

# **The Enneagram as a Spiritual Tool for Healing**

By Katy Taylor

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## **The Enneagram and the Divine**

First and foremost, the Enneagram is a map of the soul, showing us nine different paths we can travel to heal and reconnect with the Divine. Whatever you call God—Nature, Goddess, the Universe, Presence, Jesus, the Divine, Presence, Higher Power, Essence, Allah, the Tao, True Nature, Now—similar qualities are attributed to this living force, this connection we all yearn for.

Qualities that we use to talk about God, such as, Love, Goodness, Strength, Oneness, Excellence, Beauty, Clarity, Faith, and Joy, are all the higher Levels of the Enneagram—they represent our Divine potential and our True Nature. The Enneagram system also shows how at lower Levels of Health, feeling cut off from these qualities results in nine different ways of falling asleep and losing ourselves as we descend into our separate ego self. (This is explained by the Levels of Development discovered by Don Riso and elaborated by Russ Hudson, whose Enneagram work I am indebted to.)

We all have all of this Divine potential within us, just as we all carry a spark of the Divine, of God. However, each Enneagram type has a specific affinity toward certain qualities of the Divine, as if we are more sensitive to experiencing the Divine in a distinct way. For example, a Type One dominant person might feel most aligned with the goodness or integrity of God, while a Type Six dominant person might feel this connection through an experience of deep courage and faith.

## **Our Divine Potential and our Personality are Related**

The Enneagram also explains how, when we lose connection with these Divine qualities, we become more and more attached to ego, or personality, to know ourselves. Think of the circle of the Enneagram symbol and the center of the circle as being God. As we move out from the center, we are moving from the unity of Divine freedom and liberation in the middle of the circle, into personality and less freedom, and ultimately, if we traverse all the way to the outside edge, into compulsion and restriction.

Each human being is an innately mysterious and amazing individual, but when we lose touch with this, our True Nature, and move into the realm of our personality (or ego), we become rigid, predictable, and patterned. As Riso and

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Hudson teach, we can think of our personality as a box that we live in and are very familiar with—we think everyone has the same box and the same assumptions about life, but at some point or other we start to notice that people aren't the same as we are, and we wonder why.

In Enneagram theory, there are nine different boxes, nine different archetypal ways in which humans view and interact with the world. Everyone has all of these types within us, but one is particularly dominant in our life, and we call this our primary type. The following list gives the Riso-Hudson Type Names and short descriptors, and provides a list of four characteristics portraying the descent from psycho-spiritual health to more restriction (less health) within each type:

- Type 1: The Reformer: the rational, idealistic type; principled, purposeful, self-controlled, perfectionistic
- Type 2: The Helper: the caring, interpersonal type; generous, demonstrative, people-pleasing, possessive
- Type 3: The Achiever: the success-oriented, efficient type; adaptable, excelling, driven, image-conscious
- Type 4: The Individualist: the sensitive, introspective type; expressive, dramatic, self-absorbed, temperamental
- Type 5: The Investigator: the intense, cerebral type; perceptive, innovative, secretive, isolated
- Type 6: The Loyalist: the committed, security-oriented type; engaging, responsible, anxious, suspicious
- Type 7: The Enthusiast: the busy, variety-seeking type; spontaneous, versatile, acquisitive, scattered
- Type 9: The Peacemaker: the pleasant, self-effacing type; receptive, reassuring, complacent, resigned

### **Using Knowledge of our Personality Type to Heal and Reconnect**

We can use the Enneagram as a way to see how we are keeping ourselves in this box of our personality. One of the main practices we use in the Riso-Hudson Enneagram is called the “Wake-Up Call.” Each type has a specific way of falling asleep, a specific way that the doors and windows get battened down. If we can learn to catch ourselves in the act of falling asleep to our Divine Nature, to observe this process as it is happening, then we can learn to reverse it, as well.

Another main practice is working with the three Centers of Intelligence: the Belly Center, the Heart Center, and the Head Center, corresponding to the three basic components of the human psyche: instinct, feeling, and thinking. Each Center corresponds to one of the three primary human emotions: Anger, Shame, and

Fear. All three Centers are necessary for balance and health. We need to be able to truly inhabit our bodies, to feel the sensitivity and delicacy of our hearts, and to have clear, quiet minds to be healthy, fully human, and present.

In the Riso-Hudson work, we pay special attention to learning to develop presence, which is taught first as a meditation practice, (integrated from the Diamond Approach Work, a Fourth Way spiritual school founded by A.H. Almaas—see [www.ridhwan.org](http://www.ridhwan.org)). We can think about the past or future, we can feel past hurts, but only in our bodies can we be here in this moment that is now. So, this meditation about being with the body, not leaving it to find Divinity elsewhere, but staying with sensing ourselves here and now, with whatever is there, with no judgment. If we are asleep to our bodies, then we are also asleep to our Divine or True Nature, and not in touch with the moment, with the possibility and openness of Now.

### **A Brief History of the Enneagram**

The Enneagram is a modern synthesis of ancient psychological and spiritual insights. It addresses the age-old philosophers' question: "Who are we, and why are we here?" as well as the main question religions and spiritual paths try to answer: "How then shall we live?" It is not a religion or a spiritual path, but rather a tool that you can use in whatever path you follow to help you heal and reconnect with the Divine.

The roots of the Enneagram come from different sources. The symbol is likely from the Greeks and the work of Pythagoras, and it was brought to the West by George Ivanovich Gurdjieff in the late 1800s. The psychology of the Enneagram was originally brought together with the Enneagram symbol by Oscar Ichazo, a seeker in Chile in the 1950s. Claudio Naranjo, Ichazo's student, brought the Enneagram to the USA and synthesized it with other psychological systems. There have been many innovations on the system since then, with Don Riso and Russ Hudson being the major recent innovators in the field.