

What enneagram is for

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Feb 3, 2018

Back from travels in Italy and Egypt, and pondering freshly why we bother with the Enneagram. Partially, this is a response to reading many posts on various pages here on FB expressing various theories and takes on the types, the overall structure of the Enneagram, and of course, the **instincts** or **subtypes**. While many of the theories are interesting, I am sometimes **saddened by the tone** of some of the discussions. So a few thoughts, based on what has been useful to me:

1) We will never go too off track if we remember what all these theories are actually for. They are frameworks to help us see **WHAT WE GET IDENTIFIED WITH**. They do not tell us who or what we are. All of this knowledge was originally offered as a means to see what distracts us from more full on, compassionate, awake, energized and amazed living our lives in the here and now--the only place we actually are! So when I look at any theory I ask myself, does this view of me or my type or my instinct help me notice how I get stuck? Does it open up new horizons for me? Or does it coddle and support my old self concepts? My narcissism? Does it help me avoid what I really need to be noticing? For example, how does telling myself I am more into one-on-one intimacy than others wake me up? Or does it merely prop up ideas of how I like to see myself? Does this observation bring me back to myself or does it keep me comfortably asleep in my assumptions about myself? In my experience, we will keep noticing new layers and more subtle ways of tricking ourselves as we go, but much of the real Enneagram work is seeing all the ingenious ways we trick ourselves. So what is this observation serving?

2) It is good to remember that **NO ONE** has a total handle on this, and that the more certain we are of our views, the more, in that moment at least, we are likely quite stuck in our fixation. This really is a work in progress, so there is room for new discovery and to let yourself be surprised by the new perspectives real inner work can bring. So as they say in Zen, it is a good idea to cultivate 'beginner's mind.'

3) **AND** at the same time, there really are some deep frameworks and some background understandings of how the Enneagram itself actually works. There is so much more to it than just remembering some type traits (or subtype traits) to agree with or not. This is not merely esoterica but vital for learning how to

employ the insights we get from studying this material. At its deepest levels, the Enneagram teaches us how to undo our habitual ways of looking at things.

4) It is a very good idea to entertain some humility about what we know, and that mastering this material is going to take longer than we think. I have been at this professionally for nearly 30 years, and if you count my early studies with the Gurdjieff Work, more than 40 years--and I am still amazed by new realizations and understandings all the time. This includes seeing that some of my older views were limited or even wrong. I studied directly with people who lived and worked with Gurdjieff for many years, I worked by Don Riso's side for a quarter century, I have had long and profound conversations with Claudio Naranjo, Helen Palmer, David Daniels, Richard Rohr, Tom Condon, and a host of other colleagues and presenters in this field. I do not have this all figured out, and neither does anyone else. We are looking at the enormity of human nature, and of the deepest layers of human experience, and seeking to connect with that which is most beautiful and enduring in our existence. Sometimes the need to impress others with our acumen can stand in the way of the very qualities needed to bring forward the best of what we can find in this work.

5) Lastly, apply it to yourself first. Teaching about the fixations from our fixation does not necessarily help much. Am I more aware of my manifestations? Is my understanding of my type and my instinctual biases helping me to show up? To be more compassionate? To actually offer others something of my heart and wisdom beyond some theories that I learned somewhere? Am I discovering what I am **BEYOND** my type structure and am I learning to meet my type structures with mercy and willingness to open to something new?

These are orientations to the work that I do my best to live by, and have found very useful. I hope they are helpful to you, and I wish you a glorious journey into the heart of what this work is really most about.

Love, Russ