



A Parent's Guide to the
ENNEAGRAM

axis

A large teal double quote icon consisting of two stylized, blocky characters.

Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be and embracing who we are.

— [Brené Brown](#)

A Parent's Guide to **THE ENNEAGRAM**

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Who exactly are you?

How do you define who you are? By how you look? What you do? Who you're related to? Those personal details together might give a general picture of you, but it's probably not comprehensive. What if we took it a step further: What motivates you to get up in the morning? It's a harder question to answer because now we're talking about the "why," about purpose, about who you are at your core. And it gets even harder when we apply all these same questions to our kids. Even if they know who they are and what they want to do with their lives, which is unlikely, they usually aren't in the mood to tell their parents all about it. So how can we and our kids understand ourselves and each other better? That's where the Enneagram can help. [**Note:** *This Guide is only a primer to the Enneagram. See Additional Resources below for more in-depth info.*]

What is the Enneagram?

At its core, it's a tool used to cultivate self-knowledge and increase our understanding of ourselves, our kids, our parents, our friends, and even those we struggle to love. Enneagram author and researcher Don Richard Riso [puts it succinctly](#): "It is best described as a contemporary and evolving theory of human nature based on a variety of time-honored sources and traditions." If we let it, the Enneagram can help us know ourselves better and, in doing so, know God more fully.

Where did it come from?

Though [its exact history is unclear](#), some variation of it has existed for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years, according to [Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery](#). Our modern iteration can first be traced back to George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, who lectured on it in Europe in the 1910s and '20s and is credited with bringing the Enneagram symbol to the West. However, "the modern Enneagram...seems to be the result of [Oscar] Ichazo's brilliant synthesis of a number of related systems of thought about the nature and structure of human consciousness" (18). Since then, many modern psychologists, priests, and even lay people have studied and iterated upon it, bringing us the knowledge we have today. (For a more in-depth analysis of its history, we recommend Chapter 2 of *Personality Types*, especially the diagram on page 23.)

Why should I trust it?

Though it's not hard to find Enneagram proponents who tout its superiority over other systems, it's simply one system that seeks to understand and explain one of the most complicated things in the universe: the human psyche. So while there might be reasons people prefer it to something else, it can be even more powerful when used in conjunction with other systems.

However, one reason that people enjoy the Enneagram is its uncanny accuracy. It's amazing how well the nine types encompass everyone and yet also allow for (and even predict) the immense variation from person to person. If you don't yet know your type, it's possible that once you discover it, you'll be shocked by how well it describes you. ("How could it possibly know that about me?!" is a question uttered frequently by Enneagram newcomers.)

One of the best and most compelling reasons people are drawn to the Enneagram is its holistic way of describing a person. When you take [this Enneagram test](#), you don't just get one number that's bound to determine your every move for the remainder of your life. You are given a percentage for each of the nine numbers, indicating how strongly each type presents itself in you (we all have aspects of each type). But it also helps you understand which number is strongest, which then can elucidate core motivations, desires, fears, and behaviors.

In addition, the Enneagram is unique in that it doesn't just say, "Here's how you are!" or seek to create boxes in which to neatly fit a person. It allows for all the messiness, beauty, and variety of being human, while still offering healthy versions for each type to aspire toward. It explains how one might behave and think at their best *and* at their worst, which then also allows them the wisdom to see when they're thriving and when they're not.

Is it really that accurate? What are its limitations?

Because each one of us is a uniquely made individual, not everything the Enneagram says about your type will be Gospel truth to you. There may be certain points that resonate within your type and others that might not describe you at all, but the important thing to remember is that if you resonate with a majority of what is said for

a given number, there's a high chance that that is your primary way of interacting with the world. Remember, the Enneagram starts by describing your core motivations, so start by looking at each type's basic fear and holy desire to see which might resonate with you.

And though the Enneagram has been refined to explain variances and differences possibly better than any other system (more on how it does this below), it's not perfect. Remember that it's a constantly evolving system for describing and categorizing reality, not a system for *predicting* it. So as we learn more, the Enneagram can be refined even more, but since it seeks to describe one of the most complex, elusive, and unknowable aspects of our world, it will never fully encapsulate the whole of the human psyche.

How does one determine which type they are?

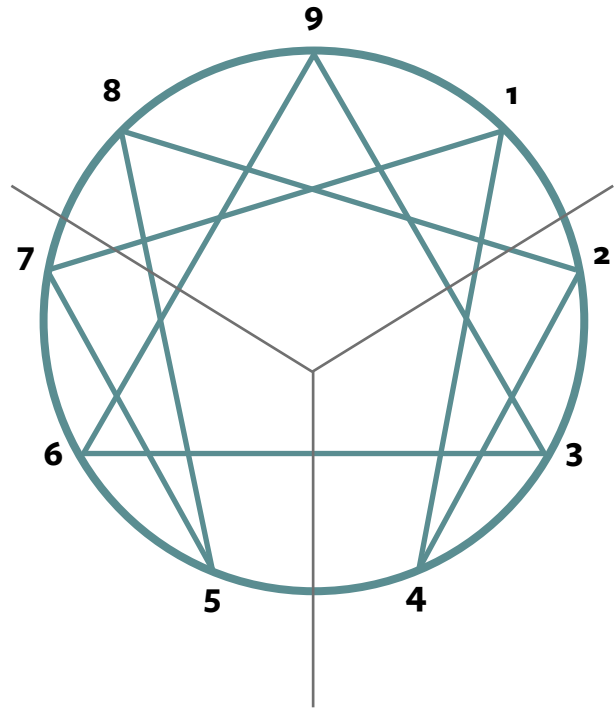
In her excellent book [Mirror for the Soul: A Christian Guide to the Enneagram](#), Enneagram specialist Alice Fryling suggests that you are actually more accurate at determining your Enneagram type than any test, though she does say tests are helpful (we've linked two reliable ones in Additional Resources below). Her advice is to read through a thorough description of each type and see what sticks. For some people, there is one number that surfaces immediately in an "ah ha!" moment. But for others, the journey to finding their type might take some discovery and deeper reflection. You might wonder, "Am I a 3 or a 7?" and you may have to take a few days and notice patterns that emerge from your daily life. Another helpful technique is to talk to a *trusted* friend to see which type they see more in you from an outside perspective.

Something to keep in mind: One clue that you're on the right track might be that you don't *want* that type to be your type or that you feel exposed. This is because, as much as each type has wonderful qualities, when you find your type, you will resonate more with the shortcomings of that type and possibly be embarrassed. We tend to see the positive qualities of other types and wish we had them, but when we find our own type, we will resonate with many, if not all, of the negative qualities.

How does it work?

Simply put, it's a personality typing system consisting of nine core personality types. While every personality typing system has its own unique way of labeling and defining

personality, the Enneagram simply uses the numbers 1 through 9 to define the different personality types (see diagram). These nine types are the different ways we as humans can experience the reality around us, as well as interact with the world and others. It helps to think of it this way: Each type is a pair of glasses with a prescription altogether different from the other eight types, so one pair of glasses might make all the punctuation marks pop off the page, while another pair might only draw out the words that start with capital letters. Depending on which glasses you're wearing, you experience the words on a page in a different way from someone reading the exact same sentence with different glasses.

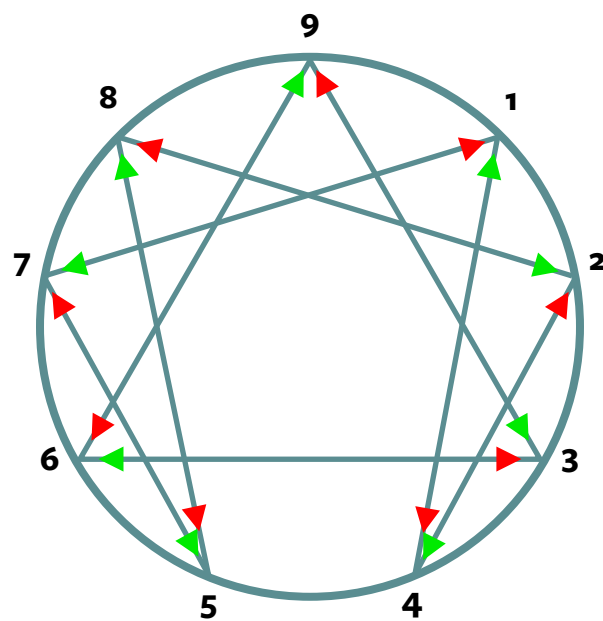


According to the Enneagram, **a person only has one core type, and that type does not change over the person's lifetime**; it is consistent. But as you can see in the diagram above, the nine types are laid out in a circle. This is not by accident. Enneagram types actually interact with each other in specific ways, and the circle arrangement seeks to describe those interactions. Each type can have what's called a "wing," which is *only* either of the two numbers that fall directly next to that type. While a wing doesn't change a person's core motivations and drives, it does impact behavior. So a Type Seven, for instance, can either have a Six wing or an Eight wing. Depending on which wing a person most identifies with, it can make that Seven seem very different from a Seven with the other wing or one who doesn't feel they have a wing at all. Most people have one wing that is strongest for them, but ideally, as you grow in health, you will be able to express both more fully. In addition, unlike the core personality types, wings can and do change throughout a person's lifetime. Check out [The Road Back to You](#) by Ian Cron for a great but concise explanation of how each wing influences your type.

What do the lines mean?

These lines, called "[arrows](#)," are also no accident. Arrows help describe how a specific type behaves when under stress (called "disintegration") and when in comfort (called

“integration”). In a nutshell, what this means is that when in comfort or psychological growth, a certain type will exhibit the behaviors of the type indicated by the green arrow in the diagram. Conversely, when in stress or psychological deterioration, a certain type will exhibit the behaviors of the type indicated by the red arrow.



What’s beautiful about this, beyond just how accurate it is, is how it explains why someone of one type can come across or behave very differently than someone of the exact type. If, say, a Five was really flourishing, they would exhibit a lot of the behaviors and characteristics of an Eight and could even be mistaken by those around them as an Eight. In conjunction with wings, arrows can also help us see why we do certain things or default to certain behavior patterns when we’re under stress, but never do them when we’re not. Also notice that once we take into account our arrows and wings, **each of us could exhibit traits of up to four different types**. Of course, our main/core type will be the strongest and most consistent, but the others play significant roles in our personalities and behaviors, again reflecting the enormous complexity of each individual person.

Why is it divided into thirds?

These thirds are known as [triads](#) (or centers) and describe the primary way each of the three types in that triad perceive the world—either through their Instinct, their Feelings, or their Thoughts. Though each type is able to use all three faculties, one becomes the dominant or primary faculty for each type within that triad.

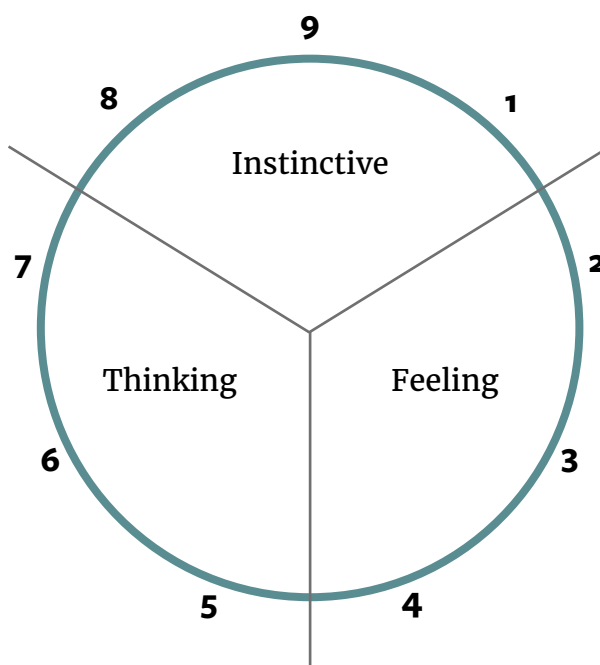
Instinctive/Gut. (Types Eight, Nine, and One) These types respond to life based on their gut reactions to things. They’re often impassioned people who live more by what drives them than by what they’re feeling or thinking. When people in this triad feel threatened, they start living out of the “false self” and are overcome with *anger*.

Feeling/Heart. (Types Two, Three, and Four) These types interact with life based on what they’re feeling. They’re often very successful socially because of their natural need and desire to connect with those around them. When people in this triad feel

threatened and start to live from the “false self,” they’re overcome with *shame*.

Thinking/Head. (Types Five, Six, and Seven)

These types approach situations primarily by using their mental faculties to understand the world around them. Head people plan, gather information, and look to the future to feel assured and secure. When people in this triad feel threatened, their “false self” takes over and they are crippled by *guilt*.



Hold on, what’s the “false self”?

Good question. The “false self” and “true self” are terms the Enneagram uses to describe our healthy and unhealthy tendencies. Let’s start with the good.

The True Self is your God-ordained, God-oriented identity. It’s the you that’s defined by your status as a son or daughter of God. It’s you at your best when you rest in the security of the Gospel, knowing that in God you have all you need, you can trust Him, and He is enough. In the true self, you are living into the fullness of who you’ve been made to be.

Conversely, the False Self is a social and mental construct driven by the ego that gets you started in life. It’s “[how you define](#) yourself outside of love, relationship, or divine union” with God. It’s who you think you are based on your appearance, education, family background, job, or title. But it’s more bogus than it is bad; we give it far too much credit for defining us than we should. When we begin to see ourselves based on external factors, we’re living out of our False Selves, and when we do that, we feel vulnerable and unsafe in our world because we don’t really trust that we are beloved and accepted by God Himself. We hide from God instead of running toward Him, and we attempt to build our own kingdoms. In the False Self, we make decisions to protect our ego from vulnerability and authenticity.

So what does the typology consist of?

The Enneagram seeks to describe multiple parts of who we are, but since our space is limited, we'll list the six most important components.

The Main Attribute. As God's image bearers, each of us has been uniquely made to represent different characteristics of God. Which attributes of God do you see in each of your kids? The Enneagram can help build some of that vocabulary with us because each type has a way that they instinctually reflect God, and we call this the Main Attribute of each type. We start here when talking about the Enneagram because we want to start by affirming the good and holy ways a person reflects God, and we always want to affirm and encourage our loved ones to live into their Main Attribute.

The Childhood Wound. It's a reality of our broken world that no child grows up in a perfect home completely protected from everything and anything that can cause pain or hurt. Each of the Enneagram types has a certain way they were wounded as children, and that wound begins to shape them. The wound happens when "a person feels they are not being loved perfectly or comes from a person's inability to receive love perfectly" (Heuretz, 245). As mentioned earlier, Enneagram types are fixed from birth and remain constant throughout a person's life. A person who is a Three was born a Three and will have the Three's way of seeing the world their whole life. So the childhood Wound is not what shapes the type; rather, *the type interprets the wound*.

The Basic Desire. One of the best questions you can teach your kids to ask is, "What is the good and holy desire behind what I'm wanting?" That question recognizes that each of us yearns for something beyond what we can simply see and that our desires are rooted in a good and holy longing we all have. This is what the Basic Desire gets at. What is that God-given desire that your true self wants to see realized and your false self will do *anything* to get?

The Basic Fear. If the Basic Desire is the good and holy desire that can only be satisfied in God, the Basic Fear is what can take over each type when they begin living out of the false self and worry that their Basic Desire will never be realized. It is the Basic Fear that drives each type down into unhealthy emotional levels

The Passion or Compulsion. If we're being driven by our Basic Fear (and therefore believe that our Basic Desire will never be achieved), our Passion or Compulsion begins to kick in, and we start trying to achieve our Basic Desire through unhealthy and often self-destructive means. Each type has a specific way it will seek to realize the Basic Desire, but when our Passions take over, it's important to remember that it means

we're actually living out of our Basic Fear, and we become trapped, trying desperately to get our Basic Desire, but succeed only in building a prison of our Passions.

The Grace Given. Thanks be to God that He doesn't just leave us to drown in our fears and passions without a way out. God gives every Enneagram type a specific grace to help them accomplish their Basic Desire in a healthy and mature way. To lean into the Grace Given is to humbly say to God, "Lord, I am yours and yours only. Help me to become more of the person you made me to be." Only God can teach us to live into our grace, but if we do approach all areas through the grace God gives us, we find that we actually move toward our Basic Desire without the stress, panic, and striving that comes with Fear. It's here that we find freedom.

What is Type 1 like?

Type One is known as the **The Reformer** because of the ability to see what's wrong in the world and make it better. By doing so, they are often bringing God's restoration, even in little ways, to the world around them.

Main Attribute. Goodness. Ones remind us that God is always working to bring His perfect kingdom to earth when all that is broken will be made right. Ones want to be good and are therefore perfectionistic, principled, and improvers.

Childhood Wound. As children, Ones got the message that they weren't good enough and that they needed to always be better. They were told that they could always be better, making the refrain in their head one of constant critique of their outer and inner world.

Basic Desire. To reveal the ideal goodness in themselves and in the world around them.

Basic Fear. That they are corrupted, bad, and immoral. When Ones move away from a place of security, they start acting primarily out of the belief that they are corrupted and are consumed with the shame of their own brokenness and inability to be good.

Passion or Compulsion. Anger, which they direct toward all the imperfections in the world. But that external anger is soon directed inward at themselves, and if Ones aren't careful, they can easily fall into a game of never-ending self-improvement, only to find that they fall short of their unrealistic expectations time and time again.

Grace Given. Serenity is the grace given to Ones as they learn to accept themselves and the world around them as good enough. This serenity allows Ones to let go of their need to constantly improve and to simply rest in the divine presence of God.

What is Type 2 like?

Twos are called **Helpers** because they excel at anticipating and meeting others' physical and emotional needs.

Main Attribute. Love. Twos remind us that “God is love” and that He is a God who will give all of Himself to bring us into a loving relationship with Him. In this same way, Twos will give all of themselves to love those around them, and they are emphatic, generous, and nurturing.

Childhood Wound. Twos received the message that their needs were selfish, so instead of focusing on what they needed, Twos turned their gaze outward to the needs of those around them. By focusing on others, Twos felt loved even when that love wasn't given back.

Basic Desire. To be loved. We all desire to be loved, but Twos feel the need to be loved by others more deeply than other types.

Basic Fear. That they are unloved. The False Self of Twos tells them that they need love from all other places except God. Twos were told that they would be loved if they loved others rather than themselves. As a result, when Twos feel unloved, they will do anything to feel love.

Passion or Compulsion. Pride. Unhealthy Twos may feel addicted to how others like their giving, caring nature and could feel pride that they are needed and loved for what they do. If Twos feel unloved, they may even manipulate others to feel love.

Grace Given. Humility, meaning that they are able to recognize their own needs and are able to articulate them to others to avoid becoming lost in what others expect of them. When this happens, Twos are able to love freely without any expecting to find their value in the love of others.

And Type 3?

Type Three is known as **The Achiever** because of the ability to accomplish and push others to accomplish great things. They are well regarded and value personal growth.

Main Attribute. Effectiveness. Threes remind us that God accomplishes and achieves all that He promises to His people. They are role-models, authentic, and successful.

Childhood Wound. Threes received the message that the only thing that mattered for them growing up was their performance. They were only valued for what they could do, not for who they were.

Basic Desire. To be valuable for who they are.

Basic Fear. That they are worthless and have nothing to offer the world. In order to chase their desire to be valuable, they work harder and faster than everyone around them.

Passion or Compulsion. Deceit. Threes want to look good all the time. They want others to see their success and value that in them. If life starts shifting in a negative direction, Threes will smudge the truth and use deceit to keep up a facade of success.

Grace Given. Truthfulness, which allows Threes the freedom to take off their masks and be honest with everyone about both the good and the bad. It's in this place of vulnerable honesty that Threes can be truly valued simply for who they are and to cease the incessant need to impress.

What about Type 4?

Fours are called **Individualists** because of their ability to recognize and appreciate what makes everyone different. They are unique, appreciative of beauty, and good at facing their emotions.

Main Attribute. Creative. Fours bear the image of God's extravagant creativity. They're described as sensitive, reserved, and unique.

Childhood Wound. As children, Fours felt isolated or unseen by one or both of their parents because they felt different or misunderstood. To deal with this sense of isolation, Fours turned inward to their feelings and imagination.

Basic Desire. To be their authentic selves. They want to be known, seen, and understood as individuals.

Basic Fear. Having no significance.

Passion or Compulsion. Envy. Because Fours view themselves as different and everyone else as normal, they may think that they are lacking that very thing that gives significance to life. Fours have the passion of envy, causing them to want and be jealous

of the lives others are living, and this envy allows them to cope with their greatest fear of insignificance. Envy causes Fours to get stuck in a hamster wheel of emotions, making them feel trapped in feelings.

Grace Given. Equanimity, which is the ability to feel the appropriate emotion at the appropriate time. This grace allows the Four to be honest about an experience without getting trapped in an emotional vortex. It is in equanimity, a place of calmness and contemplation, that Fours are able to see their own significance and value in Christ.

And Type 5?

Fives are called **Investigators** because they are curious about the world around them and want to know why things are the way they are. Because of this, they are often innovative, independent, and highly focused.

Main Attribute. Wisdom. Fives follow in the footsteps of the proverbs, reminding us that God is wise and that wisdom is a true gift to be pursued. They are perceptive, intense thinkers, and analytical.

Childhood Wound. In childhood, Fives either struggled to make a meaningful connection with their caretaker or they had helicopter caretakers who were intrusive and over-controlling. The Five thus retreated into the world of the mind for safety, finding a place to truly explore the world without invasion.

Basic Desire. To be capable and competent.

Basic Fear. Being left unable and helpless. To combat this fear and have some semblance of reaching for their desire, Fives withdraw from the outer world and live in their minds, studying the world around them intensely to find problems and solutions through knowledge and learning.

Passion or Compulsion. Avarice, a type of greed characterized by hoarding and an inability to let go. For the Five, this looks more like intellectual hoarding than physical accumulation. Fives living out their False Selves will attempt to build self-competence through the accumulation of knowledge, but they will struggle to act on that knowledge, feeling that there will always be more to learn or analyze in a situation.

Grace Given. Detachment. This often has negative connotations, but for the Five, detachment is the thing that helps them let go of the endless journey deep into the mind and allows them the freedom to reattach to the world around them through offering their wells of wisdom to others as a beautiful gift.

What should I know about Type 6?

Type Six is called **The Loyalist** because people of this type are not only fiercely loyal to relationships, but also to ideas and beliefs, even to the point that they will defend others or their values more fiercely than they will defend themselves.

Main Attribute. Faithful. Sixes remind us that God is faithful and will not abandon His people. They reflect the radicalness of God's never-ending commitment to us. Sixes are likable, warm, and charming.

Childhood Wound. As children, Sixes learned to be doubtful of the world around them because their environments were unpredictable and unsafe. They doubted everything as a defense mechanism and eventually learned not even to trust their own thoughts or instincts.

Basic Desire. To be supported and have guidance.

Basic Fear. To be without any support or guidance. When Sixes live out of the False Self, their mind becomes filled with worst-case scenarios in which they are left helpless and without safety or support.

Passion or Compulsion. Cowardice, meaning the False Self tells them that in order to be supported and have guidance, they must live in constant crippling fear, which eventually prevents them from making any decisions or moving forward with life.

Grace Given. Courage. In spite of their fear, healthy Sixes find that they have the courage to act and move through life with a sense of confident courage knowing that they have the guidance and security they are seeking in God, who is their safety.

How about Type 7?

This type is called **The Enthusiast** because they are excited about almost anything. They approach the world with a kind of wide-eyed wonder, anticipating all the exciting things that are coming next.

Main Attribute. Joy. Sevens have a natural propensity toward joy, and they remind each of us that God gives joy in all of life's circumstances. Sevens are known to be energetic, lively, and spontaneous.

Childhood Wound. Sevens either had nurturer that was taken away too soon, or they

were deprived of a nurturing relationship altogether. To cope with the pain in their life, Sevens learned to distract themselves with constant positive thinking and fun activities.

Basic Desire. To be satisfied.

Basic Fear. Pain. They crave a life of deep-rooted satisfaction, so when Sevens live out of the False Self, their lives become filled with more and more distractions in search of that satisfaction, causing them to look distracted, manic, and unfocused.

Passion or Compulsion. Gluttony. Sevens tend to over-consume anything that brings satisfaction. But they find that their unquenchable thirst and unending pursuits leave them burnt out and anxious for more.

Grace Given. Sobriety. Healthy Sevens are able to calm the chaos buzzing in their minds and are able to invest in the here and now. In this sobriety, Sevens can find great wisdom and offer that wisdom to others.

What should I know about Type 8?

Eights are called **Challengers** for their love of taking on new challenges and encouraging others to do the same in the hopes of surprising themselves with what they can accomplish.

Main Attribute. Power. Eights show us that God will fight on behalf of His people for their good. At their best, Eights fight for justice for the oppressed and defend the weak. They are direct, loyal, energetic, and protective.

Childhood Wound. Eights grew up in a highly chaotic, dysfunctional, and physically or emotionally unsafe environment where they had to mature very quickly to protect themselves. Instead of being controlled, Eights decided they would always be in control and refused to show weakness because weakness made them vulnerable.

Basic Desire. To protect themselves.

Basic Fear. Being harmed, violated, or controlled. They have an innate survival instinct woven into their DNA, and they are people of very high intensity and strongly held opinions.

Passion or Compulsion. Lust—not simply sexual lust, but a lust for everything that makes them feel alive. This is ironic because the behaviors the Eight clings to are

often self-destructive behaviors and addictions that give them the illusion of being in control and protected even while destroying the the world around them.

Grace Given. Innocence. For the Eight, this is the ability to rest from the constant pursuit of lust and settle into the moment, allowing life to come at them with childlike love and curiosity. When Eights embrace innocence, they find that in God they are protected and can then offer this protection to others.

And finally, what about Type 9?

Nines are called **Peacemakers** because they are devoted to both internal and external peace for themselves and others.

Main Attribute. Peace. Nines reflect God's peace that surpasses all understanding, and they create peace around them for others to rest in. They're described as generous, patient, emphatic, and receptive.

Childhood Wound. Nines grew up in an environment where they felt overlooked, lost, or unimportant. When they did have strong feelings, they were ignored or criticized, so they chose to simply blend in and go with the flow to keep the peace around them.

Basic Desire. To feel peace and wholeness.

Basic Fear. Loss and separation. Nines living out of the False Self will often feel an intense need to keep peace and harmony, but they will do this by ignoring their own needs and feelings and instead simply try to go with what everyone else wants. Because of their natural ability to see every perspective when conflict arises, they are often unable to take a stance or choose a side.

Passion or Compulsion. Slothfulness, meaning they often become neglectful of or slow to confront their own feelings, emotions, or needs. Nines often struggle to recognize this because they believe that if the outer world looks peaceful, the inner one is, too, but in reality, their feelings are still there; they've simply put them in a pretty box in order to ignore them.

Grace Given. Action. This allows the Nine to start creating genuine peace in the inner and outer world through the honest expression of their feelings and emotions. Action for Nines means giving themselves space to take action and speak their opinion, even in tension. It is there that true peace is found.

Anything else to know?

It's important that we first start with using the Enneagram to understand ourselves before then moving on to others. Once we do this, it becomes extremely important that we don't use our newfound knowledge as a weapon. It can be so easy to focus on the parts of a person's personality we *don't* like or to put them in a box because we think we understand everything about them. But that doesn't help anyone. Instead, the Enneagram can be used to understand why someone might do something that irritates us (it's not because they're the worst), to speak their language when asking them to stop, or to find better outlets for their energy/passion.

In addition, because the Enneagram is based on core motivations and values—things we often don't reveal to others—it's never smart to tell someone what we think they are. We'll often be wrong! Only they can decide for themselves which type best and fully describes them.

For that reason, many Enneagram experts recommend simply observing our children and guessing what we think they are *without telling them* in order to let them decide for themselves in due time. If we tell them, it could taint the way they see themselves or even cause them to try to fit into that mold and keeping them from embracing their God-given identity.

How can it help me parent my kids?

First, once you understand yourself, the Enneagram can help you understand how you parent because each of us will have [parenting styles](#) that ultimately reflect our primary type. Then, once you know your kids' types, you can see [how your type interacts](#) with theirs. It's fascinating to learn how certain aspects of your type and your kids' types might not line up and cause heavy relational issues. For example, type Two kids often struggle with type Eight parenting, and type Seven kids push back hard against the One's parenting styles. Bringing some of this to light can totally transform your family dynamic over time.

Second, it can help you in understanding your kids even better and can act as a new pair of glasses to see your kids through. When you understand how your kid sees the world and what their basic desires and basic fears are, it allows you to connect with them on a deeper level, creating more opportunity for authentic conversation and relationship. The next time your kid lashes out or is having a really difficult day, try

to walk them through their struggle with their type's desires, fears, and passions in mind (without telling them, of course). For example, if you have a kid who is a Four and consistently gets stuck in an emotional spiral, come at the situation with the mindset that what your kid *really* wants is to find significance. Help them identify their emotions, speak those emotions, and then give them techniques for moving toward finding their ultimate significance in God.

Remember, the Enneagram can be used inappropriately if it is used as a labeling tool for your kids or as an excuse for poor behavior or parenting on our end. One thing we never want to do is stereotype a Five kid as an anti-social brainiac, a Seven kid as an irresponsible class clown, or a Three kid as the perfect trophy child. These labels are gross oversimplifications and don't look at our kids holistically. Remember, the Enneagram is designed for us to enter into meaningful, authentic relationships with our kids, and when we use it as a tool to label what we like and don't like, it will do the opposite and drive them away.

Conclusion

You and your kids are all gloriously made in God's image, but because of sin and rebellion we spend a lot more time living out of our False Selves than we do our True Selves. Someone asks who we are, and our False Selves start listing all the ways we grasp for significance, meaning, and purpose, all the while missing the true fullness of who God made us be. The Enneagram gives all of us the grace of exposing the lies we hear over and over, and it allows us to see ourselves for who we really are: deeply broken masterpieces who are, by God's unending grace, being remade into His image. Here, in the security of our Father's grace, we find the strength to let go of what we think we should be and joyfully live into the abundant people He has ordained us to be. And that is freedom.

Related Axis Resources

- [*The Culture Translator*](#), a **free** weekly email that offers biblical insight on all things teen-related
- [A Parent's Guide to Discipling Teenagers](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Generation Z](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Family Night](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Making Your Home a Safe Place](#)
- [Check out axis.org](#) for even more resources!
- If you'd like access to all of our digital resources, both current and yet to come, for one low yearly or monthly fee, check out the [All Axis Pass!](#)

Additional Resources

There are many more layers and facets of the Enneagram that we didn't have space to discuss here. We highly recommend the following for learning more.

- [*The Sacred Enneagram*](#) by Christopher L. Heuertz
- [*What Type Am I?*](#) by Renee Brown
- [*The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery*](#) by Ian Cron and Suzanne Stabile
- [*Mirror for the Soul: A Christian Guide to the Enneagram*](#) by Alice Fryling
- [*The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective*](#) by Richard Rohr
- [*Personality Types: Using the Enneagram for Self-Discovery*](#) by Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson (this will be particularly interesting to Fives because it's very in depth)
- ["How the Enneagram Can Point You to God,"](#) Relevant Magazine
- [*The Path between Us: An Enneagram Journey to Healthy Relationships*](#) by Suzanne Stabile
- [Songs for Each Enneagram Type](#) by Sleeping at Last
- [Sandals Church Enneagram Podcast](#), Episodes 105-113
- [The Enneagram Institute test](#), \$15
- [WEPSS test](#), \$10
 - The above tests have been verified to be accurate. Other free tests are not necessarily as accurate.

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A Parent's Guide to **THE ENNEAGRAM**

Recap

- Self-knowledge and awareness can help us live more intentionally, and the Enneagram helps us to gain that knowledge and awareness.
- The Enneagram is a personality typing system that touches on core desires, fears, and motivations.
- It's a strong parenting tool that can expose weak places in relationships.
- Our True Self is when we rest in God, but in our insecurities, our False Self rules.

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!



A Parent's Guide to **THE ENNEAGRAM**

Discussion Questions

- What Enneagram type do you feel best describes you? Why is that?
- What sticks out to you about your type?
- Is the Enneagram popular amongst your friends? What about at school?
- Do you think the Enneagram is helpful and/or accurate? How so?
- How do you think increased self-knowledge and awareness can help us to live more intentionally?
- How can I love you better, given the attributes and tendencies of your type?
- What are ways you think my type and your type differ?
- What are ways that our types may clash at times?
- How do you think our types can work together?

Hint: Screen shot or print this page to refer back to later!