

The Universal Enneagram: Is Spirituality Different for Men and Women?

By Katy Taylor

From *Radical Grace*, VOL. 22, No. 2, 2009, the quarterly publication of the Center for Action and Contemplation, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Used with permission.

Why do we assume that women's spirituality is somehow different from men's? In the many women's spiritual groups I've participated in, we are trying to love, honor, and accept ourselves. This often means building a community of support, practicing loving kindness, accepting and honoring our bodies and minds, and finding ways to deepen our innate connection to the Divine. This is done in different ways—through ritual, dance, sharing, in circle, in nature, in a sacred indoor space, in community with other women.

Is this orientation so different from what men do when they practice “men's spirituality”? Are we creating an artificial distinction to try to define women's spirituality separately?

There are certain stereotypes about the masculine and feminine. The masculine tends to be characterized as logical, linear, left-brain, focused, reasonable, rational, objective—basically head-centered. The feminine is usually described as non-linear, right-brain, fluid, all-encompassing, nurturing, relationship-oriented, emotional—or mostly heart-centered. Is this really true about our souls, or is this a cultural overlay?

Understanding the nine Enneagram personality types helps us to become more specific about appropriate practices and gives us insight into the textures of the soul. The Enneagram divides the types into three Centers: the Body, Heart, and Head Centers. Each type has a specific relationship with the energy of its Center and a healing path that includes bringing all three Centers online. Based on the way the types work with the energy of their Center, certain types could be seen as more “masculine” (types Eight, One, and Five) or more “feminine” (types Two, Four, and Nine). The other types, Three, Six, and Seven, do not as obviously fit into the masculine/feminine stereotyping.

How are these insights useful for talking about spirituality, either for women or men?

Women who identify as Eight, One, or Five may find that their personality expression goes a bit against what is expected of women culturally. They may be seen as unfeeling—in addition to being too forceful and domineering (8), or too left-brain and logical (1), or too intellectual and withdrawn (5). Knowing that this is part of my basic personality structure can alert me to the need for balance—to the need to develop my heart or a more nurturing relationship with my body, for example. Women who identify as Two, Four, or Nine will likely find their “feminine” expression more in-line with cultural views: they tend to be more feeling-centered—and generous and nurturing (2), sensitive and self-reflective (4), or receptive and accepting (9). Awareness of these tendencies can be useful in guiding me to develop a stronger sense of clear-mindedness, objectivity, and balance.

But how is this different for men of these types? Don't they, for a balanced spirituality, also have to cultivate a healthy relationship with their heart, body, or mind? Following the lead of the spiritual teacher David Deida, many have assumed that there is a split at the Essential level between the Divine Masculine and the Divine Feminine; however, the Riso-Hudson Enneagram, in accordance with the spiritual teacher, A.H. Almaas, shows us that on the mystical level of the soul, there is no masculine/feminine distinction, only humans who are trying to become more whole.

Whether we are women or men, the Enneagram teaches that to realize God (or to attain our True Self) we need to cultivate a real connection with our bodies, hearts, and minds. Looking at the stereotypical “masculine” and “feminine” personality traits is only part of a much bigger picture. To become a more complete human being, we each need to cultivate presence in all three Centers:

- In the body, we need to practice a grounded, alive, connectedness with reality, feeling sensations, listening to the instinctive intelligence of the body that is continuously available in the moment;
- In the heart, we need to practice a receptive, open connection with our deeper self, allowing ourselves to be affected by whatever is up in the moment, opening to tenderness, sweetness, preciousness, impressionability, compassion, and love;
- In the mind, we need to practice a love of silence and stillness, which opens the ability to allow Quiet Mind, a clear, awake awareness that is open, vast, spacious, still, the ground of all Being.

Of course, there is always a place for women practicing spirituality together—many of us find it easier to allow a vulnerable, open heart, and to explore what it means to love and be with our bodies with other women. However, many people

who know the Enneagram have found that the greatest spiritual understandings are not from identifying with being a certain gender, but by seeing their type-trap, which is the same for both women and men. Using this very specific information helps us to wake-up and become more present, allowing all three Centers to come into balance and allowing us to become more available to grace