

Christa Hardin

The  
Enneagram  
in  
Marriage



*Your Guide to  
Thriving Together  
in Your Unique Pairing*

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in Your Unique Pairing*

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# Introduction

It is better to enlighten than merely to shine.

THOMAS AQUINAS<sup>1</sup>

Every couple's love story has the potential to brighten the world. This includes the two of you and your love story, even if your relationship doesn't feel all that dynamic these days. The truth is, your individual gifts have the potential to combine with one another, casting a beautiful and unique light into a world of shadows. Together you have a distinctive form. You bring your shared wisdom, your creativity, and a unique love to the world that no one else can offer in exactly the same way.

Along with your light, however, you can also cast shadows together in the world, creating disappointment and sometimes great big messes for one another and for future generations to clean up. If you've been in a relationship or family for any given amount of time, you know this well. You've likely experienced the interplay of lights and shadows cast from generations before you.

None of us are perfect, and even with the best of intentions, things fall apart. We've all intentionally or unintentionally shaped or influenced generations coming up alongside or under us.

In my marriage, for instance, my husband and I love shining into the world together by providing family and friends with special bonding experiences. We've put on couples events in large ballrooms, we've written and hosted mystery dinner game parties together, and we've taken most of our twenty nieces and nephews on various adventures, not to mention our own three kids. This is all on top of our jobs as helpers in medicine and mental health, where our dreams span even broader.

At our best, our combined personality gifts have taught us that with hard work and big dreams, many times there are rewards at the end of each checkpoint on the trails of life. I'm sure you have similar stories of climbing metaphorical or even real-life peaks together as you bring shared dreams to life.

As my husband and I bring what we hope are joyful experiences to others, if we're not careful to find rest and balance, our lights can burn out. As a couple, we can miss the heartbeat of one another or our kids in our zeal to help so many others.

When we're flying high, it's sunshine and good vibes all day. However, in darker moments of life, our unhealthy patterns tend to rise up in defense. Then all the adventuring in the world, no matter how glorious the peaks, can't save us from shadows and sorrows.

One such memory that reminds me of this truth is a family hike we did up Beehive Mountain in beautiful Acadia National Park. Our family of five was just finishing a vacation in Maine, the beautiful home state of my late mother. My father had also recently passed away, so I wanted to visit their special old haunts, such as the Boston train station where they had their first stolen glances and the house where my mother grew up.

My family and I were completely taken in by the slower pace of the coastal lifestyle. We ate New England clam chowder, visited historic sites, and stuffed ourselves with "lobstah" rolls. We were highly committed to experiencing a different ice cream shop every night on the dazzling harbor-front downtown. It was great!

However, as the trip wound down, I started to feel a bit uncomfortable. The losses started to really hit into my vacation mode. I laughed a bit harder to make up for it. I read books, watched funny shows, shared pics on social media, and ate Bar Harbor delicacies. But I still felt a need for further satisfaction, which I knew would help quell the emotions that threatened to rise up.

The truth is, I was having a case of classic type Seven FOMO.

If you don't know about this type Seven trait, what the nine Enneagram types are, and why various types do what they do, don't worry, I'll give you an overview of each of the nine personality types soon! For now, let's just say that all the ice cream in the world couldn't cure the ache that lay deeply buried within me.

On the last day of our trip, these feelings were coming to a climax, so I developed a spontaneous plan as a sort of cure-all. We would have one final adventure, a crescendo that would create not only a diversion from my feelings but also an epic marriage and family memory.

"This path is a little too dull for me," I sang out to my family almost as soon as we got onto the beautiful but flat and very safe Ocean Path. The legendary adventure trail Beehive Mountain was in sight, and I had an idea brewing. "Let's just do a little bit of Beehive," I said, already moving ahead.

My husband groaned, as did one of my daughters, both of whom were aghast at the idea of starting another hike so soon—especially this formidable trek. When my husband verbalized that we were already on a beautiful route, the very one we had planned for this moment, I said, "I know, but we came to one of the most beautiful places in the world to have a real adventure. We'll go up the backside or just do a tiny bit. Plus, we'll literally have the rest of the day to lounge and eat ice cream."

The truth is, I wanted to be nice and tired before we sat down. Make that exhausted.

Since we didn't have a proper map, we asked directions from a father and son who had just come down the switchback at the

trailhead. The father showed us there were two paths: one for easy and one for difficult. He told us to go right for the easy path.

It was left.

We went right, but we were on the wrong path. By the time we realized this, we had so quickly climbed up many slippery boulders that we could not turn back. There was also a sign that read, “One way only.” It was virtually impossible to go down the same way we’d come up.

We soon found ourselves on the edge of a cliff with the clouds literally beneath us. There was still at least a half mile to go and also—gulp—iron rungs to climb ahead. Ahead of us, a family was stuck on those iron rungs, their little girl paralyzed with fear. None of us could get up if she didn’t, so we all waited for her, and my middle child started to pick up on the girl’s emotions and panic. We comforted her as best as we could.

As soon as we had clearance, my husband, an Enneagram One, pulled me aside to assess the situation critically. He reminded me that we had decided together in the hotel room that Beehive, clearly marked “Advanced” on the All Trails app, was not an option for our family’s level of expertise. He further pointed out that the next sets of rungs looked like they had just been pounded into the mountain haphazardly, on top of the fact that we had very little water—just half a bottle for all of us in the heat. A debate started between us, and if I’m honest, I wanted to have it out right there. But we knew we had a problem to solve that was bigger than our personality differences.

Finally, after some careful assessing and gingerly steps, we made it to the top, safe and sound. We snapped a couple of plaque-at-the-summit pics and took a *lot* of deep breaths, letting the adrenaline roll off as we chatted with other hikers who had trekked the same harrowing adventure.

I am so grateful this family memory remains a happy one. While it was fraught at the time, the relief and joy of making it to the summit



is the memory we keep with us. But that day was also a wake-up call for me personally. I realized that in my rush to burn steam and climb another dizzying height to discharge all my sadness and anxiety, I had endangered my people. That couldn't happen again.

Something would have to change.

That day, I decided it was time to delve further into my Enneagram work, but this time on a deeper level. I wanted to face my emotions squarely, allow tears in as necessary, and really let myself sit with my pain when it started to rise up. I decided to learn from some of the best and most emotionally wise Enneagram teachers in the world through podcasts, books, and interviews. Soaking in their wisdom, I shared what I'd heard on my new Instagram account for Enneagram and Marriage and did research with couples about their best lessons for moving through the world emotionally, mentally, and physically.

Since that fateful day on Beehive Mountain, I have learned so much from pausing to tend to my heart's aches instead of sheer overdoing. That has brought vast learning back into my life, marriage, and family after years of numbing out to my triggers. My husband has been doing his own work, and he has made more space for my emotions as well. With our tools and ongoing commitment to these balancing self-inventories and the awakening practices you will find in the pages of this book, we are stronger together and more intentionally shining brighter as individuals, as a couple, and as a family with one another and in the world.

I believe in the growth work you're stepping into here too. Will you join us in leaning toward balance and health with your spouse as you aim to shine brighter individually, together, and in your world? Will you start paying attention to the ways you truly bring the best and the worst out in each other? My friends, if you're brave in focusing on the journey in each chapter as well as in completing the questions that follow, you will truly bring one another forward into the light of your healthiest selves.

After two decades of walking my own path toward healing, I am even more passionate about helping couples learn their own and one another's best coping strategies, walking them through conflicts, helping them see one another's hearts, and offering them healthy, problem-solving strategies. Why? Because when they can see one another's truest vulnerabilities and fears and begin to trust one another with those exposed, raw places, it's right there that they feel safe enough to truly begin to grow.

As humans, we don't grow only individually. In marriage, we begin to combine our gifts and grow together to help the world in beautiful and unique ways—with the light of our unique relationship hues. As Carl Jung said, "The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed."<sup>2</sup>

## **The Marriage of Enneagram and Couples Therapy**

The entire fields of both family systems therapy and social work are built around the premise that when we make intentional, healthy little shifts, we make a positive influence on one another on a personal, familial, and societal level. Doing our personal and relationship work matters so much more than we may realize.

What's more is that your impact as a couple comes full circle when you do some of your personal and marriage work as a unit, branching outward and bringing good things to the world. The Enneagram helps you to see how your particular light together shines out in unique angles.

Couples vary in the ways they shape the world. Sometimes they birth children together, they serve actively in communities together, they think critically together to solve problems, and they create projects and artistic expressions together. In other words, couples glow brightly when they're coloring the world with both the best

of their individual essence and the best of their unique chemistry together.

As we begin the work of helping you understand both your own unique glow and the glow you can create alongside your partner, let me pause to answer a few questions.

***What does the integration of two personality types mean for us and our relationship?***

Don't worry, we're not going for codependence here but the understanding that together you create a sort of dance of interdependence and cast a light together. For instance, if you're in a relationship, think of your own essence as a mirrorball dangling in a dark room, shining out with its own particular light. As a new hue is cast upon you by your partner with their colorful gifts and traits, your own light emanates a little differently. (You can cue the Taylor Swift song "Mirrorball" here if you like!)

Finding your light together gives each of you more angles from which to shine out your best qualities. It helps the two of you serve the world better too. To romanticize it further, combining your best gifts with the best of your partner's gifts helps you to face the darkness you encounter in yourselves and in the world with the added luminescence—or, as I like to say, the "glow"—of your love together.

However (you knew this was sounding awfully idealistic), there's also a catch. We tend to lean into some of our partner's less refined qualities as well. We also bring our shadows to one another, taking on our partner's negative traits at times. And we can create a new shadow as a couple when we miss important things collectively. This can happen when we're not intentional with our personal, relational, and communal growth, such as when we try quick, instinctual fixes instead of actually facing the shadows of our lives squarely with wisdom, patience, and love.

This is why it's so important to marry the understanding of our personality types and our relationships. As you continue with me here, I'll show you how to blend with one another in a way that will truly allow you both to shine, as well as how to walk through your shadows in healthy ways across time.

Before we delve deeper (and we are delving deep, believe me!), let's start with the basics of the framework we'll be using to understand our personalities and our relationships: the Enneagram.

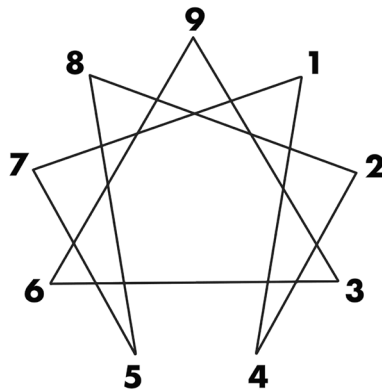
### ***What exactly is the Enneagram?***

You may know it as a trendy personality typing system that influencers use for creating memes and archotyping celebrities on their favorite sitcoms, but it's *so* much more than that. Although it's fun in popular culture to joke about our types or to debate whether Michael Scott on *The Office* is more like a type Two or a type Seven, it's also important to know that there are some compelling benefits that come from using the Enneagram as a personal, relational, and societal framework for growth. You may even have found this out for yourself by reading Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile's very popular 2016 book, *The Road Back to You*.<sup>3</sup> Whether you're new to the Enneagram or just need a refresher, let me give you a brief summary of what it's all about.

The Enneagram is a system of personality integration that focuses on our core motivations, fears, strengths, and blind spots. The awareness we get from studying this system not only serves analytical insights but also provides emotional awareness and reminders of active growth tools we can use for our bodies. Unlike the many two-dimensional personality assessments that measure only mental traits, the Enneagram and the theories encompassing it offer a more robust system that allows growth to unfold in our lives with a healthy balancing of the body, heart, mind, and even spirit.

So why is it called the Enneagram?

The name comes from the Greek words *ennea*, which means nine, and *gramma*, which means something that's drawn or written. The symbol of the Enneagram comes from ancient mathematics studied across cultures and over time.<sup>4</sup> It consists of an inner triangle and another triangular figure called a hexad connecting all the numbered points to one another with various arrows and lines, alluding to the fact that our personality types are not meant to be fixed but have movement and dimension.



The Enneagram system focuses on sorting or “typing” people into these numbered points, with each number having its own unique motivations, fears, and internal dynamics. If it sounds a bit like the Sorting Hat in Harry Potter, maybe it is, but only on the surface. Instead of just the four houses of Hogwarts, there are nine Enneagram types. These types have been studied for millennia in some form or other in an attempt to systematize and order the complexities of humanity at least to some degree.

The Enneagram was not authored by just one person but instead has been an ongoing human collaboration of individuals trying to understand one of the biggest questions of all time: How do we come to understand the human psyche and the ways we grow in mind, body, heart, and spirit? Some of the most notable Enneagram

scholars are Oscar Ichazo and Claudio Naranjo, who drew from Gurdjieff and even from Plato, Plotinus, and the Desert Fathers.<sup>5</sup> The late Don Riso and many in the Jesuit order spent much time in the 1970s and 1980s developing the typology further, and many since have also added to the research, notably Beatrice Chestnut, Uranio Paes, Helen Palmer, Russ Hudson, the late Dr. David Daniels, and Peter O’Hanrahan.

Like the four ancient temperaments of Hippocrates<sup>6</sup> or any truly rigorous modern personality system, the purpose of the Enneagram is to understand ourselves so we will make decisions that will better us and our relationships in every area of life. In fact, at the end of the day, we want to look a little *less* obviously like one rigid personality type so we don’t just get stamped with a meme and passed over. That, of course, is personality typing at its worst, so please don’t do this branding to your spouse or yourself.

Remember, we want to grow, to change, and to adapt as we work on our own intrapsychic dynamics. We want to learn from one another’s typology, gifts, insights, and experiences. We don’t want to use a type or number to box someone in, to make them feel worse than someone else, or to make them feel like they can never grow or shift. However, knowing the type or types with which we most and least identify can and does help us to understand our growth process more specifically.

The images of the Enneagram in this book are just to give you an idea of the flow of the system and are ultimately incomplete, as are all drawings of something theoretical. This is in part because theories are never fully understood, but also because the Enneagram isn’t just a flat, circular drawing with points. It is a robust, spherical symbol of the interplay of all the types with their fluidity and underpinnings, and we continue to learn more as we collectively study.

That doesn’t mean there isn’t much for you to learn about yourself and your partner. The pieces of the Enneagram system

that we will be discussing in this book have already been greatly developed. I've also integrated truths I've learned from two decades of study in the fields of psychology, marriage, and human development.

It's important to note that there are no perfect pairings within the Enneagram system. There are no pairs that are more or less compatible. The truth is, romantic as I am, I know that *all* healthy relationships have strengths and weaknesses and take work. So if you're questioning whether you're paired up well with your partner in terms of your personality type, let me assure you.

*Any type can work well with any other type.*

Yes, truly! There are no bad pairings. So go ahead and take a deep breath. You and your spouse are not the “wrong personality types” for one another because there *is* no wrong type.

In fact, each couple, whatever their personality types are, creates their own unique chemistry together as the elements of each person's essence and personality combine. They blend their gifts and traits like threads of a tapestry interwoven, exposing and grafting in shades and patterns that were not seen in each person individually before.

***If the Enneagram and marriage growth aren't about compatibility, how will doing our personal and relationship work in this book influence our relationship?***

In addition to learning about how your type influences others and how you shine together, you'll find new routes to growing together that seem small but actually make a big difference in your everyday life together.

When we intentionally learn about the particular movements that help each type grow, we can take small steps instead of staying stuck in the same rigid patterns and defense mechanisms of our own type all the time. Learning from our spouses' and others' types at their best also helps us to expand our own frame of reference and

find different and often healthier ways of doing things. This is the work I'm excited to walk you through!

Think about each person in a relationship as an element in a chemistry experiment of sorts. Just as when we combine two hydrogen atoms with one oxygen atom to make something beyond each of those elements alone—something necessary for life (H<sub>2</sub>O!)—so it is when two humans combine elementally. They have the potential to burn brightly and make beautiful new displays of creation together.

This is a reminder that our Enneagram-type gifts not only *can* combine but *need* to combine for the world to go round well. We all have a role to play in this lifetime that we are caught up in together “for such a time as this,” as the ancients would say.

Whether married or single, we need to figure out how to be team players. We *all* benefit when one of us is doing well. Thus, knowing our Enneagram types helps us to learn our gifts and struggles, and it aids us in working as a collective versus withdrawing into ourselves or ranking our gifts higher or lower than others'. Instead of misusing our gifts, casting a dark shadow on the world, or bowing out altogether, we can—we *must*—find our Enneagram Glow.

### ***What is my Enneagram type?***

As someone who used to conduct complex psychological assessments before using the Enneagram to help couples grow healthier, I'm confident the Enneagram is among the very best of psychological tools. Now I'll assist you in finding your type (or refreshing you on your type) and its traits. Even if you think you already know all about yourself and your spouse, read on. Some people, experts included, have mistyped themselves or their spouses, so it's important to make sure you're attuned to yourself and to one another as you begin.

For now, let's start with just a brief description of how each of the nine types work as they present both individually and in the context of a relationship. While it's ideal to find a type you resonate



most with for the purposes of growth, it's okay if you resemble more than one type in this initial read-through, or even if you find a bit of yourself in all the types. As you progress through this book, you'll pick up new teachings about each of the types, which will help clarify things in time.

## **The Nine Types**

In your typology study, remember not to “sort” away or withdraw from one another by overly classifying or polarizing yourself or your spouse. Also, make sure you don't reduce someone down to just their type. As with all labels, use person-first language. Each of us is a person before a numerical title or a type of any kind. Be kind as you explore your questions and as you work together to find personal and relational health.

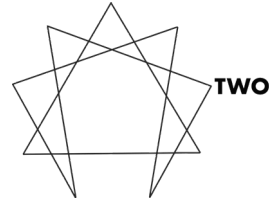
**Type Ones** are often known for their goodness and their tendency toward editing or improving others and themselves. They may have a perfectionistic slant, which is usually designated to a few areas of life and not implemented everywhere. They enjoy making high-quality, detailed investments in others and in themselves and are often moralistic. Additionally, they are sensory oriented, noticing sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches with great nuance. They love to do things to completion and without waste. They often experience joy and relief at the mere act of doing something well or being perceived as good by the culture. They are often concerned so much with keeping to their strict inner code that they worry they are hopelessly bad or wrong if they make any mistake at all.



In marriage, they love to find a spouse who shares their desire to bring healthy structure, order, and goodness to the world and to their families. They are logical and good listeners. They value

hard work before play, as it gives them inner permission to laugh and to let go, which often allows an unfolding of their deep hearts of love and artistry.

**Type Twos** are often noted as major contributors and generous givers in their families and cultures. They love to find special places in their communities to serve others. Nothing else brings them more inner harmony than knowing they are close to and in good standing with those they love. They need to be reminded of this often. They are greatly attuned to the needs of the world around them and are not afraid to talk to their spouses and peers about things of depth, naturally welcoming these topics in with nurture and comfort. Often they don't take time to do their own emotional processing because they are so busy finding worth through serving in the world, enjoying pleasurable experiences, and serving their family.



In marriage, they love to find a spouse who both understands their heart to nurture and their desire to save the world. Ideally, they want to bring their partner along for service projects and times of connection or at least to be given the freedom to give of themselves. If introverted, they will want most of this special time to be just for the two of them and in smaller groups. They also love it when they feel like their spouse is a strong support they can lean on after their long, hard days. Most of all, they love to be adored by their spouse. This helps them to define their worth, even as they try to remember that inner worth is inherent.

**Type Threes** are often seen as excellent performers and achievers in workspaces, community groups, and whatever public spaces they find value in. Threes can be perfectionistic, going to almost any length to do things with excellence. They love to fit in at the top of the



cultural echelon and to passionately pursue whatever is the reigning paradigm for success and acceptance. They truly want their achievements to be noteworthy, not just for goodness' sake but so they can gain the love they need and desire.

In marriage, they love being both admired and leaned on for support in almost every capacity. In addition to wanting a loyal connection, they deeply want their spouse to love them for who they are on the inside, even when they're relaxing or vulnerable. At their core, they worry this is not the case and thus deceive themselves—and sometimes others—to make sure they are seen as successful and on top of their game.

**Type Fours** are often viewed as artists, individualists, and dreamers. They spend time in contemplative spaces of depth and intricate understanding, both in their own minds and in the artistry they bring to the world. Fours are good at leading others into vulnerable spaces of depth on an intimate level. They can show compassion and give others permission to be in process or flawed yet still beloved. They enjoy shared understanding that comes from suffering and yet surviving together. At their core, they worry that they have a fatal flaw and that unless they are unique and do a bit of a wistful push-pull dance with their loved ones, they will be resigned to a bleak fate of loneliness or even self-loathing.



In marriage, they long for a spouse who will let them share their honesty, woes, and wounds and stay there with them for a time, as well as rise with them into deep joy. They also want a spouse who recognizes their dislike for being boxed in or feeling too average and thus being potentially insignificant. Though they often resist being understood, they hope someone will take large amounts of time to love and understand them, even as they find out they too are flawed.

**Type Fives** are often viewed as researchers and investigators as they spend time exploring and innovating in their interior world. As such, they are often introverted and prefer to keep their groups of friends separate from one another. Fives love to focus deeply, tinker with systems, and find out why things work the way they do.



They can display an air of conceit once they have achieved a level of mastery, though they often struggle with self-doubt about whether they have really learned enough to jump into situations safely or with enough energy. They can get lost in any number of research projects or fandom, to the extent that they have trouble coming out of these fantasies or wormholes and relating to the outside world again.

In marriage, they desire a spouse who realizes that they need time and space for their version of R and R (rest and research), especially considering the real or perceived lack of energy that they face daily. They also hope they can be loved despite dealing with the inner struggle of incompetency. Yet their intelligence in most cases makes them one of the most competent people in their circles of influence or fields of study.

**Type Sixes** are often seen as caring, loyal troubleshooters, able to find problems, tackle them, and cautiously move forward, step by careful step. Sixes are a bit of a paradox in their quest for trust. They can test others quite a lot. They tend to be skeptical of



trusting both themselves and others, as they have seen things go sideways in life and want to be well prepared. They can get quite reactive about this planning desire, especially since they care so very deeply about doing what is right for themselves and their people. Though full of doubts, they ultimately love to find leaders

in their circle whom they can turn to when their very analytical minds begin to spin too far into anxiety and fear.

In marriage, Sixes want a spouse who will both understand and support them in their concerns, who will allow them to make plans because of their troubleshooting nature, and who will let them share their fears and concerns regularly. They also desire a trustworthy, caring spouse who will ultimately empower them to walk away from the unhealthy cowardice that often holds them back from their beautiful courage. They long for and are thrilled by someone who will challenge them to grow in wisdom and to take healthy risks.

**Type Sevens** are known as enthusiasts and encouragers, and when grounded, they can excel at creative problem-solving with their quick minds and optimistic solutions. Inquisitive by nature, Sevens love to revel in their creative imaginations and

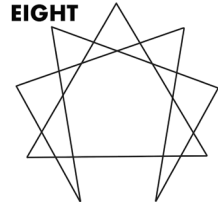


drink of the pleasures of life, encouraging others in the drinking of wellness also. They feel best when gaining pleasure and freedom and by satisfying the external senses. This Epicurean posture of curiosity and imagination at times aids them in avoiding the anxieties and essential tasks of life and their deepest feelings. When their whirling, always-busy mind and body stop in exhaustion, the Seven must deal with their inner pain, boredom, consequences, and dark or terrifying feelings like everyone else. When they do, they learn that they can face them and emerge with an open heart, sobered and focused.

In marriage, Sevens want a spouse who will give them freedom to explore but also challenge them to live with moderation, rest, and care since they often keep an unsustainable pace. On a deeper level, they desire someone who is trustworthy with their sensitive though buried hearts, as well as someone who can hold their pain

with them for just a little while and encourage them not to run from hard things.

**Type Eights** are often thought of as the protectors and challengers of the world, in that they deeply care for the underprivileged. They also want to make sure that those they love feel defended and passionately loved by them. Eights love to enjoy life on a grand, experiential level with their sensual natures and love the finest experiences life can offer, indulging in them for hours at a time. They often quite naturally find a willing tribe to lead with their practical, stoic leadership (or even dominance), although this can sometimes make others afraid of their strong pull. Eights do not like being vulnerable with their feelings unless it is with someone they can trust, and even then, they are often reticent until there is complete assurance of an alliance proved across time and much testing.



In marriage, Eights love a spouse who sees their huge heart underneath their strong exterior and who will match their strength in some capacity. Eights want someone who will rise to the occasion with specific, desired acts of love and loyalty, to support them in the same way they long to support their spouse—to the fullest capacity, at all costs.

**Type Nines** are the calmest of the types and yet still extremely strong, with enough potential energy to be revolutionaries. They typically spend much of their time resting, being peacekeepers, or being mildly diplomatic. A Nine in growth is a marvel to see. Paired with their strength is a deep love—they often carry great regard or care for the personhood of everyone on earth. They fear that they don't matter and that their voice will be unheard. Therefore, sometimes



they distance themselves completely, going into a “turtle shell” of comfort—harboring hurts and protecting their basic human material desires—since they worry their upper-level feelings will not be met.

In marriage, Nines desire a spouse who will honor them, offer them direction and options, and help them prioritize themselves, their self-care, and their comfort, the latter of which greatly matters to them. They get internally upset when they have worked hard to sacrifice and to understand and merge with others who in turn do not support or listen to them. They also want someone who will support their justice-oriented causes and rally with them for peaceable, active changes in the world.

Now that you’ve read about the nine types, you’re likely starting to have an idea of what your strengths and areas for growth are in your relationship. It’s time to talk about the ways you can truly help one another to shine out of your gifts as you combine them.

In addition to your typology relationship health and stress, I will share a bit about complementary types that are helpful for the various types to learn from. These complementary types are called the wings and arrows. Each person has a main Enneagram type as well as two complementary arrow types and two complementary wing types. It’s important that you don’t let wings and arrows distract you from your main type’s work but that you use them as a deeper-dive aid for growth.

## **Arrows**

Each of the primary nine Enneagram types has two other types connected to it by way of arrows. The arrow pointing toward each type is what some Enneagram experts call the starting or growth point. The arrow pointing away from the type is an end or resolution point, a final move for the person to take for a more completely healthy self. For example, Enneagram Four is the starting point

for an individual who is a type Two, while Enneagram Eight is the resolution point. The concept of arrows potentially has many layers, but in general, the connected arrow types offer a mini treatment plan as a guide for the growth an individual does.

Why add other types into the mix? In general, the more integrated we are with the other types, the more we become a balanced and functional human. For instance, if someone relates as an Enneagram Four and tends to be slower paced and introspective, it's important for them to use their One arrow to get moving and organized as well as their Two arrow to get them thinking of and helping others. If you don't know much about your arrow types, I encourage you to read about them also.

## **Wings**

There are two more points that are helpful as you view your type, and these are the types on either side of yours. These points are known as the Enneagram wings, since we exhibit traits not only from our types but also from the neighboring types. In addition to the analogy of butterfly wings opening for smoother takeoff into maturity, I like to use the analogy of shades of colors when it comes to type and wings, especially as we think of the Enneagram Glow concept. If a type Six is thought of as yellow, for instance, then its wings would direct us to nearby colors on the spectrum, such as orange (type Five traits) and green (type Seven traits). Your life is, of course, colored in with more shades and nuances, but when you allow yourself to use shades or aspects of the Enneagram map, you have more options for shining out all the brighter.

When it comes to wings, most people find that there's usually a stronger, or dominant, wing instead of a precise balance between the two. The wing is often notated as a *w* following a person's core type. For instance, if someone identifies as an Enneagram Six, they



are said to have a Five wing and a Seven wing. If they lean farther to the Five traits, such as research and focus, than to the Seven traits, such as enthusiasm and extroversion, they are said to have a Six wing Five (6w5 in shorthand). If someone is a Two, their wings are One and Three.

Remember, the goal is to stop leaning so hard to one side or the other but to balance the traits of the core type as well as both wings.

## **How Do We Influence One Another's Types?**

When I was in my third year of working with Enneagram couples from a family systems framework, I started to notice patterns. Not only were couples of similar pairings alike, but couples were different from others of their own type because they were merging with their spouse's type. For example, a Two married to a Three was often very different from a Two married to a Nine.

I most noticeably observed this pattern in the type Two and the type Five dance of marriage as I saw the couple merging in ways a bit different from my typical experiences with them as individuals. Over time, the Five was allowing the Two's love and nurture to fill them with more confidence, fueling their competency with their need for love. Likewise, the Five's playful desire to keep the Two close and at home was reminding the Two of their love and worth even without their service. The Five also helped the Two spend more time at rest and taught them to enjoy their own company, though this was certainly not an easy journey for the Two (hence why this pairing, a fun combination when in balance, typically contacts me). To my joy, I also saw Twos and Fives with other types grow in other wonderful ways across time, each sharpened by their mate in a myriad of ways, regardless of what their partner's gifts were.

I was witnessing in couples the important truth that it isn't just nature or genes that determine our personality. Indeed, nurture and environment also play a large role in adding layers and complexity to our self-development. I sought to determine whether this concept was seen in other Enneagram work and asked those I saw as leaders about it.

I found that this concept of layering, or taking on the traits of surrounding individuals, had been studied before in the context of families and cultures. Many Enneagram scholars have also theorized on family overlays.<sup>7</sup> For instance, if your father was a careful One, you may more likely be One-ish yourself or even mistake yourself as a One, even though at your core you have other main issues and gifts. Similarly, if your workplace has the vibe of achieving relentlessly, like an Enneagram Three does, or has a research-based Five-ish culture, you often feel the pressure to follow suit.

Geographically, if you came from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, you may often note an overlay of a passionate, joyful Seven-ish persona that has rubbed off from your culture. You may be a Four-ish person if you come from France, often thought of as a romantic culture, even though you're higher in Enneagram Eight gifts. In this way, you may have Seven-ish or Four-ish tendencies while still not being a Seven or a Four.

As you can see, the capacity for layering is not limited to influencing your partner's personality attributes. In fact, couples can also help one another heal from trauma, even without typology. The trauma therapist on my team, Glenda Reagan, helps me see this when she talks about how we can heal one another's wounds in marriage. I find that we often seek partners who differ from us, sometimes in quite opposite ways. There is a likelihood that instinctively we understand that they have gifts we do not yet possess but wish to, gifts we especially hope that our community or potential offspring will possess as we try to heal one another's wounds.

One may ask, would we eventually find our way without these gifts and without these influences, namely our spouses? Community is part of survival, and these overlays are all a bit of a complex pattern. It is anecdotally said, however, that it was the one-to-one bond that got the Holocaust survivors through the Nazi regime. There's definitely an important value for the growth we offer to our partners, despite the fact that sometimes we grow on our own. You don't need a partner to ensure you become more generous, but it sure does help to have community and the close bonds of family and friends who can rub off on and support one another across time.

## **My Hope for You**

The rest of the Enneagram teachings, exercises, and tools in this book are integrated with spiritual wisdom and reputable marriage research with the utmost care. I have engaged with thousands of individuals in the process of preparing for this journey together, and it's my complete honor and privilege to have this seat next to you for the journey.

My ultimate hope as you read this book is that you find refreshment as you become a healthier individual, that you find grace and understanding for your spouse, and most of all, that you find the unique way you can shine together in the world with your unique Enneagram pairing.

Your spouse does not have to read this book with you. However, if they do decide to embark on the journey with you, my hopes are even greater because I know that together you will shine brighter than ever!

Finally, I want to thank you for the hard work and soul-searching you're planning to do with me in the following pages. I respect and applaud you for that brave step of hope you're taking for your

relationship. May these insights, tips, and tools guide you along the way.

Happy glowing!

## How to Read This Book

However you choose to move through these pages, whether individually, as a couple, or as a group with others, do it with a plan and with focus. Write down the action steps you plan to take and ask for accountability with another reader or mentor. I've been coaching for almost two decades now, and I know that writing down your intentions and sharing them with others who care about you makes a *huge* difference.

If you need help defining any of the terms as we trek together, be sure to turn to the glossary on page 269. You'll create an even healthier relationship culture as you build upon your unique story together with clarifying terms. Feel free to discard any glossary terms that distract you from the work you're doing, and take one thoughtful step of growth at a time.

At the end of each chapter, you will find three sections under the heading "Afterglow." These sections will lead you into a practical engagement of your bodies, minds, and hearts, so you can allow the materials from the chapter to settle in and bring you forward in a healthy way.

**Illuminate:** This section will offer you tips to think through as you begin to examine your own life through the lens of a thoughtful observer.

**Spark Up Heart-to-Heart Conversation:** This section offers questions for you to answer individually and potentially together as you consider how to safely open up your hearts to one another.

**Glow Brightly Together:** This section contains assignments for you and your partner to try to stoke the fires of love with strength and vibrancy together.



**Illuminate:** Which of the types do you relate to the most? Ask your spouse which one they relate to the most, even if they aren't reading the book with you. Don't push or label them, but gently inquire.

**Spark Up Heart-to-Heart Conversation:** Which of the types you studied, if any, generates a strong emotion of some sort, like weariness, anger, or sadness? Spend a few moments journaling about it or talking it out with your spouse.

**Glow Brightly Together:** What can you do to use the gifts of your type to encourage your partner this week? Get the process rolling by doing something kind right now.

# 1

## The Stages of Your Enneagram Glow across Time

They can only come to the morning through the shadows.

J. R. R. TOLKIEN<sup>1</sup>

“You should really give Wes a chance,” my friend Heather said to me as we slammed our lockers at Harry S. Truman High School between classes.

Heather was assertive and even a bit audacious to confront me with love so boldly in my new singlehood. I appreciated her direct nature, even if I was more reserved with my heart.

“No way! He’s not my type,” I replied.

As I had observed from a few past experiences, Wes and I were completely different types of people and from vastly different families as well. Though we were both well-known in student government and other clubs, we were at opposite ends of the spectrum when it came to just about everything.

Wes was a classic jock from a Southern family. He lived on one of the only farms in Taylor, Michigan, as I had discovered the year before when my former boyfriend and I had given him a ride home. For fun, he enjoyed working on his old hot rod or playing football. He was quarterback and captain of the football team. I was pretty sure he was the president of the Bible club too.

Though I loved athletics, I had a desire for sports that emphasized self-reliance and a rich interior. (In other words, I had self-esteem issues and this was my workaround.) I kept moving all the time. I had a season pass at the local ski lodge, ran 5Ks just for fun outside of my track meets, and was captain of the girls' tennis team. I relied on myself and my curated clique of friends exclusively for a sense of identity and safety in an unforgivably large herd.

But Wes—with his pickup truck and all-American good looks, at the top of the class, attending church three times a week in between football practices and farm duties—did not seem to notice these opposing forces. Or if he did, he didn't let them stop him from pursuing me.

On paper and by my quick analysis, Wes and I seemed so wrong for each other. However, when he started pursuing me in our literature class, somewhere between *A Farewell to Arms* and Mark Twain's antics along the Mississippi, I was shocked to realize I began to actually like him—a lot. So I did what any young type Seven does when emotions run high and love comes knocking on her door.

I ran.

I didn't save him a dance at the Sadie Hawkins event like he asked, and I managed to skirt the hallways every time he showed up. He didn't quite catch up with me until he found me singing Christmas carols at a nursing home during a student leadership outing a few months later. That fateful night, I stayed extra late to visit each patient, and he offered me a ride home. I brought Heather along and even made her sit in the seat between us in his truck.

When he dropped her off first and finally asked me to join him for a movie date, I reluctantly said yes.

The date was an epic fail at first. When he picked me up, this clean-cut traditional young man was greeted by a depressive girl smelling of incense and wearing thrift store corduroys, a huge brown wool sweater, and first-generation Vans. (I was in the absolute height of my alternative grunge phase.) I wondered at his careful driving, his cowboy boots, and his full mustache. (Yes, you read that right—full mustache at sixteen.) However, after the movie, he asked me the most endearing question, one that would change our lives forever as we stepped into our place in history and into destiny together.

“Would you like to go somewhere to talk and to have a piece of pie?”

What happened at Denny’s that night was even sweeter than pie to me. He really did just want to talk, and that spoke to me. Conversation for the sake of conversation was a foreign concept to me at the time. Most kids in my town, including me, had something rebellious on their minds, be it alcohol, marijuana, or sex.

So, talk we did, all through the night. By giving him a chance, I found that he was innocent, trusting, and good. I was so taken aback by his manners and care that I felt unable to resist spending more time with him.

We’ve been together ever since that day, twenty-seven years ago.

While we didn’t have the words to articulate it at the time, we were a match of opposites: a One and a Seven. One month into our relationship, we were influencing each other in all kinds of ways. I began to pour feminine nurture into his life and helped to fill him with confidence. I’m sorry to say my influence was not all this good. I planned the biggest school-skipping event in history since *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, and to my surprise, Wes, who desperately needed more youthful passion and spontaneity in his serious life, came along. (As a morally upright type One, he



did ask parental permission first.) I also helped him to designate one weekend night each week for time with friends. He came out with my friends and me after football games and just enjoyed a night on the town being a teenager, even though he wasn't doing anything wild.

Lo and behold, Wes began to rub off on me too. In the spring of my junior year, at his prodding, I started to pay attention more in school. I even began to attend my honors precalculus lectures, to Mr. Poole's delight, instead of conveniently getting out of class for student government duties and cramming it all in sloppily and late.

Wes also supported my love of psychology and literature. I told him I read the classics at night, something I'd never confessed to anyone. He even suggested we hang out with my parents, even though their idea of fun was writing poetry, watching *Jeopardy*, and doing the *Reader's Digest* vocabulary quizzes. For the first time, my own literary interests were appealing to someone. Thanks to him, I began to see more value in them as opposed to simply carrying adolescent shame about them.

I began to find more academic accolades coming my way again, as I had in earlier years when life was more innocent. Though my friends were caring in other ways, they had written me off as their wild, fun friend and told me my college board scores, winning Voice of Democracy speeches, and moments of academic attention were total flukes. They weren't trying to be mean; I had likewise written off my abilities, as many immature and unfocused teens are prone to do. Wes, however, encouraged and celebrated these things in me.

We kept influencing one another through the years of engagement and marriage. I ended up graduating from college and graduate school with honors and pursuing a career I always knew I was made for. I later put Wes through medical school and encouraged him to finish even though he felt on many days that he just wasn't

good enough. I can still remember calling him up one day to tell him I got him into the class he needed at Oakland University after the registrar had told him he was too late.

I bet you can relate to this early season together in a relationship. Even though there are often things to work through from the beginning, this stage can be a beautiful season of elements combining—a season when you and your partner champion one another in ways no one else ever has. Maybe your friend circles and your life trajectories dramatically shift, and your ways of walking through the world are more vibrant and colorful. New couples are really winning with these added and unexpected new hues being grafted in from one another's gifts and ways of moving through the world.

However, as time goes on, that “glow” created in the beginning begins to look very different. As it turned out, being voted “cutest couple,” being on homecoming court together, and having hard-earned scholarships could only take Wes and me so far. Those early differences and questions I had asked about how a relationship with such disparity would work out later demanded answers. Perhaps you've come to the same realization in your own relationship.

No one in those early stages can be expected to comprehend the allegorical Robert Frost poem “Nothing Gold Can Stay.”<sup>2</sup> We instead insist that it will always be dawn. This early spring of a relationship carries us far, as it should. Yet as our own relationship continued, Wes and I encountered the frost.

If a marriage lasts long enough, every couple will experience seasons of shadow. Then the worst of their types come at them, losses awaken them to the deepest pain imaginable, unexpected illnesses ensue, and perhaps even crises of faith take place. Though the shifts will be different for everyone, all couples will find themselves in the shadows if they're together long enough. Digging in and doing their

work helps so much in times like this. As J. R. R. Tolkien reminds us, “Deep roots are not reached by the frost.”<sup>3</sup>

Whatever stage of a relationship you’re in right now—early attraction, young love, or later shadows—I want you to know there is so much more than that basic chemistry we initially find together. I want you to know about all the phases of a dynamic relationship so you can find your deepest, richest, most authentic way of lighting up the world together. Then you can find that, though nothing gold can stay, your roots are deep and there is purpose and even beauty in *all* seasons. There are indeed riches, even as all that is gold does not glitter.

I am deeply passionate about helping you through this experience. After walking through so many heights, depths, and shadows myself and working with thousands of couples over the last two decades, I’ve noticed patterns and seasons that are part of it all. As I integrated the Enneagram into my work, I began to call these seasons the “Stages of the Enneagram Glow.” The Enneagram Glow is simply the name surrounding the idea that we cast both lights and shadows together when in a long-term relationship or marriage.

As you walk through these stages, it’s of utmost importance to realize that though you can expect some linear growth, life is often found between the margins. Thus, these phases often overlap. Cutting or spiraling through them in various spiderweb patterns across spans of life is normal and expected.

There is implicit good news here. You don’t need to wait till you’re eighty to hit the afterglow season of life. Indeed, my hope is that you will be thriving together sooner rather than later and as frequently as possible! By knowing that seasons come and go in life and marriage, you’re less wrapped up in the “why” of finding yourself in various tangled-up moments and more focused on finding your very best route through together.