

FANNING THE FIRE WITHIN

Authentic Leadership of Self and Others

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INTRODUCTION

“Leadership’s First Commandment: Know Thyself! No tool can help the leader that lacks self-awareness.” Harvard Business Review

“I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people.” Indira Gandhi

“The path to self development commences with an honest appraisal of our current strengths and weaknesses.” Wayne Bennett

The study of personality tells us there are enormous differences between people. When leaders understand more about their unique ‘lens’ on the world, what drives them (and ‘fans’ their internal ‘fire’), and how this makes them different from others, they become far more authentic and effective. They can then use their considerable skills in a focussed, conscious way, and limit the damage they can accidentally cause by acting without self-awareness.

“The Enneagram is the single, most productive, insightful, and practical tool available to help us grasp the depth and complexity of human personality.”

The Enneagram describes nine distinctly different personality profiles. Organizations are finding the Enneagram invaluable in creating more effective leaders and teams, assisting them manage communication, productivity, motivation, and staff development. It gets to the heart of how people operate by understanding core motivational drivers. Some people have dubbed the Enneagram ‘the personality genome’.

We can use the Enneagram as a model to understand and welcome the wide variety of personality types in families, teams, organizations and communities. We can also use it as a ‘road map’ for understanding:

- how different people bring entirely different skills and strengths (as well as blind spots) to formal and informal teams,

- why some people might focus primarily on understanding a problem, and others might become impatient for quick action,
- why some people speak more, and others less,
- how differences of opinion (and conflict) can develop when people operate with different 'lenses' on the world,
- why communications patterns can vary, according to type etc. etc.

These insights help us identify where our 'fire' to get up in the morning, and do the things we do, comes from. The insights can also improve how we live and work together, as individuals, family and team members, and contributors to our communities.

Background to the Enneagram

No one is exactly sure where the Enneagram (pronounced 'any-a-gram') originated. It is a way of classifying people that dates back at least two thousand years and has its roots in many different cultures. But it is clear that, in those ancient societies where there was an interest in understanding what makes people "tick", communities were coming to a similar conclusion that there are 9 core types of people. Today, it is probably the fastest growing model for identifying personality and understanding differences between people.

The theory suggests that each of these 9 personality types see life through a different "lens", based on a combination of DNA and upbringing. Peter Senge (1990) observes that *"the mental model each of us possesses determines not only how we make sense of the world, but also how we take action"*.

Enneagram theory suggests that we are all born spontaneous, inquisitive, vulnerable, giving our feelings full expression, and trying to work things out. But our early carers had the task of socializing us. Young children want to have their needs met, and obtain love. Children are therefore influenced to see the world, and behave in certain ways, by their early carers. These early carers had already developed their type with well established "mental models" and behaviours of their own. So they rewarded or over-valued certain behaviours and punished or ignored other behaviours.

As a result of our perceptions during this socialization process, we develop a "lens" through which we view the world. We hoped, as children, that this would be the key to obtaining love. We became proficient in operating in particular ways, exquisitely tuning into certain data, and ignoring other information. As adults, our actions are still generated mostly from the view we developed of the world in those early days. As the Jesuits say, *"Show me the child until he is seven, and I will show you the man."*

The Enneagram model suggests that, as adults, we favour one of the nine personality types. This brings with it specific strengths and talents, as well as blind-spots and weaknesses. Furthermore, each of the 9 Enneagram types is driven by a specific motivator that fuels our enthusiasm (or otherwise) for everything we do.

The following is a short summary of each of the Enneagram types. I have added some characteristics I have particularly noticed in leaders of each type.

TYPE ONE : The Perfectionist, The Reformer

Type 1s (often called **The Perfectionist or Reformer**) **search for what is right, and what is wrong, then work with great dedication to fix errors.** They bring the highest standards and ethics, but can be inflexible and resentful when others don't try as hard "to be good" as they do.

Their 'fire' comes from the desire: To get things "right", measured against an ideal standard.

Typical Presentation: Cool, tense, rational, measured, unflappable.

Basic Proposition: The **state of perfection in all things** is damaged by a world that judges & punishes bad behaviour and impulse. Therefore, One's gain worthiness (love) by being good & correcting errors. One's suppress their anger and guilt over impulse and bad behaviour in self & others.

Strengths : Contributes effort and correct action, integrity, fairness, clarity with guidelines and standards, concern for excellence, drives for continuous improvement, industry, diligence, idealism, high standards, ethics, practicality, self-reliance, responsible, conscientious.

Hypersensitive to: Error

Under Values: Diversity and Flexibility

How this plays out: The core of the One's personality is the belief that they must do things right to be of any value as a human being. Anything that does not meet a strict standard is bad, and should not be tolerated. So, one's are compelled to strive for the "correct" way to work, play, and live. This results in very high standards for their own behaviour, a totally dedicated work ethic, and a strict moral code.

They react strongly to criticism of their performance, to others' suggesting that they didn't do something 'right', to people who don't follow the rules, to co-workers who they see as "slackers" not measuring up to the One's internal standards, and to people who break this severe code of ethics.

One's reactivity often takes the form of scolding, frustration, anger, or moral outrage. They are often unaware that they sound angry, and usually reject any suggestion that their outrage is unjustified.

As Leaders: One's are particularly good at role modeling high standards, dedication, and hard work to the team. They can lead through integrity and reason, when they are not hindered by perfectionism and resentment.

Slowing down instead of making quick judgments, pausing to listen carefully to others, and exploring 'the shades of grey' prior to coming to a conclusion, makes One's much more effective in their roles.

When One's become less self-critical, they become more tolerant of those around them.

TYPE TWO : The Helper, The Supporter, The Giver

Type 2s (often called **The Helper or Giver**) **want to be needed by others.** They make themselves indispensable with their generosity and helpfulness, but can interfere and avoid tough decisions, becoming resentful when not appreciated “for all I have done for you”.

Their ‘fire’ comes from the desire: To help others and become indispensable, focusing on interpersonal and emotional issues.

Typical Presentation: Contactful, reaching out, helpful, ‘other’ focused.

Basic Proposition: The **state of freedom** where needs are met is negated by the premise “to get, first you must give”. Two’s replace humility with pridefulness, where love is gained and needs are met by giving to others (even before others know they have a need, or ask for assistance), hoping others will give back in return.

Strengths: Sensitive to feelings, empathetic, willing to give what’s needed, helpful, warm, generous, caring, supporting others’ development, mentoring leadership (with “with” them, not “for me”), continually explaining, energetic, exuberant, alive, expressive, generating good feelings, networking.

Hypersensitive to: Other’s unmet needs

Under Values: Own needs

How this plays out: The core of the Two's personality is a belief that they must actively help others if they are to be valued as human beings. They usually find it extremely difficult to identify their own needs as their own needs are repressed. Pride results from the belief that they have no, or few, needs, and that their role in life is to predict and meet the needs of others. Two’s can experience resentment, or act as martyrs, when they don’t feel appreciated by co-workers, or don’t feel they’re getting what they deserve in return for “all they have done”.

Yet Two’s often search for freedom from having to look after others. But everything they do is aimed at searching for emotional connection with others through giving. Two’s can feel intense rejection if co-workers emotionally shut down or shut them out. Two’s can also get upset when others don’t help each other or “play nice.”

Two’s may mentally blank out, emotionally crumble, or burst into tears rather than pushing their own agenda, or pointing out the value of their work, or themselves. As they spend so much attention on other’s needs, they assume others should know that they want overt appreciation, or love, in return.

As Leaders: Two’s bring an intense and untiring desire to connect and assist others in the team. They can shine with generosity, or struggle with people-pleasing and possessiveness.

Waiting first to see if their assistance is really needed, can stop the Two from becoming burnt out and resentful. It also prevents the Two from intruding where they are not needed and disempowering team members rather than helping.

TYPE THREE : The Performer, The Achiever

Type 3s (often called **The Achiever or Performer**) **strive to achieve goals and succeed in everything they do.** They surmount all obstacles that get in the way, but can be inappropriately competitive and image conscious, “putting a spin” even on their failures.

Their ‘fire’ comes from the desire: To work hard and be successful, so they are admired, recognized, and applauded.

Typical Presentation: Great image, alert, energetic, looking successful.

Basic Proposition: A **state of hope** where things work according to a universal plan is negated by a focus on rewards given for doing, not being. Love & acceptance is gained through performance, doing & success. Three’s fall into self-deception when taking on the image of being successful & worthy of approval.

Strengths: Industrious, efficient, practical, competent, focused, energetic, confident leadership, thrives in competition, sees possibilities, “tasky”, finds solutions, active “go getter”, often high profile, “juggles many balls at once”, enthusiastic, persuasive, encouraging, provides what’s needed.

Hypersensitive to: Obstacles to achievement

Under Values: Teamwork

How this plays out: At the core of Type Three is the belief that they must reach goals and look accomplished to be of value as a human being. To achieve these ends they project the image and persona of a top performer. They intensely focus on completing tasks.

They react strongly to anything or anyone blocking their forward progress, to people who expose the flawed person behind the superhuman image, and to co-workers who make them look bad in meetings or other public forums. Failure is to be avoided at any cost, even if it results in putting on a “spin” to “re-badge” the activity as a success.

Three’s often are unaware that they have emotions, or even a body that should be attended to. They often work themselves to exhaustion, a nervous breakdown, or even into serious illness to get things done and achieve.

As Leaders: Three’s bring a driving desire to perform and achieve outcomes. The goal is to achieve the ‘applause of the audience’.

Three’s can sometime forget to share the credit with the team, and become defensive if fault (or failure) is found with their work. This is where they might ‘spin’ for success. However, their attention to ensuring outputs are valued can ensure great attention to meeting stakeholder needs.

Three’s can be inspiring examples of excellence and authenticity, or blindly pursue success and status.

TYPE FOUR : The Connoisseur, The Romantic

Type 4 (also called **The Romantic or Connoisseur**) **search for a life or work that is special, unique and different.** They bring flair, innovation, and deep feelings when not consumed by dissatisfaction with the “ordinariness” of life.

Their ‘fire’ comes from the desire: To explore their true feelings, centre on their own creativity, produce exceptional quality, and be special.

Typical Presentation: Flair, dramatic, idiosyncratic, and intense.

Basic Proposition: The **state of deep & complete connection** is lost in a world that abandons, leaving something important missing, resulting in envy & longing. As a result, there is a never-ending search for love, or situation that is unique, special, missing & believed to be fulfilling.

Strengths: Great creative flair, constant searching for exceptional quality, ability to realize passionately held ideals, appreciative of the unique, idealistic, sensitive, attuned to feelings, deep compassion for others, empathetic (specially with suffering), individualistic, intense, romantic.

Hypersensitive to: Ordinariness **Under Values:** Calm and stability

How this plays out: Four’s have a core belief that there is something missing deep inside them. They see others as happier and complete in comparison, and may envy them. This leads to internal feelings of deficiency and longing, yet also a sense of uniqueness and specialness.

They react strongly to feeling left out because it affirms the belief that they don’t really belong in the team. In these situations, Four’s will withdraw and feel alone or “less than.”

Four’s also react badly to repetitive, mundane tasks or projects if they see them as lacking deep meaning. It is difficult for Four’s to interact for long periods of time with people who they consider are superficial or not authentic. Four’s may be overwhelmed with emotion when they experience loss of objects, relationships or status.

As Leaders: Four’s search for the ideal outcome. This typically results in great creativity, innovation, and flair. Finding that sometimes work can be ‘ordinary’ can be a struggle.

Their desire for deep meaningful connection usually makes them particularly conscious of meeting the personal needs of staff. Four’s need to make sure their team receives positive feedback from them, rather than always searching for the unattainable dream.

Four’s can model the benefits of intuition, or be held back by moodiness, self-consciousness, and self-criticism.

TYPE FIVE : The Observer, The Researcher

Type 5s (also known as **The Observer, Researcher or Sage**) **seek objective knowledge, rationality and bring clear thinking to problem solving.** They are the “minimalists”, conserving time, energy and resources. They feel drained by people’s needs and emotions.

Their ‘fire’ comes from the desire: To gather all the objective information, seeking understanding with as few entanglements as possible, and want to be the wisdom keepers and masters of the game

Typical Presentation: Rational, cool and aloof, withdrawn, withholding, analysis.

Basic Proposition: The **state of knowing there is always sufficient energy** to meeting real needs is taken away by a world that demands too much, or gives too little. Avarice for time, energy, resources and knowledge results. Fives protect from intrusion, and limit loss of resources by maintaining privacy, self-sufficiency, limiting desires and wants, and acquiring knowledge.

Strengths: Scholarly, “sage”, observant, knowing, thoughtful, rational, quiet, comprehensive analysis, dispassionate (calm in a crisis), respectful of others’ boundaries and independence, excellent listeners, keeper of confidences, dependable, sorts out what’s required vs what’s wasted energy, minimalist, works behind the scene, self-contained, appreciative of simplicity, ascetic.

Hypersensitive to: Intrusion **Under Values:** Networking “just for fun”

How this plays out: Type Five’s share the core belief that an invasive world takes too much, and drains their limited amounts of time, energy, resources, and knowledge. In response they often hoard their resources, and put emotional or physical distance between themselves and others.

Type Five’s retreat from, or get frustrated by, co-workers who require a lot of time, emotional connection, or hand-holding. They like to be self-sufficient. Five’s react badly to people who invade their space or probe into their inner world. Being over-dependent on others, or working with people who are needy, causes anxiety.

Five’s react strongly if they are rushed to make decisions before they conduct extensive research or gather enough knowledge. Yet Five’s frequently hold an enormous amount of organizational or technical knowledge and have considerable wisdom to offer.

As Leaders: Not surprisingly, another term for Five’s is **The Sage**. However, Five’s are usually very aware of how much they still don’t know!

As leaders, they need to trust their considerable experience and make sure they have their say, even if this means fighting for the ‘air space’. This may include not waiting so long until they have considered every option prior to making a decision.

Five’s can demonstrate visionary intellect and inventiveness, or become increasingly eccentric and isolated.

TYPE SIX : The Loyal Skeptic, The Trouble Shooter

Type 6s (also called **The Loyal Sceptic or Trouble Shooter**) **want certainty and security, constantly scanning for potential danger, excelling at “worst case scenarios”, and testing others.** They can be loyal servants as they build trust in a team that provides “safety in numbers”.

Their ‘fire’ comes from the desire: To be secure and certain, identifying all possible hidden agendas and problems, to manage their fear, and be prepared for anything

Typical Presentation: Loyal, questioning, darting eyes, challenging/testing new ideas.

Basic Proposition: The **state of faith in self & others** is injured by a world that is threatening, dangerous and not to be trusted. This results in doubt & fear. Six’s gain (or defy) security and avoid (or face) harm through vigilance, active imagination, doubting, and escaping (or battling) perceived dangers.

Strengths: Dedication, devotion & loyalty to others, dutiful, questioning mind, “ferreting out” hidden agendas, insightful forethought and risk minimization (specially re potential hazards and possible outcomes to decisions), good in crises, perseverance through difficulties, warm, protective, trusting as faith develops, sensitive, steadfast, vigilant, inject humour.

Hypersensitive to: Danger **Under Values:** Innovation and others’ good intentions

How this plays out: Type Six has a core belief that, to survive, they must seek safety and security in a world filled with hazards and dangers. They are hyper-alert, vigilant, and scrutinize all as to whether they can feel safe with them, or not. They often describe themselves as “realists” rather than “pessimists”.

Six’s will either confront (or avoid) authority figures that they believe are not trustworthy. Authority figures are not to be trusted if their actions don’t match their words, if they don’t protect members of the team, or if they are inconsistent and quickly change their mind “without good reason”. Six’s are keenly alert for false images and hidden agendas.

Six’s defend causes they believe in, especially around underdog groups. They react with anger or fear to situations in which they feel physical risk.

Although it can be frustrating for others when Six’s worry about everything that could possibly go wrong, their risk minimization approach to life and work can also ensure potential problems are identified. Trouble shooting can be a specialty, as they have fore seen problems, and have often developed plans to address problems should their fears be realized.

As Leaders :

Sixes can find the idea of change extremely challenging. Their worrying makes them appear like “wet blankets” to others. Yet their focus on predicting future problems, and developing plans to minimize them, can make them invaluable members of the change team, as long as their fellow team members understand and respect the skills they bring.

Sixes can exemplify courage and commitment, or struggle with anxiety and rebelliousness.

Sixes need to balance ‘worst case scenario’ thinking with ‘best case scenario’ to ensure they have considered the full picture, and don’t flatten enthusiasm in others.

TYPE SEVEN : The Adventurer, The Planner

Type 7s (also called **The Optimist, Epicure or Planner**) intend to “taste” everything that life has to offer. Multi-tasking, with agile minds, they are spontaneous and “charm to disarm”. They bring a multitude of options but try to avoid commitment, pain and limits.

Their ‘fire’ comes from the desire: To avoid pain and traps by keeping upbeat, focusing on the exciting, positive possibilities and a dizzying array of experiences, while keeping their options open.

Typical Presentation: Multi-tasking, agile mind, charms to disarm.

Basic Proposition: The **state of focused concentration** with the ability to respond freely and fully is blocked by a world that frustrates, limits and causes pain. Gluttony of mind ensures an escape from frustration and the pain of facing fearful situations, by using imagination (possibilities), indulging in pleasures, and future planning.

Strengths : High energy, playful, charming, loving of life, enjoyable, inventive ideas and plans, interconnecting diverse areas of knowledge, imaginative, egalitarian flair to leadership, optimistic, minimally impacted by painful experiences, open to a variety of possibilities and alternatives, fascinated and fascinating.

Hypersensitive to : Limits and constraints

Under Values : Consistency and focus

How this plays out : Seven’s believe they must keep their options open in a world that attempts to constrain and limit them. To do this, they juggle multiple projects, change plans quickly, and keep the environment light and enjoyable.

Although they avoid confrontation, they react strongly to those trying to control them, or people who demand compliance to specific ways of accomplishing tasks, or even someone who tries to pin them down to one plan of action. They find loopholes or alternative solutions if they are assigned repetitive or boring jobs.

If they are exposed to anger, pain, or sorrow, anxiety will emerge, and they try to escape by flying into mental planning or simply exit, physically or mentally. Co-workers who are slow, think small, and can’t see the multitude of possibilities cause frustration in seven’s.

As Leaders :

Seven’s are intensely optimistic, fast thinking, and bring endless possibilities to the team.

As leaders they need to make sure they assess things in a balanced way, as they can fall into ‘best case scenario’ thinking, failing to consider what can go wrong.

‘Negative’ people can make them frustrated, yet this caution is sometimes exactly what is needed.

Attention to detail, and ensuring projects are completed before moving on to the next exciting option, make Seven’s more effective.

Seven’s can become highly accomplished and spirited, or be waylaid by impulsiveness and impatience.

TYPE EIGHT : The Boss, The Confronter

Type 8s (also called **The Boss, Confronter, or Protector**) take control. They are directive, decisive, and self-confident doers. They usually have a huge “lust for life” and can be intimidating. For 8s, there is usually only one way of doing things: their way!

Their ‘fire’ comes from the desire: To exercise power and full dominion, taking full control and protecting those “under their umbrella”

Typical Presentation : Extroverted, self-assurance, “fills the room”, doer.

Basic Proposition : The **state of believing there is truth in everything** is damaged by a hard, unjust world. This is replaced by forceful energy, called lust. Respect & protection is gained by becoming strong & powerful, imposing own truth, and by hiding vulnerability.

Strengths : Straightforward, direct, wants feedback, wants the truth, generous, strong, demands power, takes control, gives direction, zestful and forceful energy, passion for seeking justice and confronting injustice, protective of others, exciting, intense, determined, courageous, persistent, friendly, truthful, trusting, fair, clear.

Hypersensitive to : No one in control

Under Values : Other’s ways of doing things

How this plays out : Type Eight’s are often “larger than life” people, who believe they have to be strong in a world that is hostile and threatening. They like environments that are controlled. If they don’t perceive adequate control, they will take over and dominate.

They value competence and will test, challenge, or try to take over if they believe an authority figure is not up to the job. Often Eight’s will dismiss or “run over” co-workers who are weak and indecisive.

Eight’s react with anger or distrust if co-workers are indirect, subtle, or evasive. Anything short of total honesty is not tolerated.

Eight’s instinctively move to correct imbalances in power and justice. They specially avenge wrongs, and rush to the aid of weak people who they perceive as being abused by others. Eight’s fiercely defend members of their inner circle against outside attacks.

As Leaders :

Eights will do whatever is needed to complete the task, “or die in the attempt”! Because of their driving energy to get things done, and their desire to have things under control, they seem to find themselves in leadership positions in many organizations.

Listening carefully, and being prepared to take in and implement ideas from others, can be a challenge.

Eight’s can become powerful magnanimous leaders who build long-term loyalty, or control and intimidate.

TYPE NINE : The Peacemaker, The Mediator

Type 9s (sometimes called **The Peacemaker or Mediator** are agreeable team players, striving for consensus and merging with others. They seek “comfort” and a peaceful environment. This can result in a lack of decision making or confronting problems.

Their ‘fire’ comes from the desire: To remain comfortable, empathizing with all players, getting the whole picture, and bringing all sides together so the workplace is inter-meshed and free of conflict.

Typical Presentation : Congenial team player, blending in, the “bridesmaid”.

Basic Proposition : The **blissful state of unconditional love and union** where all belong equally is lost, resulting in feelings of unimportance, requiring blending in. Nines fall into self-forgetting (sloth) where belonging and comfort is gained by merging with others, and dispersing energy into substitutes.

Strengths : Attentive to others, keeping balance through adaptability, building harmony with others by resolving conflicts, compromising / consensus driven, win / win, empathetic, adaptive, accepting, agreeable, supportive, participative, calming, receptive, co-operative, steadiness, team builder, facilitator, coach, uses attributes of all types.

Hypersensitive to : Own discomfort **Under Values :** Own opinions

How this plays out : Type Nine’s believe that, to have a place in the world, they must blend into their environment. They have learned to merge with others’ desires and disconnect from their own drives, impulses, and needs.

They typically avoid confrontation. Although they may appear calm and placid, they can react when others try to impose deadlines or structure on them, becoming passively aggressive.

When it’s time to make important personal decisions or stand up for themselves, easily distracted Nines may find their attention pulled to inessential tasks, books, food or activities. When their own needs are not met, which often happens, they may discover anger building up inside, or they may become sleepy and “zone out.”

As Leaders :

Nine’s are wonderful team players and lead by consensus. They are very good at predicting all sides to an issue. They are happy to share the credit, and usually excel in smoothing over any tensions between team members. They have been described as “the glue of the universe”!

They can ‘lose the forest for the trees’, finding it hard for them to determine what is essential from the rest of the data, sometimes making them wordy communicators and procrastinators.

Nine’s can bring people together with consensus and heal conflicts, or be held back by indecision, passivity, and stubbornness.

SUMMARY

The real value of the Enneagram comes when you can see yourself through the 'eyes of your inner observer'. What is it that has been hidden from you, yet hss driving who you are? What is it that 'fans' your 'fire'? And who is the most authentic you?

Once you understand this, and observe how you are acting, you can manage yourself so much more authentically and effectively at work, at home, and in the wider community.

Whenever your 'hot buttons' are pushed, you can be certain your type has been activated. The 'fire' is being 'fanned'. Whenever you find yourself in conflict, the Enneagram provides a 'map' for understanding what has happened, and provides guidance regarding how to exit gracefully. You don't want your 'fire' to run out of control!

I look forward to travelling on the Enneagram 'journey' with you sometime again in the future.

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