

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

THE ENNEAGRAM

The Enneagram, a personality typing tool, has been around for a long time but has grown in popularity lately—from churches to boardrooms. What I appreciate most about each of the nine types is how they instill confidence in me and our entire Magnolia team as we recognize our own strengths and abilities and use them to better understand and relate to one another. And that is no small thing. —Jo



story by guest columnist

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As we own the fullness of who we are, we can more plainly see the gifts we bring to the world.

My mentor, Father Larry Gillick, loves to tell a story about visiting an elementary school. After gathering with a group of students, a bright girl, just 8 or 9 years old, approached him and struck up a conversation. A few moments into their discussion, she blurted out, “You’re blind!”

It’s true. Due to an illness, Father Gillick lost his sight when he was just a small child.

With genuine tenderness, Father Gillick responded, “My dear, that’s not news to me.”

But before he could say anything else, she quickly moved from shock to sorrow, sadly replying, “But you don’t know what you look like.”

That profound statement from a child caught Father Gillick off guard, and before he could comment, she ever so softly said, almost whispering, “You’re beautiful.”

There’s something profoundly human hidden in that little exchange. When it comes to recognizing the truth of our own identity, most of us experience a figurative version of blindness that keeps us from seeing ourselves for who we really are.

Many of us live unawakened lives marked by living out misrepresentations about who we are—or how we wish to be seen. Somehow, we don’t truly know what we look like. And so, it often takes an unlikely “other” to remind us what’s true—that each and every one of us is beautiful. Each and every one of us is beloved.

When we accept our inherent beauty, we find the courage to examine what makes us unique—to honestly encounter both the good and the bad, the shadow and the light.

More than anything else I’ve encountered, the Enneagram has helped me do just that. It exposes the lies we tell ourselves about our identities. It helps us realize there’s much more to learn about who we can become. It reveals what’s always been good and true and beautiful about each of us. It can help us get to the heart of who we really are.

Almost 20 years ago in the slums of Cambodia, I first learned about the Enneagram. Over lunch on a rooftop café in Phnom Penh, a friend from New Zealand introduced me to it, and I’ve never been the same.

Often misunderstood as simply a personality assessment used to describe quirks and traits of individuality, this tool goes much further than simple caricatures. It helps explain the “why” of how we think, act, and feel. It helps us come

to terms with our gifts, as well as with the difficult patterns that tether us to our greatest interpersonal, spiritual, and emotional challenges.

Before you start to think the Enneagram puts you in a box, it’s important to realize it’s a much more nuanced and dynamic system. Like a color wheel that displays the blending of hues around a vibrant circle, the Enneagram illustrates how each type mingles and mixes with the numbers on either side of it. In fact, each of the types on either side of an Enneagram number are called its wings, and these adjoining types help balance the types they’re connected to.

As someone dominant in Type Eight (the classic contrarian who sides with the vulnerable) with a very strong Seven wing (signaled by lighthearted playfulness), I have had to learn how to lean into my Nine wing (characterized by peace-filled cooperation) to find ways of bringing people with diverse perspectives together around difficult exchanges or within intense work environments.

Crisscrossing lines also travel through the Enneagram symbol, showing the movement of each type when operating in healthy (sometimes called integration) or unhealthy (disintegration) states.

After graduating from university, I moved to India where I worked with children orphaned because of AIDS or born HIV positive. During my time there, I had the incredible honor of meeting with Mother Teresa throughout the last few years of her life. I understand that Mother Teresa was also dominant in Type Eight, which surprises a lot of people. However, following the Enneagram’s lines of integration, those dominant in Type Eight reach toward Type Two (generous companion who lives to nurture those they love). Clearly Mother Teresa had embraced these gifts by integrating into the caring hero she’s remembered as.

Once we learn our Enneagram type, it can change the way we see ourselves. It helps us tell the truth about who we really are and live out of that reality.

This tool helps us connect to our hearts, and the beauty that’s always been there waiting for us to rediscover. When we can understand the truest parts of who we are, an invitation for growth awaits us.

All of us just want to know we’re safe and loved. The Enneagram helps us get to the root of this simple desire. From there, we can live out the purposes that each of us has been created for.

THE NINE TYPES

As humans we all have default ways in which we interpret the world. While there are qualities of each personality type within each one of us, you're likely to find one that you most identify with.

1

TYPE 1: TEACHER, REFORMER, PERFECTIONIST

seeks principled excellence as a moral duty

2

TYPE 2: CARETAKER, PLEASER, HELPER

seeks love through self-sacrifice

3

TYPE 3: ACHIEVER, COMMUNICATOR, ROLE MODEL

seeks recognition from achievements

4

TYPE 4: ARTIST, ROMANTIC, INDIVIDUALIST

seeks discovery of authentic identity

5

TYPE 5: OBSERVER, INNOVATOR, THINKER

seeks decisive clarity through thoughtful conclusions

6

TYPE 6: LOYALIST, GUARDIAN, QUESTIONER

seeks steady constancy through confident loyalty

7

TYPE 7: ENTHUSIAST, ADVENTURER, ENERGIZER

seeks imaginative freedom and independence

8

TYPE 8: LEADER, CHALLENGER, PROTECTOR

seeks impassioned intensity for autonomy

9

TYPE 9: PEACEMAKER, COMFORTER, OPTIMIST

seeks peacefulness free from strife and discomfort

Learn more and discover your Enneagram type:
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