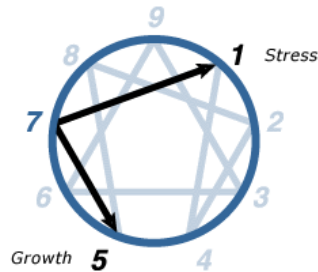


Personality Type SEVEN: The Enthusiast

*The Busy, Variety-Seeking Type:
Spontaneous, Versatile, Distractible, and Scattered*



Generally, Sevens are excitable, spontaneous, curious, optimistic, eager, outgoing, future-oriented, adventurous, variety-seeking, quick, and talkative.

Sevens get into conflicts by being scattered, distracted, restless, impatient, thrill-seeking, escapist, over-extended, irresponsible, demanding, and excessive.

At their best, Sevens are appreciative, bountiful, thoughtful, accomplished, versatile, receptive, grateful, content, quiet, and passionate.

Recognizing Sevens

Type Seven exemplifies the desire for freedom and variety and for exploring the many rich experiences that life offers. Thus, Sevens are probably the most enthusiastic, extroverted, and outgoing type of the Enneagram. They are spontaneous and upbeat; they find life exhilarating. They are the kind of people who make ordinary life into a celebration. Sevens like to fill up their calendar with things to do: after work, a quick drink; then off to dinner and the theater; then after that, a nightcap before getting home at 2 a.m. The next night may bring the symphony, a ball game, or singing in the local choir, or a visit to new restaurant. Sevens who do not live in large cities or who do not have enough money for that diverse a lifestyle might have to make do with less lavishness. But they still seek variety and constant experience, whether it's going to a mall or out to a movie, talking on the phone with friends, hanging out in a bar, or leafing through magazines and daydreaming about a vacation. Sevens do their best to stay up with what's new, and so their wide-ranging experience makes them a resource for others, too. They know which Italian restaurant, or cognac, or jeweler is the best; they know what new movies are worth seeing and what the latest news and trends are.

Healthy Sevens, however, know that life is most satisfying when they keep their feet on the ground and work within certain constraints. Their enthusiasm and versatility can make them productive and practical, highly creative and prolific, cross-fertilizing their many areas of interest and skills. They can be highly accomplished "Renaissance people," gifted with virtuosic talents and prodigious skills. If they suffer a setback or disappointment, Sevens bounce back with resilience and renewed energy: very little keeps them down for long.

Sevens want to try everything at least twice: once to see what it is like, and the second time to see if they liked it the first time! Of course, Sevens want their experiences to be as much fun and as enjoyable as possible, although, strictly speaking, that is not always essential. What is important to Sevens is being free,

having options, and creating more possibilities for their future.

Sevens' minds are restless and filled with ideas and plans for activities to look forward to. They anticipate the future, virtually licking their lips as they foresee the delicious possibilities that await them. But Sevens do not just *think* about the future: they get out there and actually make it happen. They live their dreams by throwing themselves into action and putting their plans in motion. With their energy and enthusiasm, they get things going!

However, as their restlessness increases and they begin to fear missing out on other pleasures and experiences, average Sevens become less discriminate about the experiences they pursue. They begin to lose a sense of priorities and become hyperactive, throwing themselves into constant activity—into endless busyness. They easily feel trapped or deprived, and this makes it difficult to say "no" to themselves or to deny themselves anything. While this might seem like freedom to them, it is a kind of prison that makes it increasingly difficult for them to find satisfaction in what they are doing. They begin to believe that freedom is having no restrictions or responsibilities, but this is a false freedom, and it eventually brings them greater unhappiness.

As this occurs, Sevens begin to flee from their inner anxieties by engaging in more distractions and activities. They expect that they and their lives should be exciting and "dazzling" all the time. Increasingly uninhibited, they grab attention and discharge anxiety with storytelling, joking around, exaggeration, and wise-cracking. Others may find this behavior amusing and irreverently entertaining for a while, but for most people, even other Sevens, scattered energy eventually becomes tiresome. This only frustrates average Sevens, and unless others are willing to keep up with them, for better or worse, the Seven moves on to greener pastures. Often, this leads to a dissipation of their energy and a loss of focus. While Sevens are often brilliant, once in flight from themselves, they often fail to actualize their many talents or live up to their potential.

In brief, Sevens want to maintain their freedom and happiness, to have a wide variety of interesting, fun experiences and choices, to keep their options open, to avoid missing out on anything worthwhile, to have more pleasure, to keep themselves excited and occupied, and to avoid and discharge pain. **Sevens do not want** to feel trapped or limited by having few choices or options, to be bored or guilty, to let their anxieties arise for long, to be slowed down, to be still and quiet for long periods of time, or to dwell in the past.

Their Hidden Side

On the surface, Sevens would like to convince themselves and everyone else that they are always feeling "fabulous"—having the time of their lives. Of course, the truth is often somewhat different. Sevens, like all human beings, are vulnerable to anxiety, depression, loneliness, and other difficult feelings. At times, Sevens sincerely want to tell others how they actually feel, but they often feel compelled to keep spirits high, even if privately they are miserable themselves. Yet they also struggle with fears of not being taken seriously and a sense that others will misinterpret their positive approach to life as a lack of feeling or depth. In private, Sevens struggle with loneliness, grief, and self-doubt and are as prone to depression as any other type. Most of all, Sevens fear a gnawing feeling that they will never really get what they truly want in life. So they settle for other pleasures that they hope will make them happy enough, or at least pleasantly distracted, from the more painful disappointments in their lives.

Relationship Issues

Sevens are often sought out as companions because of their energy, openness to experience, and high spirits. They are like a breath of fresh air to more withdrawn or subdued types and can generally be relied on to be stimulating, engaging, and fun. Sevens can also be generous with themselves and their resources. They feel that good times are best enjoyed when others are enjoying them too and they want to have someone to share their adventures and discoveries with. But the very high-energy approach that draws people to Sevens can also exhaust their partners. Others can tire of the nonstop stream of activities and plans and want more quiet time with Sevens, which less healthy Sevens may resist. Other relationship problems include these:

- Becoming so involved with expressing their thoughts and ideas that they do not really listen to others.
- Becoming impatient or critical of others' slower pace.
- Getting flighty or seeking distractions when important relationship challenges arise.
- Fearing that others will not support them if they are down or depressed.
- Expecting the partner to provide gratification, entertainment, or support immediately on demand.
- Being unwilling—or very slow—to make commitments.

Type Compatibility

To learn more about compatibility issues and relationships with other types, see the [Enneagram Type Combinations](#).

The Passion: Gluttony

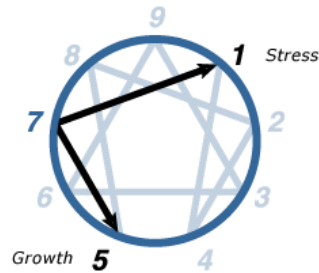
Sevens enjoy life most when they feel stimulated, awake, and refreshed by life's amazing diversity. But to the extent that they are harboring unacknowledged feelings of inner emptiness or loneliness, Sevens become anxious and can get into the habit of seeking constant stimulation as a way of distracting themselves from their anxiety. At such times, they are like starving refugees released at a banquet: they gobble up every experience that is offered to them, often without discriminating the experiences that would be most satisfying. And because their minds are so revved up with options and exciting possibilities, the experiences that they are having hold little possibility for actually getting through to them. Sevens are so much looking forward to the next great experience that the experience they are having now cannot satisfy them. Thus, they remain in a state of perpetual hunger—restlessly seeking the magic combination of circumstances that they believe will fulfil them once and for all.

At Their Best

When they are balanced and in their own center, healthy Sevens can harness their enormous enthusiasm and curiosity and still stay focused and deeply engaged with tasks until they are brought to completion. They can set priorities and work within limitations, imposing restrictions on themselves from the recognition that a certain degree of self-restraint actually makes them more productive and much happier. Healthy Sevens can say "no:" to themselves without feeling deprived because they are more in touch with their own Inner Guidance and their ability to know what will fulfill them most deeply. From this sense of fulfillment, healthy Sevens move toward others and to the world from a sense of abundance and joy, feeling intensely blessed to be alive and able to enjoy the many enriching experiences that life brings them.

Healthy Sevens are also steady and grounded, able to honor commitments and to take personal responsibility for their actions. In short, they grow up emotionally and move from being an "eternal youth" to being a mature person, able to look both inward at themselves and outward at life, accepting all that they find in both realms. They become truly "celebratory" and filled with gratitude, resolving their inner hunger and allowing them to feel that they never have to fear that they will be deprived of anything truly worthwhile.

Personality Dynamics & Variations



Learn more about the [Directions of Integration \(Security\) and Disintegration \(Stress\)](#).

Under Stress (Seven Goes to Average One)

Sevens value their spontaneity and so tend to follow their impulses, for better or for worse. As a result, they can become scattered in their attention and energy, leaping from one promising idea to the next, from one activity to another. While this can be exciting, it often leaves Sevens frustrated with themselves because they feel that they are not accomplishing as much as they would like to. At such times, they begin to behave like average Ones—pulling in the reins on themselves and trying to get more organized and self-controlled. But because they are trying to *impose* order and control on themselves, they begin to feel trapped and restricted. This only makes them more frustrated, impatient, and irritable. They may, for instance, become critical of their own creative ideas before they have really had a chance to develop them. Similarly, they cannot avoid feeling disappointment with people and many aspects of their environment. Nothing seems to meet their expectations, and they can become harsh and perfectionistically critical with themselves and with others.

Security (Seven Goes to Average Five)

Sevens often feel it is their duty to entertain others and to keep their environment positive and exciting. Over time, this can be exhausting—even for Sevens. When they are tired of being "on" for everyone, they may choose to withdraw even from their intimates and seek seclusion and noninterference. This can come as a shock to others. ("You've been out having fun with everyone else, so why are you so quiet and unavailable with me?") They no longer want to put out energy for anyone else, and can become almost obsessively focused and preoccupied. They can also be surprisingly withdrawn and isolated, like Fives. Their body language and aloof responses let others know that they want space and privacy. At such times, Sevens make no effort to entertain or energize others. Like Fives, they retreat from contact and attempt to restore their energy.

Integration (Seven Goes to Healthy Five)

As Sevens learn to relax and to tolerate their uncomfortable feelings more completely, they stop using their restless minds to distract themselves. Their minds become quiet, clear, and focused, allowing Sevens to tap more deeply into their reserves of creativity and insight. They are able to prioritize not by imposing some arbitrary order on themselves but by following their true interests and staying with them. Thus, they become far more productive, satisfied, and really satisfying as companions. Their capacity to find connections and to synthesize information is not drawn off into tangents—they produce results, and this gives them grounds for real confidence in themselves and in life. As they experience the world more deeply, they find each moment fascinating, profound, and revelatory. The idea of boredom becomes absurd as they savor the incredible mysteries of existence, moment by moment.

The Levels of Development

[*Learn more about the nine Levels of Development.*](#)

Healthy Levels

Level 1 (At Their Best): Assimilate experiences in depth, making them deeply grateful and appreciative for what they have. Become awed by the simple wonders of life: joyous and ecstatic. Intimations of spiritual reality, of the boundless goodness of life.

Level 2: Highly responsive, excitable, enthusiastic about sensation and experience. Most extroverted type: stimuli bring immediate responses—they find everything invigorating. Lively, vivacious, eager, spontaneous, resilient, cheerful.

Level 3: Easily become accomplished achievers, generalists who do many different things well: multi-talented. Practical, productive, usually prolific, cross-fertilizing areas of interest.

Average Levels

Level 4: As restlessness increases, want to have more options and choices available to them. Become adventurous and "worldly wise," but less focused, constantly seeking new things and experiences: the sophisticate, connoisseur, and consumer. Money, variety, keeping up with the latest trends important.

Level 5: Unable to discriminate what they really need, become hyperactive, unable to say "no" to themselves, throwing self into constant activity. Uninhibited, doing and saying whatever comes to mind: storytelling, flamboyant exaggerations, witty wise-cracking, performing. Fear being bored: in perpetual motion, but do too many things—many ideas but little follow through.

Level 6: Get into conspicuous consumption and all forms of excess. Self-centered, materialistic, and greedy, never feeling that they have enough. Demanding and pushy, yet unsatisfied and jaded. Addictive, hardened, and insensitive.

Unhealthy Levels

Level 7: Desperate to quell their anxieties, can be impulsive and infantile: do not know when to stop. Addictions and excess take their toll: debauched, depraved, dissipated escapists, offensive and abusive.

Level 8: In flight from self, acting out impulses rather than dealing with anxiety or frustrations: go out of control, into erratic mood swings, and compulsive actions (manias).

Level 9: Finally, their energy and health is completely spent: become claustrophobic and panic-stricken. Often give up on themselves and life: deep depression and despair, self-destructive overdoses, impulsive suicide. Generally corresponds to the Bipolar disorder and Histrionic personality disorder.

Personal Growth Recommendations for Type Sevens

Sevens grow by recognizing that real happiness is available anytime, anywhere: the price of admission is their willingness and ability to be quiet, to be still inside themselves, and to open their eyes to the wonder and richness of life all around them. Once Sevens understand this, they are able to assimilate their experiences in depth. They discover that every moment can make them feel deeply grateful and appreciative—truly awed by the wonders of life. Moreover, their openness and inner quiet brings them a sense of life

beyond the physical, a spiritual reality, that begins to shine through the material world. The healthy Seven understands that by being still within, a quiet joy begins to pervade all of life—a deep satisfaction in existence that cannot ever be taken away.

- Recognize your impulsiveness, and get in the habit of observing your impulses rather than giving in to them. This means letting most of your impulses pass and becoming a better judge of which ones are worth acting on. The more you can resist acting out your impulses, the more you will be able to focus on what is really good for you.
- Learn to listen to other people. They are often interesting, and you may learn things that will open new doors for you. Also learn to appreciate silence and solitude: you do not have to distract yourself (and protect yourself from anxiety) with constant noise from the television or the stereo. By learning to live with less external stimulation, you will learn to trust yourself. You will be happier than you expect because you will be satisfied with whatever you do, even if it is less than you have been doing.
- You do not have to have everything this very moment. That tempting new acquisition will most likely still be available tomorrow (this is certainly true of food, alcohol, and other common gratifications—that ice cream cone, for instance). Most good opportunities will come back again—and you will be in a better position to discern which opportunities really are best for you.
- Always choose quality over quantity, especially in your experiences. The ability to have experiences of quality can be learned only by giving your full attention to the experience you are having *now*. If you keep anticipating future experiences, you will keep missing the present one and undermine the possibility of ever being satisfied.
- Make sure that what you want will really be good for you in the long run. As the saying goes, watch what you pray for since your prayers may be answered. In the same vein, think about the long-term consequences of what you want since you may get it only to find that it becomes another disappointment—or even a source of unhappiness.

From *Discovering Your Personality Type*, pp. 145-154. See also *Personality Types*, pp. 259-96, *Understanding the Enneagram*, pp. 54-57, 105-112, and 344-346, and *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*, pp. 260-286.

Examples

The 14th Dalai Lama, Galileo Galilei, W.A. Mozart, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Amelia Earhart, Richard Feynman, Wassily Kandinsky, Ram Dass, Timothy Leary, Noel Coward, John F. Kennedy, Joe Biden, Sarah Palin, Silvio Berlusconi, Malcolm Forbes, Richard Branson, Ted Turner, Suze Orman, Leonard Bernstein, Chuck Berry, Elton John, Mick Jagger, Fergie, Miley Cyrus, Britney Spears, Katy Perry, Russell Brand, Sacha Baron Cohen, Federico Fellini, Steven Spielberg, Fred Astaire, Cary Grant, John Belushi, Joan Rivers, Bette Midler, Goldie Hawn, George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Robin Williams, Jim Carrey, Mike Meyers, Bruce Willis, Robert Downey, Jr., James Franco, Leonardo DiCaprio, Charlie Sheen, Cameron Diaz, Paris Hilton, David Duchovny, Larry King, Howard Stern, Simon Cowell, “Auntie Mame”