

The Changeworks

*Consulting, Training, Books and CDs
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What is the Enneagram?

The subject of many best-selling books, the Enneagram is a fascinating, powerful system of psychology that describes the nine personality styles that human beings most favor.

The Enneagram is about people - how we are the same, how we are different, what makes us tick. It presents a system of psychology that describes nine core personality styles that human beings tend to favor. The descriptions of these styles are both profound and comprehensive, detailing the inner motivations, thought patterns and basic beliefs of each one. Newcomers to the Enneagram are often amazed to find clear, accurate portraits of themselves and most everyone they know.

Part of the power of the Enneagram is that it recognizes how human beings have sincerely different versions of reality. No version is presented as better than another. Each of the nine styles has its own internal logic and integrity. Each correctly perceives part of reality and has an area of "expertise." Each style has strengths, talents and advantages as well as limits, pitfalls and blind spots.

Enneagram styles are like nationalities. While we are all unique individuals, we belong to a larger group of which we are individual examples. If you have friends from other cultures, you know that on one level you are very aware of the differences between their culture and yours. The fact may contribute much to your relationship. On other levels, you and your friends connect affectionately in a way that bypasses how your cultures make you different.

Studying the Enneagram will reveal the differences between your psychological orientation and those of other "psychological nationalities." With this awareness you can also connect more compassionately or usefully to others who have world views distinct from your own.

The major advantage to learning the Enneagram, of course, is to discover your own personality style. This can be a startling experience at first, but its usefulness soon emerges. Once you identify your core style, baffling aspects of your own behavior may suddenly make sense. You might see more clearly why you sometimes think and act the way you do. As you tune further into your own inner workings, you might sense deeper beliefs, plus a way of seeing the world that shades your daily actions and relationships.

You might also become aware of the ways you are caught up in the pitfalls of your style and cause yourself suffering. There could be little psychological traps you set for yourself, limits you place on your experience or habitual ways that you react to events without choice.

These insights can be helpful in that they provide motivation to work on one's self. Some responses that you now have may be outmoded and carried over from childhood. You may act blindly at times. To an extent, you may find that your Enneagram style amounts to something like a hypnotic trance, as though part of you sleepwalks through life, relating to an idea of the world, rather than the world itself.

Most psychotherapists would say that just having insight into your behavior is not enough to change it. Learning about the Enneagram won't magically transform you, but it will give you a tool that is greatly clarifying and uncannily useful.

Just as the Enneagram will show you how you are caught, it also points to your higher capacities - what you are good at, what creative resources are present when you are happiest and most awake. It will direct you toward the source of your personal power and give you a major tool for living more fully in the present-day world, basing your choices on your actual needs.

The Enneagram is a system of psychology. It is neither inherently esoteric nor spiritual. You might, however, find that it has deep spiritual implications in that it helps diagnose how you get in your own way and block the most free and soulful expression of your being.

On everyday levels, knowledge of the Enneagram is helpful in dozens of ways, from understanding relationships to improving communication to handling difficult people. You may discover that your friendships reflect affinities for certain Enneagram styles. You will also better pinpoint types of personalities that have been difficult for you to deal with. You may realize that the behavior of some people that you always took personally never was personal; they were just acting blindly out of the limits of their own world view.

The Enneagram is especially useful in any professional context where communication is important. Attendees at workshops have included psychotherapists, teachers, lawyers, counselors, business people, artists, plumbers, filmmakers. Anyone who needs to deal effectively with other people benefits greatly from studying personality styles.

What do people say about the Enneagram?

"You've never heard of the Enneagram? This system of personality analysis, once fad-dish pop psychology, is becoming a personnel tool for corporate America." -Business Week

"What sets the Enneagram apart is that it contains such detailed, useful information about what drives us to behave as we do. It's valuable not just for those seeking to understand themselves but also as a source of insights into one's friends, colleagues, and even enemies." –Esquire

"Now after lurking on the fringes of mysticism and pop psychology for more than 20 years, the Enneagram is turning mainstream and respectable. Last year the Stanford University School of Business course called "Personality, Self-Awareness and Leadership" focused on the Enneagram for the first time; the class proved so popular that it will be expanded from 40 to 50 students next winter. The CIA now uses the Enneagram to help agents understand the behavior of individual world leaders. The U.S. Postal Service recently turned to the Enneagram to help employees resolve conflicts. Clergy from the Vatican signed up for an Enneagram seminar last year. And the First international Enneagram Conference, with 1,400 participants who came to Palo Alto, Calif., from as far away as Japan, was cosponsored by Stanford Medical School's department of psychiatry." - Newsweek

"A hot new management idea has just arrived on the scene, Introduced to the West around 1940 by Russian mystic G.I. Gurdjieff., the Enneagram is a personality typing system that groups people into 9 categories. Executives from companies such as Motorola and Marriot have attended workshops devoted to the Enneagram system, and it's part of the continuing education program at Silicon Graphics. The CIA has even held Enneagram briefings on the behavior of world leaders." –Working Woman

"The apparent universality of the Enneagram is a big part of its attraction. People use it to improve themselves and their relationships. Many psychologists and marriage counselors swear by it. Members of the clergy and business managers use it to understand their congregations and subordinates. It is even accepted by academics." - Contra Costa Times

"As a guide to human character, behavior and motivation, it has no equal. More practical than typologies derived from conventional psychology, the Enneagram provides a clear and easily recognizable map of nine distinct personality patterns. For most people, it simply rings true." - Yoga Journal