

Introducing the Enneagram

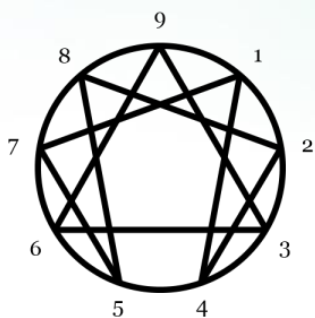
Understanding what it is, where it originated and how to draw upon its wisdom to support our growth



What is the Enneagram?

The Enneagram is a powerful, scientifically-validated framework with ancient origins. It is both a spiritual and psychological lens that supports the development of our self-awareness and promotion of personal growth.

Linguistically, *Ennea* is the Greek for nine, *Gram* means written or drawn.



It is represented by a geometric figure which illustrates nine archetypes, or different ways, of looking at the world and responding to others.

It helps us to uncover insights that enables us to understand: who we really are, what motivates us, why change can feel so hard and how we can feel more fulfilled.



"It illuminates the challenges and magic of being human."

Dirk Cloete, 2019

Where did it come from?

The Enneagram has many roots in ancient wisdom and teachings from 600BC. For example, Plotinus, a Greek philosopher, developed the nine divine qualities of human nature. Ramon Lull, a Catalan philosopher, developed the nine archetypes and geometric form.

From the 1900s psychologists from around the world began to consolidate this philosophical and spiritual wisdom into a more holistic and accessible form. In particular, in the 1970s Naranjo, a Chilean psychiatrist, is widely-acknowledged as the thought leader who brought the Enneagram's insights into the personal and organisational development fields.

More recently, insights from neuroscience have been integrated into the Enneagram wisdom. Now we can benefit



from the latest scientific research in neuro-plasticity, enabling us to re-wire and evolve our old patterns of thinking.

What benefits does it give us?

Around the world today, millions of people are drawing upon the Enneagram to support personal growth. It can help us in many ways, including enriching our relationships, family lives, careers, spiritual growth and much more.

In essence it helps us to build our self-awareness to a much deeper level. This leads us to evolve how we see the world, how we respond to others and also how we show up to others,

"A shift in self-awareness can change a life."

Dirk Cloete, 2019

Within this increased self-awareness, the Enneagram helps us to distinguish between our own ego and also our true essence.

As a young child we sub-consciously develop our ego and personality around our true

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essence. Our ego and personality are like a protective defence mechanism, keeping our true essence safe in life. Whilst our personality may have strengths, it also has shadow areas that may hold us back if we are not aware, including our vices, fixations and blind spots.



Source: Adapted from Dirk Cloete, 2019

Our essence is the source of what makes us unique. It is the part of us that makes us feel real, truly alive and fulfilled.

On helping us to recognise both the strengths and shadows of our personality, the Enneagram invites us to integrate more fully and reconnect with our essence. Some people call this our soul.

“When we are able to access our essence, we are profoundly free, seeing ourselves as part of a greater whole and connected to others.”

Dirk Cloete, 2019

Through increasing this awareness of our personality and essence, we can consciously choose to spend more time connecting to our true essence.

As well as helping us individually to live a freer, more fulfilled and connected life, we can draw

upon the Enneagram to foster better climates within our teams and organisations too. Some of the leading organisations are beginning to see the importance of helping to find the true essence and purpose of their businesses. For example, Microsoft, LinkedIn and Google now use the wisdom of the Enneagram to support their organisational development.

Why is it even more relevant now?

In today's world, we can find ourselves facing many different expectations. These can come from our family and friends, our employers and also society. Some of these expectations can be pressurising.

By experiencing and responding to such pressures and expectations, we can sometimes lose track of ourselves and what we want and need. This can leave us feeling disconnected from ourselves.

“We sense that something is missing in our lives and search the world for it, not understanding that what is missing is us.”

Parker, J. Palmer, 2004

Therefore, drawing upon the Enneagram can help us to integrate within ourselves and with our essence, helping to understand our purpose and what brings us meaning in life.

“The journey of integration is a journey back to our truest self.”

Dirk Cloete, 2019

How can I find out more?

Reading more – there are many fantastic books available to read about the Enneagram. I recommend a couple below

Through experience – this can be done by undertaking an online diagnostic and making sense of the findings through a couple of coaching sessions with a registered practitioner. Please feel free to contact me if you want to find out more and have any questions

Resources

The Wisdom of the Enneagram: The Complete Guide to Psychological and Spiritual Growth for the Nine Personality Types

By Don Richard Riso

The Enneagram: A Private Session With the Worlds Greatest Psychologist

By Simon Parke



About the writer

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Cathy Brown is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist, consultant and writer. She runs Evolve Consulting Services Limited which works with individuals, teams and businesses to manage transition and change.

She works as a transition coach and a career counsellor with individuals and teams. She is also a guest lecturer at Henley Business School and University of Derby. In addition, Cathy is a founding trustee of the Evolve Transition Trust, which supports disadvantaged people through life transitions.