

## **A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE ENNEAGRAM**

By Sandy Roos

Have you ever wondered how your partner could say or do something so out of the realm of your own experience that your jaw drops and you shudder in disbelief? Perhaps the Enneagram of Personality Types can help explain profound differences in the way we, as well as others look at the world.

The Enneagram of Personality Types has been most helpful in my work as a couple's therapist because this system helps couples understand type related personality differences and how our perception of reality is filtered by our type related core issues.

There are nine Enneagram types and each type has a unique way of thinking, feeling and acting. Each type also possesses a great gift in terms of special talents, and ways of being in the world that contribute to life. Our type helps us respond to challenges and helps us creatively interact with our environment.

As luck would have it however, each type has an aspect, if not brought to consciousness that can create difficulties for the person as well as those in relationship with said person. Knowing your type can help change the way you relate to yourself and others as well as give you a greater understanding of the circumstances and issues facing you.

“Understanding yourself, as well as the significant others in your life can contribute to compassion, tolerance and an appreciation for differences.” (David Daniels, author THE ESSENTIAL ENNEAGRAM).

Understanding the Enneagram gives us fluidity and choice. We do not have to act on beliefs or feelings that are type related but rather can challenge these type related thoughts and reactions to assess their validity as opposed to unconsciously identifying with them.

When couples understand that what is creating pain is not a deliberate attempt by their partner to be hurtful, though it may feel that way, but rather their partner's type-related coping skills and sensitivities. With this deepened awareness, there can be a profound understanding, empathy and overwhelming relief. The following is a very brief description of where attention goes for each point on the Enneagram:

- Point One- evaluating what is correct or incorrect in a situation
- Point Two- gaining approval from others by fulfilling perceived needs
- Point Three- obtaining positive attention based on performance
- Point Four- noticing what is missing in life, self and others
- Point Five- maintaining privacy and warding off intrusion
- Point Six- scanning environment for clues to hidden intention of others.
- Point Seven- noticing what is pleasant and creating optimistic plans for the future
- Point Eight- avoiding loss of control

- Point Nine- noticing other's agendas and points of view

“The Enneagram goes well beyond conventional approaches in reminding us that we live too often in an illusory world because of defenses that are no longer needed, that we mistake ideas and feelings ABOUT reality for reality itself” (Charles Tart, Professor of Psychology, University of California at Davis). Understanding our distortions, as well as our gifts and talents, allows us to bring conscious awareness to those aspects of ourselves which keep us from wholeness and interfere with our relationships.

Recommended reading:

The Enneagram by Helen Palmer

The Essential Enneagram by David Daniels

The Wisdom of the Enneagram by Don Riso and Ross Hudson