beliefs and behaviors. Learning a healing message unique to each number is a useful aid to help us along on our journey back to our true selves, to the wholeness we crave. It can become a salve of compassion for ourselves, teaching us to respond to old patterns by reminding us to let go of the false self we developed to protect ourselves in childhood and to put on the true self.

YOUR TYPE IN RELATIONSHIPS AND AT WORK

I once worked with a person whose self-awareness quotient was so low as to be unquantifiable. His lack of self-knowledge and inability to self-regulate wounded so many of his colleagues that he should have been removed by OSHA as a workplace health and safety hazard.

The truth is, people who lack self-knowledge not only suffer spiritually but professionally as well. I recently read a *Harvard Business Review* article in which the entrepreneur Anthony Tjan writes, "There is one quality that trumps all, evident in virtually every great entrepreneur, manager, and leader. That quality is self-awareness. The best thing leaders can do to improve their effectiveness is to become more aware of what motivates them and their decision-making." Numerous other books and articles on the topic of self-awareness in magazines from *Forbes* to *Fast Company* all say the same thing: *know thyself*.

In this book, we'll look at a few ways the behaviors associated with our particular number can help or hinder us as we perform our work and relate to colleagues. It can also help us in the process of discerning what career path we should pursue, whether we're currently on the right one for us, or whether the professional environment we're currently working in is a good fit based on the strengths and liabilities of our personalities.

God wants you to enjoy and be effective in your work (unless, like my wife, you've chosen to teach eighth grade, in which case

you got the pizza you ordered). By expanding self-knowledge and self-awareness, the Enneagram can help you perform better and experience more satisfaction in your vocation, so much so that companies and organizations like Motorola, the Oakland A's baseball team, the CIA and clergy from the Vatican, among many others, have used it to help their people find more joy in their work. Even Stanford University and Georgetown University's business schools have included it in their curriculums.

The Enneagram also offers great insight into how our personality types engage in relationships with partners or friends and what we most need and fear from those interactions. All of us bring some amount of brokenness to our connections with others, but you should understand that every single number on the Enneagram is capable of healthy and life-giving relationships. Every number has its healthy, average and unhealthy range of behaviors. With greater self-awareness, you can help ensure that your typical behaviors land more on the healthy side and don't sabotage your interactions with the people you love the most.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

"Accepting oneself does not preclude an attempt to become better," observed Flannery O'Connor, and

she's right. Your Enneagram number is not like a note from your mother that you can hand the universe whenever you behave badly that says, "To Whom It May Concern, you must excuse my son John. He is a Nine (or whatever John's number might be) and is therefore incapable of acting any better than what you've witnessed him do to date." If anything, once you know your Enneagram number it takes away any excuse you might have for not changing. Now you know too much to cop the "This is just who I am so deal with it" plea.

"I love a lot of people,
understand none of them."

FLANNERY O'CONNOR

Recently in a twelve-step meeting I heard someone say, "Insight is cheap." Man, is that ever true! As Fr. Rohr points out, "Information is not transformation." Once you know your type you owe it to yourself and the people you love (or don't love, for that matter) to become a kinder, more compassionate presence in the world. May a pox fall on anyone who reads this book and walks away with no more than something "interesting" to prattle on about at a dinner party. The purpose of the Enneagram is to show us how we can release the paralyzing arthritic grip we've kept on old, self-defeating ways of living so we can open ourselves to experiencing more interior freedom and become our best selves.

At the end of every chapter you will find a spiritual transformation section that offers each type a few suggestions on how they can put what they've learned about themselves to good use. This is helpful information so long as you don't waste your time trying to accomplish any of it apart from the transformative power of God's grace. Anyone who says they're "trying" to be a good Christian right away reveals they have no idea what a Christian is. Christianity is not something you do as much as something that gets done to you. Once you know the dark side of your personality, simply give God consent to do for you what you've never been able to do for yourself, namely, bring meaningful and lasting change to your life.

HOW TO READ EACH CHAPTER AND FIGURE OUT YOUR TYPE

It's tempting, but as you read the chapters that follow, don't try to type yourself solely on the basis of behaviors. At the start of each chapter you will find a list of "I" statements designed to give you a sense of how people of that particular number might describe what it's like to live in their skin. Keep in mind as you read these lists, however, that *your number is not determined by what you do so much as by why you do it*. In other words, don't rely too much on traits to identify your type. Instead, read carefully about the underlying

motivation that drives the traits or behaviors of each number to see whether it rings true for you. For example, several different numbers might climb the ladder at work, but the reasons they do so are very different: motivated by a compulsive need to improve things, Ones might seek advancement because they've heard only people in top management have the authority to fix the countless imperfections the One can't help fixating on in the company's day-to-day operations; Threes might climb it because getting the corner office is important to them; and Eights might scale the ladder just to see who's stupid enough to try to stop them. Motivation is what matters! To find your number ask yourself why you do the things you do.

It will help you identify your type if, as you read along, you think back to what you were like at age twenty rather than who you are now. Even though your personality type never changes, it's never more florid or clear than in early adulthood when, as James Hollis says, you haven't lived long enough to figure out that you are "the only person who is consistently present in every scene of that long-running drama we call our life"—in other words, the source of most of your problems is you. It's also important to think more about the way you act, think and feel at home.

Look for the type that best describes who you are, not the type you'd like to think you are or have always wanted to be. If given my druthers I'd like to be a charming, happy-go-lucky Seven like Stephen Colbert, but I'm a garden-variety "Bob Dylan" Four minus the talent. (Throughout the book I give examples of famous people for each number. These are guesses on my part, not self-reported by the people themselves.) As Anne Lamott says, "Everyone is screwed up, broken, clingy, and scared," so there's no sense wanting to be differently screwed up than you already are. As you try to figure out your type, it's great to ask your close friends, spouse or spiritual director to read the descriptions and offer their opinions about which type they think sounds most like you—but don't kill the messenger.

If while reading a description you begin to feel squeamish because it's captured your inner world in a way only someone who hacked into the server where you back up your personality could know about, then you're probably zeroing in on your number. When I first read my number I felt humiliated. It's not pleasant to be the rat in a dark kitchen who is so focused on devouring crumbs that he doesn't hear the stealthy homeowners approaching and therefore doesn't have time to take cover before they suddenly switch on the light and catch the rat in the act with a bagel in its mouth. On the other hand I felt consoled. I didn't know there were other rats like me. So if this happens, don't despair. Remember each number has its assets and liabilities, blessings and blights. The embarrassment will pass, but in the words of novelist David Foster Wallace, "The truth will set you free, but not until it's done with you."

Don't expect to identify with every single feature of your number—you won't. Just be on the lookout for the one that comes closest to describing who you are. If it's any comfort, it takes some people several months to explore the numbers and gather feedback from others before they feel confident in identifying their type.

I often hear beginning students of the Enneagram taking what they're learning about other types and turning it into a weapon to dismiss or ridicule other people. It gets my hackles up when I hear someone say to another person something akin to, "Oh you're so Six" or "Stop being such a Three," particularly when the person they're saying it to has no idea what the Enneagram is. *The Enneagram should only be used to build others up and help them advance on their journey toward wholeness and God. Period.* We hope you take this to heart.

A few of the type descriptions might also sound suspiciously reminiscent of a family member, coworker or friend. You might feel tempted to call your sister to tell her you now understand the reason she made your childhood a living hell had more to do with

her personality type than demonic possession as previously believed. Don't do this. Everyone will hate you.

"I don't want to be pigeonholed or put in a box." People express this concern to Suzanne and me all the time. Fear not! The Enneagram doesn't put you in a box. It shows you the box you're already in and how to get out of it. So that'll be good, right?

Now this is very important: At times, you will feel that we're focusing far too much on the negative rather than the positive qualities of each number. We are, but only to help you more easily discover your type. In our experience, people identify more readily with what's not working in their personalities than with what is. As Suzanne likes to say, "We don't know ourselves by what we get right; we know ourselves by what we get wrong." Try not to get all pouty.

Finally, have a sense of humor and be compassionate toward yourself and others.

The universe is undemocratic. A man in a white lab coat holding a clipboard didn't appear at the moment of your conception to inquire whether you preferred to be genetically matched with Pope Francis or Sarah Palin. You didn't pick your parents, your lunatic siblings or the place you occupy in the family birth order. You didn't choose the town where you were born or the side of the track on which your childhood home sat. That we were not consulted about these matters has long been a source of contention between God and me. But over time I've learned that in addition to sins born of the ego's desire to have everyone in the world organize their lives around ours, we face many challenges that are not of our own making but which we are responsible to do something about. Either way, always maintain a compassionate stance toward yourself as God does. Self-contempt will never produce lasting, healing change in our lives, only love. This is the physics of the spiritual universe, for which we should all be grateful and say, "Amen!"

And so as Br. Dave would say, "Now we can begin."

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE AN EIGHT

(You don't understand why we're starting with Eights? Reread page 27.)

1. I have been told that I'm too blunt and aggressive.
2. Doing things halfway is not my spiritual gift.
3. I enjoy a good verbal skirmish, just to see what others are made of.
4. In relationships that matter to me I insist on being honest about conflicts and staying in the fight till things are worked out.
5. It's hard for me to trust people.
6. Justice is worth fighting for.
7. I can sniff out other people's weakness the first time I meet them.
8. Saying no isn't a problem for me.
9. I welcome opposition. Bring it.
10. I make decisions fast and from the gut.
11. I don't like it when people beat around the bush.
12. I'm wary of people who are super nice.
13. When I walk into a room I know immediately who has the most power.
14. I don't have much respect for people who don't stand up for themselves.
15. One of my mottos is "A good offense is better than a good defense."
16. Don't mess with the people I love.
17. I know I'm respected. But sometimes I want to be loved.
18. I have no problem confronting a bully.
19. If God wanted people to wear their hearts on their sleeve, he would have put it there.
20. Under my tough exterior is a tender, loving heart.

TYPE EIGHT

THE CHALLENGER

Lead me, follow me, or get out of my way.

GENERAL GEORGE S. PATTON JR.

Healthy Eights are great friends, exceptional leaders and champions of those who cannot fight on their own behalf. They have the intelligence, courage and stamina to do what others say can't be done. They have learned to use power in the right measure at the right times, and they are capable of collaborating and valuing the contributions of others. They understand vulnerability and even embrace it at times.

Average Eights tend to be steamrollers more than diplomats. They are dualistic thinkers, so people are good or bad, opinions are right or wrong, and the future is bright or bleak. They prefer to lead, struggle to follow and use aggression to emotionally protect themselves. Many Eights are leaders, and others follow them with little or no hesitation. They have little patience with people who are indecisive or who don't pull their weight.

Unhealthy Eights are preoccupied with the idea that they are going to be betrayed. Suspicious and slow to trust others, they resort to revenge when wronged. They believe they can change

reality, and they make their own rules and expect others to follow them. Eights in this space destroy as much as they create, believing the world is a place where people are objects to be used and contributions from others have little or no lasting value.



When we first moved to Nashville our family was invited to a dinner party at the home of a new neighbor. Over dinner my then thirteen-year-old son Aidan began to talk about a story he'd heard and enjoyed on the way home from school on the NPR show *All Things Considered*. Aidan wasn't three sentences into describing the premise of the story when a middle-aged man across the table interrupted him by booming out, "The only people who listen to NPR are latte-drinking, skinny-jean-wearing, clove-cigarette-smoking hipsters."

Aidan's eyes grew wide as his face reddened. He hadn't yet learned that our community is for the most part politically conservative, and some of its residents regard NPR as no more than a propaganda machine for Ivy-League-educated communists. The neighbor then launched into a doozy of a tirade about left-wingers inventing global warming to destroy capitalism, the Supreme Court's plan to impose sharia law, and something about his pit bull's right to carry a handgun in the dog park.

An excruciating silence fell on the room. I was about to say something on Aidan's behalf when, from the vicinity where my daughter Cailey was sitting, I heard the unmistakable clearing of the throat that I knew translated to "Pilot to bombardier, open bomb bay doors." She was directly over her target and preparing to drop her rhetorical ordnance. I was about to yell, "Run, Bambi, run!" but there was no time. I commended the man's soul to God.

At the time Cailey was a twenty-two-year-old senior at Middlebury College, one of the better liberal arts colleges in the country.

This girl is smart as a whip, and she doesn't suffer fools gladly, particularly fools who pick on people she loves.

Cailey picked up her napkin from her lap, dabbed the corners of her mouth, calmly folded and placed it next to her plate, then turned to face the man who had smacked down her younger brother. "You're kidding, right?" she said, glaring at him like a panther marking its prey.

The man's eyebrows made a retreat up his forehead. "I'm sorry?" he responded, sadly unaware that the gates of hell were now unguarded.

Cailey turned to the rest of us at the table and gestured toward the man the way a circus ringmaster gestures to a clown about to be shot out of a cannon: "Friends, I give you another wingnut who uncritically believes everything he hears on conservative talk radio."

The man shifted uncomfortably in his chair and sniffed. "Young lady, I—"

Cailey held up her hand to the man's face like a cop stopping traffic and proceeded to uncover and shred every weakness in his argument. It was an unrelenting fusillade of criticism, after a few minutes of which I felt a moral obligation to step in and stop.

"Thank you, Cailey," I said.

"Sir, do us all a favor and have a point the next time you shoot your mouth off," she said, finishing the man off with a stinging flourish. She then unfolded her napkin and returned it to her lap. "Would you please pass the salt?" she said, licking her paws.

Cailey is an Eight on the Enneagram.



THE EIGHT'S DEADLY SIN

Eights are called Challengers because they're aggressive, confrontational, high-voltage people who approach life the way Alaric and his Visigoths approached Rome: they sack it.

The deadly sin of the Eight is *lust*, but not in the sexual sense. Eights lust after intensity—they are high-voltage human dynamos who want to be wherever the action and energy are, and if they can't find any, they'll cook it up. Eights have more energy than any other number on the Enneagram. They are fiery, zestful, earthy, full-throttle people who drink life down to the dregs and then slam their glass down and order a second round for everyone else at the bar.

Eights don't need a Marine band to play "Hail to the Chief" to let a group of people know they've arrived. When Eights walk into a room you feel their presence before you see them. Their larger-than-life energy doesn't fill a space; it *owns* it.

Visualize a men's locker room in which a group of guys is standing around whining about how "challenging" their restorative yoga class was. Then imagine the awe-soaked silence that would fall over them if a towel-clad Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson walked by and glanced their way. You'd have a bunch of guys squinting down at the floor, saying, "Can any of you see my contact lens?"

You get the idea.

FAMOUS EIGHTS

Martin Luther King Jr.
Muhammad Ali
Angela Merkel

Not all Eights speak loudly or karate-chop the air with their hands to drive home a point in conversation; nor are they all physically intimidating people. These are stereotypes, not personality types. The defining feature of an Eight is the overabundance of intense energy they radiate wherever they go. Regardless of whether they are introverts or extroverts, big or small, male or female, liberal or conservative, every Eight I've ever known oozes confidence, fearlessness and strength. Like Kazantzakis's Zorba the Greek, they're juicy people who respond with gusto to whatever life throws their way.

Spiritually healthy, self-aware Eights love to do what others say can't be done. When their energy is harnessed and channeled they can change the course of history. Think Martin Luther King Jr.

On the other hand, a spiritually undeveloped Eight who tests poorly on the self-knowledge scale is someone you want to keep away from the kids. Think Joseph Stalin.

ALL ABOUT EIGHTS OR CHALLENGERS

Anger is the dominant emotion in an Eight's life. They are fiercely independent people whose oppositional energy expresses itself in a need to be strong and go up against power. Eights assume others are untrustworthy until they've proven themselves otherwise. It's no surprise, then, that anger is their go-to emotion. It's so close to the surface that you can sometimes feel like it's radiating off them like a space heater. And because anger is so easy for them to access, an average Eight can be a little too quick to the draw, firing off a few rounds at people without thinking beforehand about the consequences. Their flashes of anger, however, are unconscious defense maneuvers to avoid acknowledging or revealing weakness or vulnerability. Eights use anger like a palisade to hide behind and defend the softer, more tender feelings of the open-hearted, innocent child they once were, the one they don't want others to see.

Eights don't come equipped with dimmers. They are on or off, all in or all out. They "go big or go home." They want to express their animal drives and satisfy their appetite for life without limitations or constraints being placed on them by anybody. This impulsive, all-or-nothing approach to life leaves Eights prone to being overindulgent and excessive. They can overwork, overparty, overeat, overexercise, overspend, over-anything. For an Eight, too much of a good thing is almost enough. As my Eight friend Jack likes to say, "If something's worth doing, it's worth overdoing." (You don't want to play beer pong against Jack. It doesn't end well.)

All this hot-blooded, passionate and combative energy can feel overwhelming and threatening to people who aren't Eights. Most folks go to parties hoping to have fun and talk to interesting people,

not to find themselves verbally sparring against the wunderkind captain of the Harvard debate team. Try not to take it personally. As strange as it sounds, what feels like intimidation to you feels like intimacy to an Eight. For them, conflict is connection.

In my experience Eights don't see themselves as angry people. In fact, they're genuinely surprised when they learn other people experience them as intimidating, insensitive and domineering. "Every year during my annual review I'd get the same feedback," Jim, a former Nashville record label executive and Eight told me. "My boss would say when it came to sales I killed it, but my staff consistently complained to him that I was overbearing, gruff and ran roughshod over their ideas. I honestly had no idea that's how people felt around me." Eights see themselves as honest, straight-talking people who aren't afraid to go nose to nose with whatever life throws at them and always leave everything on the field.

Lucky for us, Eights care deeply about justice and fairness. They are fierce advocates for widows, orphans, the poor and the marginalized. They have no problem speaking truth to power, and they are perhaps the only number on the Enneagram who are brave enough to confront and take down the oppressors and dictators of the world. Go on my daughter Cailey's Facebook page and I guarantee you'll find a photo of her marching in a recent protest to end police brutality, raise the minimum wage or force a university to divest from companies that produce fossil fuels. You'll have to look elsewhere for cute kitten memes.

Though Eights' concern for justice, fairness and defending the underdog is genuine, there is another drama underway here as well. Having witnessed or experienced the negative consequences of powerlessness as a child, the Eight identifies with the easily preyed upon and rushes to their aid.

Eights' concern for justice is great until they throw on tights and a cape and arrogate to themselves the role of the superhero sent to

avenge the defenseless and restore balance to the scales of justice. This is a temptation to Eights who are more often dualistic than non-dualistic thinkers. They see things as black or white, good or bad, fair or unfair. People are friend or foe, weak or strong, streetwise or suckers. In an Eight's mind, you and I have opinions while they have facts. They absolutely believe their viewpoints or positions on issues are irrefutable. They reject taking a nuanced view of anything because not having clarity or absolute certainty about your position represents weakness or—God forbid—cowardice. If you want to try to convince them otherwise, I suggest you pack your pajamas because it's going to be a long night.

Eights can start an argument in an empty house. A good old-fashioned verbal brawl gives them the opportunity to "get big" and disabuse people of any illusion they might previously have held about the Eight being weak. Eights value truth, and there's nothing like a nose-to-nose confrontation to bring it to light. Eights know other people can show their hands in the heat of a fight. A confrontation can expose what's *really* happening behind the scenes, force people's real intentions or hidden agendas into the open, or reveal whether people can stand their ground and be trusted.

Each number has a signature communication style. Knowing the talk style of each number will not only give you insight into other people's types but will help you narrow down your own number as well. The talk style of Eights is *commanding*. Often their sentences are littered with imperatives and end with exclamation marks.

Whereas most people experience conflict as anything but invigorating, Eights get their energy from it. If conversation at the

"You lose nothing when fighting for a cause. In my mind the losers are those who don't have a cause to care about."

MUHAMMAD ALI

holiday table takes an unexciting turn, Eights will pull out their phones and secretly check their email under the table. If it stays boring they'll take off their gloves and say something like, "I'd rather throw myself under a bus than live with this president for another four years," then sit back and watch the fun.

EIGHTS AS CHILDREN

So where do these forces of nature come from? A common story Suzanne and I hear from Eights is that something happened in their formative years that required them to prematurely abandon their childlike innocence in order take responsibility for their own lives and often the lives of others. Some Eights were raised in unstable environments or homes where toughness was rewarded with praise. (This does not apply to my own daughter. She grew up in Eden.) Others report they were bullied at school until it became clear they could rely on no one but themselves. These struggles may or may not reflect your experience as a child. Don't reject out of turn the possibility you're an Eight or any other number solely on the basis that you don't identify with a particular childhood story.

Regardless of the root cause, as kids Eights picked up the wounding message that "the world is a hostile place where only the strong survive, and the weak or innocent get emotionally beaten up or betrayed. So put on your armor and never let them see your soft side." Eights worry a lot about betrayal. It's why many of them won't trust more than a small circle of friends over the course of their lives.

As they grew a little older, Eights looked around the sandbox or their home and saw a "might makes right" world in which there were two types of people—those who controlled others and those who submitted. They figured out that weaker kids ended up as followers and vowed, "Not me, pal." You can't tell by looking at them, but Eights don't feel like they have to be the person in control—*they just don't want to be controlled*. (That last sentence is so important

that I will set my alarm clock to wake me up to Nickelback's song "Rockstar" every morning for a year if it means you reread and remember that sentence. You'll never fully understand Eights if you don't grasp that distinction.)

One of my favorite stories about Eights as kids involves Suzanne's daughter Joey. When Joey was five, Suzanne got a voicemail message from the head of the daycare center she attended. If you've raised children, you know that a call like this means that your kid is either throwing up in the Lego bucket or is in need of some crucial item that you, woefully pathetic parent that you are, failed to send them to school with. It's also possible you have a serial biter who is not responding to "ongoing positive guidance" that morning and needs their muzzle. In any case, it means you have to go face the principal.

But Suzanne was surprised to discover that the problem wasn't any of these typical scenarios. She learned to her bewilderment that Joey had come in earlier in the week to schedule an appointment with Mrs. Thompson, the director of the daycare.

"Suzanne, as you can imagine, we've *never* had a five-year-old request a formal meeting," Mrs. Thompson explained. "My secretary wasn't sure what to do so she went ahead and scheduled it."

"Why did she want to meet with you?" Suzanne asked.

"Well, Joey walked into my office ahead of me and suggested that we take a seat. I did, but she didn't, so she was eye level with me. She handed me a folder she'd been carrying under her arm and said, 'Thank you for meeting with me, Mrs. Thompson. I have a problem and I tried talking to my teacher about it, but she wasn't much help. I understand that most kids need to take a nap. But I don't. So rather than being bored and made to lie down during that time I have an idea.'"

Mrs. Thompson then handed over Joey's folder containing all her papers—all of which bore gold stars. Joey had brought the folder to Mrs. Thompson as Exhibit A to demonstrate her impeccable

credentials and the genius of her plan: since she didn't need a nap and her own papers were flawless, she should be permitted to help the teachers by checking papers during naptime.

"And I can do this for you for only \$1.47 an hour," Joey said, straightening her back to bring herself to her full height.

"Suzanne, I can't pay her! It's against the law!" said the director after she had finished the story.

"So did you just tell her no?" Suzanne asked.

The frown of disbelief on her face indicated that Mrs. Thompson had not even considered this possibility. Joey hadn't given her the impression it was an option.

The point of this story is not to show that Eights are bullies and Joey had a leg up on it. (In fact, unless they're very unhealthy, Eights are not characteristically bullies. Bullies act out to compensate and cover their own fears, while Eights aren't afraid of anyone. Because of their concern for justice and desire to instinctively protect and defend the disadvantaged, Eights are more likely to stand up to bullies.) It's to show how deep the wiring of the Eight's number runs. Joey was flexing her Eightness even at the age of five.

Like Joey, kids who are Eights often run ahead of the pack and want to be allowed to act independently. These kids trust themselves more than they trust most adults, and they have plenty of stamina for meeting challenges and getting things done.

Young Eights will get in line when limits are placed on them, but their motive has less to do with pleasing and more with hoping they'll be rewarded with more freedom and independence for good behavior. They don't feel a need to conform, but they know when it's to their advantage to follow the rules. These kids literally take over when it seems that no one else is at the helm, and they usually do a good job—so good a job that when people point to our daughter Cailey as evidence that we must have been reasonably decent parents, we say, "What makes you think we had anything to do with it?"

Unfortunately, the downside of their independence and self-reliance is that these kids can forget their innocence much too early, and it is difficult to reclaim it later in life. They need to recover a little of the open-heartedness that defines childhood for others. They need to remember that time in life when they didn't need to be in charge or control to feel safe, when they could trust others to protect them. They need the lessons that mistakes and weakness teach us: the value of an apology, the experience of forgiveness and the lessons we only learn from following another leader. If their boldness doesn't get shaped and channeled toward becoming a force for good in the course of development, later on it can bloom into full-blown oppositional stances toward the world.

THE CHALLENGER IN RELATIONSHIPS

I love the Eights in my life. I wouldn't trade my relationships with them for anything in the world. This doesn't mean that Eights are easy in relationships, only that the care and energy you have to expend to be their friend or partner is worth it.

Eights want people to challenge them right back. Eights admire strength. They won't respect you if you're not willing to stand toe to toe with them. They want others to be their equals and stand up for what they believe. The last thing you want to do is hoist the white flag when Eights start pounding their chests and trying to push you around.

One night a family friend who is an Eight came over for dinner. Living one door down from my childhood home, Ed watched me grow up from the time I was a baby. I love him like a father, but he can be a lot to handle. Over dessert I mentioned how much I had enjoyed the movie *Birdman*.

"That movie sucked," he announced. "It was too long, the premise was stupid, and Michael Keaton sure isn't what he used to be. Why anyone would think *Birdman* was a good movie is beyond me," he said, waving his fork in the air like a fencing saber.

Like most Eights, Ed lives by the "Fire, Aim, Ready" rule. He's a no-nonsense guy who speaks first and thinks later. Maybe. Over the years I'd learned to peel myself off the pavement and brush myself off after Ed mounted his bulldozer and ran me over this way. But as a student and teacher of the Enneagram I decided to see what would happen if I met him on the field of battle.

"Who are you, Roger freaking Ebert?" I said, mustering my big-boy voice and jabbing my finger across the table at him. "The script was great, the direction was flawless, and I'll bet you fifty bucks Michael Keaton gets nominated for an Academy Award. Why anyone would think that *Birdman* is a bad movie is beyond me."

No one at the table moved. My kids steeled themselves to become orphans. Ed sat back and for a brief moment looked at me curiously.

"Touché," he said, smiling and stabbing his tiramisu.

And that was that.

The group of us returned to normal conversation as if our momentary skirmish had been no more than a brief commercial interruption. That's how it is with Eights. They'll respect you if you hold your ground with them, and once the confrontation is over, it's as if nothing happened.

Eights want the unvarnished truth. Unless you like lengthy estrangements, never lie or send a mixed message to an Eight. You have to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Information is power, so Eights want to know all the facts. For a case in point, fast forward fifteen years to Suzanne and Joey. Joey was headed home from college when she was involved in a serious car accident that left her with a fractured shoulder, a dislocated hip and nasty bruising. When Suzanne saw Joey just before she went into surgery, she was shocked to see her looking so beat up, every inch of her face pockmarked from rolling in the gravel.

Fighting tears, Joey asked, "Mom, do I look horrible?"

"Yes, sweetheart," Suzanne said, "you do." A gasp went up from the nurses nearby, the kind of gasp that Suzanne tells me women universally recognize as an intentional expression of judgment. The louder the gasp, the deeper the judgment. But Suzanne knew that Eights *always* want the truth, so she didn't paper it over. Eights don't want you to protect them from the facts or coddle them by leaving out the unpleasant details. In an Eight's mind, there's a lot at stake. If they don't know the truth, then they don't know what's really happening, and if they don't know what's really happening, then they're not in control, and not in control is where Eights *never* want to be. If you hold back any relevant information, Eights will feel like you've left them flapping in the wind and dangerously exposed. You don't want to lose an Eight's trust. It takes a long time to get it back, *so always lead with the truth.*

Eights want to be in control. Eights never want to feel like they're not in control. This is one reason they don't often say "I'm sorry." If you tell them they've said or done something that hurt you, they may even make matters worse by accusing you of being too sensitive. When things go wrong Eights who lack self-awareness are super quick to blame others rather than own up and take responsibility for their mistakes. For spiritually immature Eights, expressing remorse or admitting their part in what's gone wrong represents weakness. Eights worry that if they own up and apologize for their behavior, you will bring it up and use it against them in the future. If it's any consolation, when in the silence of their own hearts they realize they've hurt someone they love, some Eights will beat themselves up mercilessly (as long as they're convinced they're wrong).

Remember that Eights are imposing, commanding personalities who need to be "the boss." Unless you put the brakes on they will take charge of possessions, the family social calendar, the TV remote and the checkbook. Because they are so expansive and self-extending, Eights can walk into a room where you're sitting, and

within minutes their full-throated voice, larger-than-life gesticulations and unsolicited but emphatically offered opinions will begin to assert control over the environment like an occupying power.

Eights are "Don't complain, don't explain" people. They don't make excuses, and they expect you not to either. If you're in a romantic relationship with an Eight, you have to know who you are and be independent. They don't want you to draft off their energy; they want you to bring your own. They love debates, risky adventures and getting people riled up.

All this excess and intolerance for constraints means Eights need friends and partners who can help keep them in check. As you'll learn, "self-forgetting" is a hallmark of all three numbers in the Anger Triad (8, 9, 1). In addition to forgetting their childhood innocence, one of the things Eights forget is that they're not invincible super humans. Many Eights feel physically bigger and more powerful than they are, so they'll place unreasonable demands on their bodies and put their health and well-being at risk. They'll bristle when you say it, but Eights need to be reminded that moderation is a virtue, not a restraining order.

Eights have a tender side. If you're fortunate enough to have an Eight in your life, you know that beneath all the intensity and anger energy there is a heart brimming with tenderness and love. Eights

will step in front of a speeding train or take a bullet to the chest for their small circle of friends.

"Aggressive fighting for the right is the noblest sport the world affords."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Feel honored when an Eight displays tenderness or shares vulnerable thoughts or feelings with you. A big problem for Eights is confusing vul-

nerability for weakness, so they rarely let down their guard to allow others to see their fragility or their deep desire to be understood and loved. This is why Eights are often attracted to Enneagram

feeling types (2, 3, 4), who can help them get in touch with and outwardly express their affection.

Eights are eager to support people who want to realize their potential. They know how to empower and bring out the best in others, and they'll block or tackle to help someone get to where they want to go in life. All they ask is that you show up and give 150 percent of yourself to reaching the goal. If you don't, the once-supportive Eight will move on to find someone else willing to put in the effort.

When Eights are in a healthy space they're a blast. They laugh easily, entertain generously and tell the kind of jokes that make you donkey snort. But they are serious competitors as well. Whether you're playing against them in the finals at Wimbledon or just in a chummy game of croquet on the front lawn, you'll soon discover that Eights hate to lose more than they love to win.

Eights' antagonism can sabotage their relationships. The Enneagram reveals how our solutions are often worse than our problems. By regularly testing authority, being overly blunt and insensitive, acting in a confrontational manner, insisting their perspective is always the right one, or acting impulsively, Eights don't protect themselves from attack, from losing their grip on control or from experiencing emotional harm and betrayal—rather, they invite it.

People can become fed up with feeling pushed around or intimidated by a spiritually immature Eight, and will either walk away from a relationship with them or band together to overthrow them professionally or exclude them socially. Sadly, when this happens it only confirms Eights' worst fears about the dangerous nature of the world, the untrustworthiness of others and the likelihood of betrayal.

Eights are looking for an answer to the question "Can I trust *me* with *you*?" At the end of the day, they want to find someone with whom they can feel safe enough to relax their defenses and reveal their heart.

EIGHTS AT WORK

Eights can be found in any profession. They make phenomenal prosecutors or defense attorneys, coaches, missionaries, business people and organization builders. Because they like to be in charge, free from limitations imposed on them by others, Eights often work for themselves.

As employees, Eights can be huge assets or a lot of work, and they're usually both. If you're fortunate enough to have an Eight on your team and want her to perform well, keep the lines of communication open and don't surprise her by changing the rules or announcing a sudden change of plans. Eights are highly intuitive and read the world from their gut, so they can smell deception or a lack of integrity from a mile away. If they trust you, you've got it made. If they don't, sleep with one eye open.

Eights always want to know who has the power, so they will consistently challenge and test authority. So you have to set limits, provide regular, honest feedback, and establish clear and reasonable boundaries. Eights will follow a leader so long as it's clear the leader knows where they're heading. They have no patience for a leader who waffles or lacks the moxie to commit to a course of action and move. Because they're looking for a strong leader, you have to either cowboy up and provide them with clear direction or put someone in charge of them who has more gumption than you.

You also need to keep them active. A bored Eight is like a puppy who's been cooped up in the house all day: keep him busy or he'll gnaw everything in your house down to the studs. But when your back's against the wall, you want Eights on your team. They're creative, smart and fearless, they're terrific troubleshooters, and they'll sleep on the floor to make sure the job gets done.

Corporate America worships Eights. (Corporate America also prizes Threes, but we aren't there yet.) They're people like Jack Welch, the former chairman of GE, whose infamous candor and

hard-hitting leadership style grew General Electric's bottom line exponentially but also earned him the nickname "Neutron Jack." (One has to wonder whether this gave him pause.) Regardless, Eights' commanding presence and boundless energy instills confidence in others, and people follow them.

As long as you're a man, that is.

FEMALE EIGHTS

Gender plays a role in how life unfolds for Eights. In the mid-1960s my father was unemployed and our family was broke—"newspapers in your loafers to keep your feet dry in the rain" kind of broke. To put bread on the table, my Eight mother took a secretarial job at a small publishing house in Greenwich, Connecticut. In those days old-boy networks dominated the publishing world, and to get ahead women didn't have to break through glass ceilings; they had to blast their way through steel-reinforced concrete walls. That didn't stop my mother. Fifteen years after she was hired to take dictation and make coffee, she was named vice president and publisher of her company.

That's an Eight: hard driving, tough, decisive, innovative, resourceful and accomplishing what people say can't be done. They just make things happen.

When she reflects on her years in the business world, my mother will tell you that female Eights are the most misunderstood and unfairly treated number on the Enneagram. In our culture a male Eight is respected and revered. People lionize men who "kick ass and take names." Sadly, we all know the word people use to describe a woman in the workplace or the community who takes charge, stands up for what she believes, refuses to take crap from people and gets the job done.

"When men cut jobs, they're seen as decisive. When women do, they're vindictive."

CARLY FIORINA

I don't need to spell it out for you, right?

Many female Eights go through life scratching their heads and thinking, *Why do people experience and treat me this way?* Will the easily threatened and insecure please put a sock in their yaps and let these gifted women out of the penalty box so they can get on with their lives without further interruption?

WINGS

Remember, each basic personality type incorporates the attributes of at least one of the numbers on either side of it on the diagram. This is called your wing. If you're an Eight and you know which of your wings colors your type more than the other, you would say either "I'm an Eight with a Seven wing" or "I'm an Eight with a Nine wing." Or as my Scottish friends put it, "I'm an Eight with a wee bit of Seven in my blood."

We haven't learned about the hallmark traits of Sevens (the Enthusiasts) or Nines (the Peacemakers) yet, but that shouldn't stop you from seeing how each of these wings adds flavor and nuance to the personality of an Eight.

Eights with a Seven wing (8w7). This can be a wild combination. Eights with a Seven wing are outgoing, energetic and fun, reflecting the Seven's sunny personality. They are also ambitious, impulsive and sometimes reckless. These Eights live life to the fullest. They are the most energetic of all numbers and the most entrepreneurial. The Seven energy masks the more wary Eight so they are more social and more gregarious than other Eights.

Eights with a Nine wing (8w9). Eights with a Nine wing have a more measured approach to life. They are more approachable and more open to cooperation over competition, in keeping with the Nine's tendency to play a peacemaking role. Because of the Nine's gift for mediating, these are not ordinary Eights—8w9s can be conciliatory. They are supportive, modest and less blustery, and others

are happy to follow their lead. When the Nine's gift of seeing both sides of everything is available to Eights, they become successful negotiators in situations both big and small.

STRESS AND SECURITY

Stress. When Eights get stressed out, they move to and take on those qualities you'd associate with unhealthy Fives (the Investigators). Here they withdraw and become even less connected to their emotions. Some experience insomnia and neglect to take care of themselves, eating poorly and not exercising. In this space Eights become secretive and hypervigilant about betrayal. They also may dig their heels in and become even more uncompromising than usual. That's something.

Security. Eights move to the healthy side of Two in security, where they become more caring and aren't so conscious of hiding their tender and gentle nature. Eights in this space don't insist their beliefs and opinions are absolutely right, but learn to listen and value other people's points of view as well. They start to trust in something bigger than themselves (yes, there are things in the universe larger than Eights) and allow others to take care of them—which, if even for a short time, makes everyone happy. Eights connected to the positive side of Two realize that justice is usually a reality beyond their control and that vengeance is something best left up to God. At least for now.

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

In his book *The Holy Longing*, Catholic writer Father Ronald Rolheiser describes *eros* as "an unquenchable fire, a restlessness, a longing, a disquiet, a hunger, a loneliness, a gnawing nostalgia, a wildness that cannot be tamed, a congenital all-embracing ache that lies at the center of human experience and is the ultimate force that drives everything else." Suzanne and I have a

hunch that Eights are more in touch with, or perhaps even endowed with, a greater measure of this divine *eros* than the rest of us. They're finite creatures trying to manage an overfull tank of infinite desires. That's a lot to manage. When contained correctly, their fire can safely welcome and warm people. But like all fire, if not surrounded with a hearth of self-restraint, it will burn your house down.

When Eights are spiritually on the beam and self-aware, they are powerhouses: fearless, magnanimous, inspiring, energetic, supportive, loyal, self-confident, intuitive, committed and tolerant toward those who are weaker than they are.

When Eights switch their lives over to autopilot and spiritually fall asleep at the wheel of their personality, they become shamelessly excessive, reckless, arrogant, bull-headedly uncompromising and sometimes even cruel.

I'd love to help Eights tap into the childhood innocence they gave up too early and restore their trust in humanity. I'd like to promise them they won't be betrayed, but I can't. Eventually we all go under that knife.

The healing message Eights need to know, believe and feel is this: there are lots of trustworthy people in the world, and though the risk of betrayal is always real, love and connection will forever elude them unless they welcome and reconnect to the innocent, less defended child they once were. Yes, betrayal is exquisitely painful, but it doesn't happen as often as Eights fear it does. And if or when it does, they'll be strong enough to survive it.

Since Eights like people to be straightforward and direct with them I'm going to be brutally frank: living behind a façade of bluster and toughness to mask one's fear of emotional harm is cowardly, not courageous. Risking vulnerability and love is what takes courage. Are you strong enough to come out from behind the mask of boast and brusqueness? That's the real question.

I like Brené Brown's books *The Power of Vulnerability* and *The Gifts of Imperfection*. Actually, I suggest that Eights read each of them. Twice. In *The Gifts of Imperfection* Brown writes, "Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light." Brown is on to something: vulnerability is the base metal of love and relationships. If Eights want to love and be loved they will have to risk opening their heart and revealing their innermost feelings to a trusted few. It's the price of admission.

"When I am weak, then I am strong." That's what St. Paul said, and I think he was right. Eights should write those words on a 3 x 5 card, tape it to their bathroom mirror, and make it their life's mantra. It will serve them better than "It's my way or the highway."

TEN PATHS TO TRANSFORMATION FOR EIGHTS

1. Too often, your intensity and lust for life runs the show. Give a friend permission to tell you when you're going overboard or exhibiting extreme behaviors. Remember, "Moderation, moderation, moderation."
2. To recover a piece of your natural childhood innocence, tend and befriend your inner child. I know, you don't have time for this sort of crap, but it helps.
3. Watch out for and avoid black-and-white thinking. Gray is an actual color.
4. Broaden your definition of strength and courage to include vulnerability. Risk sharing your heart at deeper levels with someone in your life.
5. Remember, your tendency is to act impulsively. It's "Ready, Aim, Fire!" not "Fire, Aim, Ready!"

6. You don't have a corner on the truth market. In the heat of battle, stop and ask yourself, *What if I'm wrong?* Say that a hundred times a day.
7. Your personality is twice as big and intense as you think it is, and what feels like passion to you often feels like intimidation to others. Offer an unqualified apology when people tell you that you ran over them.
8. Don't always play the part of the rebel, and try not to pit yourself against appropriate authority figures. They're not all bad people.
9. When you power up and get angry, stop and ask yourself whether you're trying to hide or deny a vulnerable feeling. What feeling is it? How do you use aggression as a way to hide it or defend against it?
10. Don't judge yourself or others as weak for sharing tender feelings. It takes courage to drop your guard and expose your inner child. (I know, you still hate that phrase.)

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