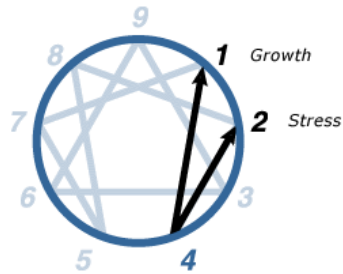


Personality Type FOUR: The Individualist

*The Sensitive, Introspective Type:
Expressive, Dramatic, Self-Absorbed, and Temperamental*



Generally, Fours are intuitive, sensitive, impressionable, quiet, introspective, passionate, romantic, elegant, witty, imaginative, and self-expressive.

Fours get into conflicts by being moody, emotionally demanding, self-absorbed, withholding, temperamental, dramatic, pretentious, and self-indulgent.

At their best, Fours are creative, inspired, honest with themselves, emotionally strong, humane, self-aware, discrete, and self-renewing.

Recognizing Fours

Type Four exemplifies the desire to be ourselves, to be known for who we are, and to know the depths of our hearts. Of all the types, Fours are the most aware of their own emotional states. They notice when they feel upset, anxious, attracted to another person, or some other, more subtle combination of feelings. They pay attention to their different changing emotions and try to determine what their feelings are telling them about themselves, others, and their world. When Fours are more in balance, their exquisite attunement to their inner states enables them to discover deep truths about human nature, to bear compassionate witness to the suffering of others, or to be profoundly honest with themselves about their own motives. When they are less balanced, they can become lost in their feelings, preoccupied with emotional reactions, memories, and fantasies, both negative and positive.

Fours are nothing if not subtle and expressive, and they are able to put words to feelings and states that others may recognize but could not have expressed as eloquently. ("That poem exactly captures how I felt about leaving home.") By being emotionally honest, and by taking time to see what they really feel about things, they encourage others to look more deeply into themselves.

Fours are also people who care a great deal about beauty and taste. Many Fours, for instance, are involved in artistic pursuits. Even if they are not artistically creative themselves, Fours seek out art, poetry, music, and other expressions that they find beautiful, because they feel these things reveal something true about themselves and about human nature. Fours often dress in ways that accentuate their own sense of personal style but also in ways that symbolically let others know how they are feeling (dressing entirely in black or in shades of violet, for instance). Similarly, they typically decorate their homes with objects and colors that evoke a strong sense of image and mood and reflect personal feelings and associations.

Above all, Fours want to distinguish themselves from others—they want to feel that their taste, their self-expression, and their emotional depth are *unique*. Thus, they tend to emphasize all of the ways in which they are unlike other people—especially their own family. They deeply want to know who they are and that who they are is special in some way. Being complimented or told that they are loved is nice, of course, but what Fours really want is for others to recognize and appreciate the pattern of qualities that is *unique* to them—that they are not generic.

Because of their powerful need to see themselves as different from others, Fours often end up feeling alone and misunderstood. They become creative "outsiders," and they are proud of it. If they are working in a regular nine-to-five job, they will find ways to put their unique stamp on their work. This can run the gamut from finding their own way of presenting reports to having a recognizable design style to decorating their office in a way that reflects their tastes and feelings. They may run their own company (as long as there's a creative component to their work and it's emotionally satisfying), or they may be in a profession that makes use of their personal touch, such as a clothing designer, or counselor, or a therapist of some kind. Fours are often professional artists, writers, or teachers. Above all, Fours *want their life to be a work of art*. They want to achieve something beautiful despite the loneliness, suffering, and self-doubt they have so often felt.

Unfortunately, the Four's need to be different can also lead to alienation and a tendency to become engrossed in feelings of loss, sadness, and melancholy. All nine types can feel sad, lonely, or depressed, but Fours feel this way frequently—even when there is nothing in their current lives to cause such feelings. They often become convinced that these painful feelings are more real and authentic when compared to more passing feelings of happiness or enthusiasm. Indeed, Fours begin to feel that they are being the most real, most honest people *because* they are focusing on disappointment and sadness. Ultimately, this can lead them to foster and prolong these painful feelings in themselves.

In brief, Fours want to express themselves and their individuality, to create and surround themselves with beauty, to maintain certain moods and feelings, to withdraw and protect their vulnerabilities, to take care of emotional needs before attending to anything else, and to attract a "rescuer" who will understand them.

Fours do not want to restrain or lose touch with their emotions, to feel ordinary, to have their individuality unrecognized, to have their taste questioned, to be *required* at social settings, to follow impersonal rules and procedures, to spend time with people they perceive as lacking taste or emotional depth.

Their Hidden Side

On the surface, Fours can seem to suffer from chronic self-doubt and extreme sensitivity to others' reactions to them. But part of the reason for this is that Fours often hold a secret, inner image of who they feel they *could* be. They have an idea of the sort of person they would like to become, the kind of person who would be fantastically talented, socially adept, and intensely desired. In short, Fours come to believe that if they were somehow different from who they are, they would be seen and loved. Unfortunately, they constantly compare themselves negatively to this idealized secret self—their "fantasy self." This makes it very difficult for Fours to appreciate many of their genuine positive qualities because they are never as wonderful as the fantasy. Much of the growth for type Four involves letting go of this idealized secret self so that they can see and appreciate who they actually are.

Relationship Issues

As the romantics of the Enneagram, Fours focus a great deal of their time and attention on their relationships. High-functioning Fours are sensitive to others—especially to others' feelings—and enjoy any kind of authentic personal sharing. They are excellent listeners and give their full attention when someone

they care about is trying to express herself. Unfortunately, Fours also tend to get caught up in their own emotional reactions and dramas. When this happens, they have difficulty seeing others or hearing them objectively. Their strong emotional reactions can make it difficult for them to sustain interpersonal connections. Fours tend to have the following issues in relationships:

- Becoming self-absorbed and uninterested in others' feelings or problems due to feeling overwhelmed by their own feelings.
- Idealizing potential partners, then feeling disappointed once they get to know them—often devaluing and rejecting them.
- Placing great expectations on the partner for nurturing and support.
- Being moody and temperamental—making others "walk on eggshells."
- Withholding attention and affection to punish the other.
- Imagining that others have worse opinions of them than they do—being touchy and hypersensitive to slights.

Type Compatibility

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

The Passion: Envy

At some level, Fours believe that they are missing something that other people seem to have. They feel that something is wrong with them or with their relationships, and they start to be acutely aware of what is not working in their lives. Naturally, given this frame of mind, it is difficult for Fours to feel good about themselves or to appreciate the good things in their world.

Fours rightly perceive that there is something inadequate or incomplete about the ego self, but *they incorrectly assume that they alone suffer from this problem*. Fours then get in the habit of comparing themselves to others, concluding that they have somehow gotten "the short end of the stick." Fours feel that they have been singled out by fate for bad treatment, bad luck, unsatisfying relationships, bad parenting, and broken dreams. It comes as something of a shock to many Fours to discover that other people have suffered as much as or even more than they have. This doesn't mean that Fours haven't suffered or that their painful pasts are inconsequential. But Fours need to see how they perpetuate their own suffering by continually focusing on old wounds rather than truly processing those hurts and letting go of them in a way that would allow them to heal.

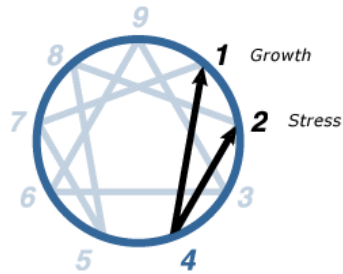
At Their Best

Healthy Fours strive to be true to themselves. They are emotionally honest and aren't afraid to reveal themselves to others, "warts and all." They combine self-awareness and introspection with great emotional strength and endurance. They bring a heightened sensitivity to their experiences and are able to share with others the subtleties of their inner world. This invites others to do the same. They are highly intuitive and creative and add a personal, human touch to whatever they are involved with. They treat others with gentleness, tact, and discretion. They can be wonderfully expressive with an ironic, witty view of life and themselves, often finding humor in their own foibles and contradictions. They bring a sense of beauty, refinement, and emotional richness into other people's lives.

Thus, high-functioning Fours are profoundly creative, expressing the personal and the universal, possibly through art but also in their daily lives. They are in touch with the ever-changing nature of reality and are inspired by it. High-functioning Fours are able to renew and regenerate themselves again and again,

transforming even their most painful experiences into something beautiful and meaningful that others can benefit from as well. They have a deep sense of "allowing," and they are able to hold even the most painful feelings with compassion and sensitivity—whether their own or someone else's.

Personality Dynamics & Variations



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

Under Stress (Four Goes to Average Two)

Fours attempt to defend their hurt feelings (and gain attention) by withdrawing from people and withholding their own affection and attention. They may recognize on some level, however, that their emotional storminess and withdrawals are driving away the people who are most supportive of them. Then Fours go out of their way to reestablish their connections and reassure themselves that their relationship is still on solid ground. But because they are reacting out of stress, Fours may overcompensate by trying to win others over, by doing favors, or, more darkly, by manipulation and creating dependencies, all in the manner of average-to-unhealthy Twos. To do this, they keep talking about the state of the relationship with the other person and try to make themselves more needed. Favors, help, and reminding others of their support are part of the picture. Troubled Fours also become more possessive of loved ones, not wanting to let them out of their sight for long, like lower-functioning Twos.

Security: (Four Goes to Average One)

With trusted intimates, or in situations in which Fours feel sure of themselves, they may risk being more openly controlling and critical of others. Their frustration with others and feeling of disappointment in how others are behaving (especially toward them) finally erupts. Fours can become impatient and critical, demanding that people meet their exacting standards, constantly pointing out how others have made errors. Nothing about the other person (whom they may have idealized and regarded as their longed for "rescuer") now satisfies them or gives them much hope or pleasure. Everything about the person and their situation becomes irritating and annoying and they can't seem to get the other person's faults out of their mind. Fours in this state may also compensate for their ragged emotions by driving themselves excessively, feeling that they are lazy and unproductive if they are not constantly working and improving.

Integration (Four Goes to Healthy One)

As Fours become more aware of their tendency to brood and to fantasize about their many hurts and disappointments, they also become aware of the cost to themselves of this way of being. As they relax and accept themselves more deeply, they gradually become free of their constant emotional turbulence and their need to maintain emotional crises or to indulge themselves as a consolation prize for not fulfilling their potential. Gradually and naturally, they become more objective, grounded, and practical, like healthy Ones. They also become more realistic and able to operate in the real world. Without imposing harsh disciplines or expectations on themselves, integrating Fours want to become involved in matters beyond themselves, such

as in community work, politics, the environment, or in other worthwhile ways to engage their minds and hearts. On some level, they choose no longer to indulge themselves but to live within the constraints of reality. When they do so, they find the payoffs and the pleasures—and their creativity—are deeper and much more fulfilling.

The Levels of Development

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

Healthy Levels

Level 1 (At Their Best): Profoundly creative, expressing the personal and the universal, possibly in a work of art. Inspired, self-renewing and regenerating; able to transform all their experiences into something valuable: self-creative.

Level 2: Self-aware, introspective, on the "search for self," aware of feelings and inner impulses. Sensitive and intuitive both to self and others: gentle, tactful, compassionate.

Level 3: Highly personal, individualistic, "true to self." Self-revealing, emotionally honest, humane. Ironic view of self and life: can be serious and funny, vulnerable and emotionally strong.

Average Levels

Level 4: Take an artistic, romantic orientation to life, creating a beautiful, aesthetic environment to cultivate and prolong personal feelings. Heighten reality through fantasy, passionate feelings, and the imagination.

Level 5: To stay in touch with feelings, they interiorize everything, taking everything personally, but become self-absorbed and introverted, moody and hypersensitive, shy and self-conscious, unable to be spontaneous or to "get out of themselves." Stay withdrawn to protect their self-image and to buy time to sort out feelings.

Level 6: Gradually think that they are different from others, and feel that they are exempt from living as everyone else does. They become melancholy dreamers, disdainful, decadent, and sensual, living in a fantasy world. Self-pity and envy of others leads to self-indulgence, and to becoming increasingly impractical, unproductive, effete, and precious.

Unhealthy Levels

Level 7: When dreams fail, become self-inhibiting and angry at self, depressed and alienated from self and others, blocked and emotionally paralyzed. Ashamed of self, fatigued and unable to function.

Level 8: Tormented by delusional self-contempt, self-reproaches, self-hatred, and morbid thoughts: everything is a source of torment. Blaming others, they drive away anyone who tries to help them.

Level 9: Despairing, feel hopeless and become self-destructive, possibly abusing alcohol or drugs to escape. In the extreme: emotional breakdown or suicide is likely. Generally corresponds to the Avoidant, Depressive, and Narcissistic personality disorders.

Personal Growth Recommendations for Type Fours

Fours grow by recognizing that while the hurts and losses of the past were real enough, there is no need to keep revisiting them in the imagination. On the contrary, doing so keeps drawing them out of the richness and depth of the present moment—the one time and place in which their real feelings and their true identity

can be found. Fours need to see how working up their feelings actually moves them further away from their most authentic self and their truest self expression.

- Do not pay so much attention to your feelings; they are not a true source of support for you, as you probably already know. Remember this advice: "From our present perspective, we can also see that one of the most important mistakes Fours make is to equate themselves with their feelings. The fallacy is that to understand themselves they must understand their feelings, particularly their negative ones, before acting. Fours do not see that the self is not the same as its feelings or that the presence of negative feelings does not preclude the presence of good in themselves" ([Personality Types](#), p. 172). Always remember that your feelings are telling you something about yourself as you are at this particular moment, not necessarily more than that.
- Avoid putting off things until you are "in the right mood." Commit yourself to productive, meaningful work that will contribute to your good and that of others, no matter how small the contribution may be. Working consistently in the real world will create a context in which you can discover yourself and your talents. (Actually, you are happiest when you are working—that is, activating your potentials and realizing yourself. You will not "find yourself" in a vacuum or while waiting for inspiration to strike, so connect—and stay connected—with the real world.
- Self-esteem and self-confidence will develop only from having positive experiences, whether or not you believe that you are ready to have them. Therefore, put yourself in the way of good. You may never feel that you are ready to take on a challenge of some sort, that you always need more time. (Fours typically never feel that they are sufficiently "together," but they must nevertheless have the courage to stop putting off their lives.) Even if you start small, commit yourself to doing something that will bring out the best in you.
- A wholesome self-discipline takes many forms, from sleeping regular hours to working regularly to exercising regularly, and has a cumulative, strengthening effect. Since it comes from yourself, a healthy self-discipline is not contrary to your freedom or individuality. On the other hand, sensuality, excessive sexual experiences, alcohol, drugs, sleep, or fantasizing have a debilitating effect on you, as you already know. Therefore, practice healthy self-discipline and stay with it.
- Avoid lengthy conversations in your imagination, particularly if they are negative, resentful, or even excessively romantic. These conversations are essentially unreal and at best only rehearsals for action—although, as you know, you almost never say or do what you imagine you will. Instead of spending time imagining your life and relationships, begin to live them.

From *Discovering Your Personality Type*, pp. 116-125. See also *Personality Types*, pp. 134-72, *Understanding the Enneagram*, pp. 46-49, 86-92, and 337-39, and *The Wisdom of the Enneagram*, pp. 177-205.

Examples

Rumi, Frédéric Chopin, Pyotr I. Tchaikovsky, Gustav Mahler, Jackie Kennedy Onassis, Edgar Allen Poe, Yukio Mishima, Virginia Woolf, Anne Frank, Karen Blixen / Isak Dinesen, Anaïs Nin, Tennessee Williams, J.D. Salinger, Anne Rice, Frida Kahlo, Diane Arbus, Martha Graham, Rudolf Nureyev, Cindy Sherman, Hank Williams, Billie Holiday, Judy Garland, Maria Callas, Miles Davis, Keith Jarrett, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Leonard Cohen, Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens), Ferron, Cher, Stevie Nicks, Annie Lennox, Prince, Sarah McLachlan, Alanis Morissette, Feist, Florence (+ the Machine) Welch, Amy Winehouse, Ingmar Bergman, Lars von Trier, Marlon Brando, Jeremy Irons, Angelina Jolie, Winona Ryder, Kate Winslet, Nicolas Cage, Johnny Depp, Tattoo Artist Kat Von D., Magician Criss Angel, Streetcar Named Desire's "Blanche duBois"