

THE
ROAD
BACK
TO YOU

AN ENNEAGRAM JOURNEY
TO SELF-DISCOVERY

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and
SUZANNE STABLE



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WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A SIX

1. I'm always imagining and planning for the worst.
2. I often don't trust people who are in authority.
3. People say I am loyal, understanding, funny and compassionate.
4. Most of my friends don't have as much anxiety as I do.
5. I act quickly in a crisis, but when things settle down I fall apart.
6. When my partner and I are doing really well in our relationship I find myself wondering what will happen to spoil it.
7. Being sure I've made the right decision is almost impossible.
8. I'm aware that fear has dictated many of my choices in life.
9. I don't like to find myself in unpredictable situations.
10. I find it hard to stop thinking about the things I'm worried about.
11. I'm generally not comfortable with extremes.
12. I usually have so much to do it's hard for me to finish tasks.
13. I'm most comfortable when I'm around people who are pretty much like me.
14. People tell me I can be overly pessimistic.
15. I am slow to start, and once I do get started I find myself continuing to think about what could go wrong.
16. I don't trust people who give me too many compliments.
17. It helps me to have things in some kind of order.
18. I like to be told I am good at my job, but I get very nervous when my boss wants to add to my responsibilities.
19. I have to know people for a long time before I can really trust them.
20. I am skeptical of things that are new and unknown.

TYPE SIX

THE LOYALIST

*There's no harm in hoping for the best as long
as you're prepared for the worst.*

STEPHEN KING

Healthy Sixes have learned to trust their own experiences of life. They are aware that certainty and accurate predictability are not likely in most situations. They are productive, logical thinkers who almost always organize their thoughts and actions around what would be most advantageous for the common good. Loyal, honest and reliable, healthy Sixes are clear-eyed judges of character. These Sixes have come to believe that in the end everything will be all right.

Average Sixes question almost everything. They struggle to get out of their heads and the pattern of worst-case-scenario planning. They are overly focused on authority and can be either subservient on the one hand or rebellious on the other. They find the world to be an unsafe place, and they respond with fight or flight. These Sixes, while managing all of their anxiety, are committed to education, church, government, family and social service organizations.

Unhealthy Sixes find danger around every corner. Their anxiety borders on paranoia, as they fear that the world is unfair and that most people are not who they say they are and cannot be trusted. Unable to trust themselves either, they look to authority figures and experts to make decisions on their behalf. These Sixes find fault in others and tend to fall into patterns associated with the mental mechanism of projection.



In 1999, authors Joshua Piven and David Borgenicht released *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook*. Providing humorous but real-life instructions for what to do in unusually dire circumstances, the book advertised itself as “the essential companion for a perilous age.” Both frightening and funny, it offered pithy chapters on how to perform a tracheotomy, identify a bomb, land a plane, survive if your parachute fails to open, deal with a charging bull, jump from a building into a dumpster and escape from killer bees, among other things.

Someone gave me a copy of *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook* when it came out. I shrugged and said, “Meh.”

It sold ten million copies.

To whom should the now unfathomably rich and grateful authors send a thank-you note for spearheading their book’s epic sales? They could start with Enneagram Sixes, who probably account for half those sales.

Sixes see a dangerous world in which disaster can strike at any moment. Appearances are deceiving. People have hidden agendas. They keep their eyes peeled for possible threats and mentally rehearse what they will do when the worst happens. For Sixes, imagining and planning for potential catastrophes is a way of maintaining a sense of safety, control and certainty in an unpredictable

world. Given their penchant for constantly asking “What if . . . ?” or “What will I do when . . . ?” I can’t fathom a Six seeing a book describing itself as a “guide for surviving life’s sudden turns for the worse” and not buying two copies—the first to read and the second as a backup in the event someone steals the first one.

The more I know about life and people, the more I love and appreciate Sixes. Called Loyalists, Sixes are the most faithful and dependable people on the Enneagram. (Sixes are also sometimes called the Devil’s Advocate, the Questioner, the Skeptic, the Trooper or the Guardian.) They keep a watchful eye over us. They safeguard our values. They’re the glue that holds the world together. Many Enneagram teachers believe these reliable, warm, funny and self-sacrificing people make up more than half the world’s population. That our cities and towns are teeming with these steadfast and vigilant citizens should have a tonic effect on us.



THE SIX'S DEADLY SIN

By now you know what’s coming, right? Sixes are wonderful, but they too have a shadow side they need to guard against. Sixes’ deadly sin is *fear*, and they suffer a deep-seated need to feel secure.

Though we say fear is the sin toward which the Six gravitates, what Sixes actually experience is anxiety. Fear is what arises when you’re in the presence of a clear and immediate source of danger—like when a guy wearing a hockey goalie’s mask kicks your door down and chases you around your apartment while wielding a chainsaw over his head. Anxiety, by contrast, is a vague, free-floating sense of apprehension that arises in response to an unknown or potential threat that may never materialize. It’s what you feel when you *imagine* what would happen if a guy wearing a hockey goalie’s mask ever chased

you around your apartment with a chainsaw. Fear says, “Something wrong is actually happening!” while anxiety is more anticipatory: “What if this happened or that happened? What if . . . What if . . . What if . . . ?” That’s the campaign slogan.

Sixes even experience elevated anxiety when life is going smoothly because they wonder what might come along and ruin it. The relationships or jobs that seem stable today might evaporate or be taken away tomorrow. In the words of Steven Wright, “If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something.”

My childhood was populated with anxious Sixes.

My first-grade teacher, Sr. Mary Elizabeth (may perpetual light shine upon her), was a Six for sure. At least once a day she’d take a break from the lesson plan and ask a random tenebrous question like, “Children, what would you do if someone held a gun to your head and forced you to decide between denying your faith and death?” If you asked a group of seven-year-olds questions like that today, someone would call Child Protective Services.

Sr. Mary Elizabeth wasn’t the only person in my life pondering those questions. Growing up my siblings and I had a nanny who appeared to suffer from pretraumatic stress disorder.

She wore herself out with worry about what could happen to us. Don’t run with scissors, you’ll stab your sister. Don’t eat food from a can with dents, you’ll die of salmonella. You’ll get electrocuted if you take a shower in a thunderstorm. If you stand too close to the microwave, you’ll turn out like your cousin

Marty. To thwart would-be carjackers she made us

roll up our windows and lock our car doors when we drove through “rough” areas of town. I grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut, a town where people think “bad taste” is a crime you should worry about, not carjacking.

FAMOUS SIXES

Ellen DeGeneres
Jon Stewart
Frodo Baggins

All humor aside, the Six's deadly sin of fear is very real, and it has serious implications.

These are difficult times for Sixes. The air we breathe is humid with anxiety. Regrettably, you and I are not the first to figure out that 3.5 billion of our planet's full-time residents (plus or minus a few hundred million) are easily motivated by fear and a deep need for security and certainty. Politicians, cable news anchors, marketing experts, highhanded preachers and other unprincipled grifters know it as well. To win votes, hike viewership, raise money and sell home-security systems, these panic-mongering demagogues, pundits and advertising execs deliberately use well-researched scare tactics to prey on all of us, but they target folks like Sixes in particular. We all need to learn how to prevent fear from taking over our lives, but Sixes especially do. History demonstrates that when anxious folks make decisions as a group based on fear and a frustrated desire for security, bad things can happen.

ALL ABOUT SIXES OR LOYALISTS

Sixes have a strong need for security and consistency. They appreciate order, plans and rules. They like the comfort and predictability that clear laws and guidelines offer us. Like Ones, they'll call Ikea's 1-800 number to order an unnecessary bolt for their new dining room table, not because it won't be perfect but because they can visualize the holiday table collapsing, the ambulance coming to whisk Grandpa to the hospital with a broken leg and third-degree gravy burns, and so on, ad infinitum.

Sixes value community. They won't leave a church if they're not "being fed," the announcements are too long, the church has gotten too big (or too small), the music is (fill in the blank), or they don't agree with everything the pastor says from the pulpit. Sixes are the most loyal number on the Enneagram. They are devoted group members who, once they commit to a community, put down stakes and won't abandon it over small matters of disagreement.

Though they are typically wary and skeptical of people at first, once you've won Sixes' trust they're with you for life. Sixes want to feel connected to the people they love. These are the mothers who call every day to "check in," wanting to know what you're doing and that you're safe. Sixes have a remarkable ability to bond us together. They believe in the importance of family, home, raising responsible children, and marriage, and they make choices based on their values, in part because they have very high security needs.

Sixes are full of doubts and questions. When it comes time to make decisions they become like the worry-prone *Star Wars* protocol droid C-3PO: "We're doomed!" Suffering from analysis paralysis, they turn to friends, coworkers, family members and experts for advice because they don't trust their own thinking. They make up their mind then change it again. They feel pulled one way, then pushed in another. They waffle and equivocate, driving themselves and others crazy as they swing back and forth between yay, nay and maybe. In the words of St. James, they are the ones who, because they doubt, are "like a wave of the sea, carried forward by the wind one moment and driven back the next" (James 1:6 Phillips).

Part of the problem is Sixes see both sides to everything. If you're a Six reading this book right now you might be thinking, *Yes,*

"I'm not afraid, but
I'm very nervous."

JOHN IRVING

I see your point but on the other hand . . .
or *Ian and Suzanne sound like they've*
thought a lot about this, but there's always
a possibility that . . . Sixes are surprised
when they discover that other people
aren't as fearful as they are, but they

identify right away with their ongoing battle with self-doubt and second-guessing themselves. When faced with decisions, Sixes freeze like deer transfixed by car headlights, paralyzed about which direction they should go.

There are two kinds of Sixes, each of whom manages fear, their need for security and their relationship to authority differently. One Six is very loyal and gives their full attention to authority because they think that's where security lies. Always loyal to authority, these Sixes seek to please and obey the rules. They are deferential to their bosses, trying their best to please because they view the authority as the source of their security. We call these folks *phobic Sixes*.

There's another kind of Six who also focuses on authority, only they're not nearly as agreeable or compliant. These folks are wary of authority figures. They keep a weather eye on those in charge in case they try to pull the wool over someone's eyes or pull a fast one. Called *counterphobic Sixes*, these folks will strike if they smell a rat. They seek security not by avoiding or placating a perceived threat but by deliberately provoking and attacking it. Their security comes from conquering the source of their fear, not capitulating to it.

In reality, most Sixes are a mixture of phobic and counterphobic, which reflects their vacillating, doubting temperament. The phobic Sixes fall back and flee while the counterphobic Sixes try to conquer or defeat whatever their fears are. Most Sixes bounce back and forth between these two poles. To borrow a phrase from Churchill, they are "either at your feet or at your throat." Whether Sixes are phobic or counter-phobic, the bottom line is fear, and the focus for all Sixes is authority.

SIXES AS CHILDREN

Kids who are Sixes learn to worry early. They're Velcro for messages like "Don't swim for thirty minutes after you eat or you'll get a cramp and drown" or "Never talk to strangers." Growing up I heard all manner of crazy warnings, but few stuck. But when these kids figure out the world isn't safe and the adults in charge can't always be trusted, they respond by obeying or rebelling. Wherever they go they know who is in charge, and keep their eyes dialed in on them.

These kids respond to life in a measured way. They'll watch one or two kids jump off a twenty-foot ledge into a lake before possibly doing it themselves. They're hesitant because kids who can't trust their environment find it hard to trust themselves. Kids who lack self-confidence typically have a difficult time receiving encouragement, so they miss out on the very messages that would make them more secure and help them to trust themselves at a deeper level.

Teachers and coaches love kids who are Sixes. They are good followers and listeners. Because they're loyal they hold groups of friends together. Only a few of them ever crave the spotlight, but they do want to be in the chorus. They like to be part of a group, so team sports and school activities are a win for them. They find a sense of comfort in routines that are predictable, and they grow up to be the folks who hold together all of the communities we all count on to make sense of our lives.

Many (not all) Six kids find themselves in unstable situations growing up. Because they are unable to trust their environment, they doubt themselves and look to other people for courage and advice. If they grow up with an alcoholic, for example, they learn never to let their guard down and to always assume the worst will happen so as not to be caught unawares.

My pal Lance's father would often fly into fits of rage. Every night he and his brother would look out their bedroom window to watch their dad get out of the car because they could tell what kind of mood he was in from how hard he slammed the car door. Like Lance, Six kids pick up small cues that a danger or threat is present, and stay safe by learning to predict whether someone is going to hurt them.

Sixes make terrific friends or partners when they're spiritually healthy and growing in self-knowledge. Loyal to a fault, Sixes mean it when they say, "Until death do us part." Quick-witted and charming, Loyalists can leverage their anxiety and be very funny. Sixes like Larry David can turn their exaggerated anxieties, insecurities and

catastrophizing into fodder for self-deprecating stories that will keep their friends laughing for days. Listen to early recordings of Woody Allen stand-up routines if you want to hear a phobic Six who made his fortune airing his self-doubts, or a counterphobic Six George Carlin aggressively questioning everything and everyone.

SIXES IN RELATIONSHIPS

But Sixes' way of seeing the world through fear-tinted lenses can wreak havoc on their relationships. They're not easy to be with, particularly in the beginning of the relationship. People who need security and certainty will keep their guard up. They will try to guess what you're thinking. Afraid of being emotionally blindsided and having been hurt in the past, they will watch for hints of imminent betrayal or abandonment. A Six will pepper you with you questions like, "Are we still good?" or "What if you wake up one day and decide you don't love me anymore?" They will alternate between pushing you away and clinging to you. And because they're doubtful, Sixes will assume you too are doubtful, which leads them to question you. This doesn't exactly achieve what they're after—greater commitment and security—as such whining tends to drive loved ones further away.

It helps Sixes in the throes of doubt to remind them of your commitment to them. Never scold, dismiss or make fun of Sixes' doubts about their relationship with you unless you want to amp up their anxiety that it's not going to work out. Calm, reasoned reassurance is the key.

Even when Sixes begin to trust their relationship with you, there's still the rest of the dangerous, fickle world for them to contend with. At times it's hard to be with people who are always imagining and preparing for disasters. If only they could stop awfulizing and relax, right? When Sixes begin to get stuck in worst-case-scenario thinking, ask them to walk you step by step through the chain of

negative events they see happening in it. At each step, stop and say, "You're right, that sounds bad. Then what would happen or who would be there to help you?" After a while, one of two things will occur. The plot of their nightmare scenario will either spiral into something so irrational as to be absurd and they'll start laughing, or they'll begin to see (often with your guidance) that as horrible as the feared future event would be, they would have the inner and outer resources to cope and thrive if it came to pass. Remember: worst-case-scenario thinking needs to be managed, not discounted. If you call them pessimists, they'll only argue back that they're realists.

Sixes are always going back and forth about things, and that can be exasperating in relationships. They decide, then second guess; they decide, then second guess. And just when you think they've finally made a decision, they'll wake you up in the middle of the night to say they've changed their minds. *Sigh*.

What's the source of all this waffling? They never learned to connect with and trust their inner guidance system. They often

"Anxiety is like a rocking chair.
It gives you something to do,
but it doesn't get you very far."

JODI PICOULT

doubt their ability to make good decisions because, as a rule, they forget past successes. Sometimes those who love them need to remind them how well things turned out the last time they made a decision and

stuck to it, or how they made it through if the results were less than they'd hoped. No one bats one thousand in this life.

The wonderful news about Sixes in relationships is they're troopers. With time and reassurance, they move beyond chronically doubting and questioning the relationship they have with their partner. When this happens, they can become some of the most fun, steady and undemanding companions in the world.

SIXES AT WORK

Years ago I worked with a Six named Dan who on numerous occasions saved me from myself. At the time I was a young, overly self-assured pastor with a 37 IQ driving behind the wheel of a fast-growing church. Like any good Six, Dan kept his eye on me, and when he saw that I was about to make what he thought was a possibly calamitous decision he'd get anxious and pull me aside, saying, "Have you thought through what might happen if you take us in this direction?"

More often than not, Dan annoyed me. His need to express his doubts and ask questions about my brilliant ideas not only put the brakes on our moving forward but felt to me like he was raining on my parade. However, in some instances, if it hadn't been for his doubtfulness and questions I would have driven my parade and our fledgling church straight off an overpass.

Sixes are sharp, analytically minded troubleshooters. They love being on the underdog team trying to resurrect a company or failing program, particularly when others say it can't be done. A pitcher should be nervous when a Six comes to bat in the bottom of the ninth with the winning runner on third. They enjoy the way being the hundred-to-one shot galvanizes a team, and they're notorious for pulling a win out of their hat when the chips are down.

There are lots of things we can learn from Sixes. Most of us think and move too quickly. We make decisions on the fly precipitously, if not recklessly. But there's a clarity and wisdom that comes when we're willing to wait and think through the implications of our choices. Because they're the ultimate devil's advocate, Sixes bring that to the table wherever they work. Every business needs a loyal skeptic who isn't afraid to ask hard questions or point out the flaws in a plan. A room full of overcaffeinated, risk-tolerant entrepreneurs may not like it when a Six asks a question that pops the balloon on their big idea, but someone has to be the voice of anxiety!

Sometimes I wonder how many Sixes have bravely raised their hand and asked the one unpopular question that threw a president back on his heels long enough for him to consider what the unforeseen consequences might be were he to pursue a policy of war. We owe these clear-eyed Sixes a debt of gratitude.

Six employees will ask you *a lot* of questions, not because they're opposing you necessarily but because they're trying to figure out what they're supposed to do and to make sure someone has looked at the big picture, should something go wrong. When you're trying to launch a new initiative and you need a Six's support, listen to all their doubts or anxieties. It takes time for Sixes to think through issues and formulate questions, so publish meeting agendas in advance. Yes, all this questioning and fact checking can slow things down for the team, but if you let Sixes voice their concerns and you answer their questions, Loyalists will follow you to the ends of the earth. If not, you're flying solo.

Sixes have mixed feelings about success as well. On the eve of victory they might procrastinate because they know success will only attract attention. Sixes don't like the exposure that comes when they're in a spotlight because it leaves them vulnerable to attack. Also, Sixes don't thrive in highly competitive environments where they're pitted against their colleagues. Winning at the expense of a coworker doesn't sit well with the person who goes by the name Loyalist.

Sixes have an odd tendency to believe that thinking about something is the same as doing it. This is never more evident than in the workplace. So if you ask Sixes if they're working on that project you gave them to do, they'll say yes even if they haven't done a thing except plan and think about it! To them thinking and doing are the same thing. At work, be sure to ask follow-up questions if you really want to know where Sixes stand in terms of progress.

Because Sixes are conscientious, they tend to take on too much work, which leaves them feeling stressed out, resentful and

pessimistic. When it all becomes too overwhelming they can overreact, which can ripple out and freak out other people. When this happens, get them to break tasks down into manageable steps, and encourage them to delegate more.

WINGS

Sixes with a Five wing (6w5). These Sixes are more introverted, intellectual, cautious, self-controlled and apt to seek security through allegiance to an authority figure. They gravitate toward a defined belief system and a group that shares their values. Sometimes misread as distant or aloof, 6w5s simply like to protect their privacy, engage in solitary activities and pursue hobbies. The 6w5 has a greater need for time alone, which can help them gain a broader perspective on things that contribute to their anxiety. The counter is also true, since with a Five wing the Six may ruminate too much, exacerbating unproductive thinking. Because they over-analyze things for too long without taking action, these Sixes can suffer from analysis paralysis.

Sixes with a Seven wing (6w7). Sixes with a Seven wing are a delightful surprise. Reflecting the playfulness of Seven (the Enthusiast), they are entertaining, animated and adventuresome. They are willing to risk, albeit only a little, so the boundaries of the Six are stretched to accommodate more options. But the 6w7 doesn't completely separate from their anxiety, so there is always a backup plan in case an adventure becomes a misadventure. Sixes with Seven wings are far more extroverted and willing to sacrifice themselves for loved ones than Sixes with five wings.

STRESS AND SECURITY

Stress. In stress Sixes move toward the negative side of Three, where they can become workaholics who pursue material success or hoard resources to make themselves feel more secure. In this space Sixes

are more inclined to misrepresent themselves and to project an image of competency to fend off their own anxiety and give others the impression they have it all together. They won't try anything they don't think they can do successfully—which, since they already lack confidence, means they are reluctant to take necessary risks.

Security. When Sixes feel secure they move toward the positive side of Nine, where they are less prone to getting worked up about potential threats in their environment. Under the influence of the Nine's equanimity, Sixes stop planning for disasters and feel less anxious about life in general. In this space they are more light-hearted, flexible, empathic and energetic. They are accepting of others, can see life from more than one angle, and become more likely to trust their gut rather than rely on outside authority figures, groups or belief systems to interpret life for them. More trusting and less jaded, Sixes connected to the positive side of Nine can believe everything is going to be all right.

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

On the path toward spiritual growth, Sixes need to hold two conflicting things in tension: that they live in a culture that's never going to let them feel safe, and that they are safe.

"Faith is a place of mystery, where we find the courage to believe in what we cannot see and the strength to let go of our fear of uncertainty."

BRENÉ BROWN

How do any of us feel safe in a world where, when we turn on CNN, we see a perpetually alarmed news anchor named Wolf coming to us live from a Situation Room telling us to stay with him because in sixty seconds

he will be bringing us "breaking news"? When I was a kid, breaking news meant someone had their finger on the nuclear button. Now it means Kim Kardashian has threatened to post a picture of her back

bumper and “break the Internet.” Our insurance ads show an unsuspecting man being T-boned at an intersection while a spokesman warns, “Trouble never takes a holiday; neither should your insurance.” I don’t even want to think about what will happen if I outlive my retirement. If I’m a Four and this stuff freaks me out, I can’t imagine how a Six might feel. Sixes are prone to internalize these messages of fear and imminent disaster, so it’s vital for them to recognize this pattern and think twice before permitting their anxieties to take over their lives.

Sixes need to be encouraged to doubt themselves less and trust themselves more. They are stronger and more resourceful than they know. They’ve just been going about transformation in the wrong way. They think the antidote to fear is courage, but they can never seem to muster enough to do the job, so surely that’s not the answer. What they need to develop is faith, which is different from courage in that it doesn’t require certainty. Faith asks Sixes to believe and trust in something or someone bigger than they are, who will always have their back, who will never leave them but instead will be there to support them in times of crisis.

Sixes need to remember the spiritual truth that they are ultimately safe. This doesn’t mean they’re magically protected from disaster or calamity, just that from an eternal perspective this Story ends well. For this message to sink deep down into their bones, they will have to decide that God is either in control or he isn’t, that even if everything doesn’t work out as planned things will be all right.

TEN PATHS TO TRANSFORMATION FOR SIXES

1. A regular centering prayer or meditation practice is vital for every number, but particularly for Sixes. Your mind never stops working. It’s filled with voices expressing vacillating opinions, doubts about other people’s trustworthiness, imagined worst-case scenarios and questions about your own ability to make good decisions.

2. Be alert for unhealthy tendencies in your relationship with authority. Are you blindly following or reflexively rebelling? You'll want to find a more nuanced and conscious middle way.
3. To develop self-confidence and trust in your inner guidance system, keep a record in your journal of those times when you made and enjoyed the fruit of good decisions or survived the fallout of bad ones. Either way, you're still here!
4. Practice accepting compliments without deflecting them or being suspicious of the motivations behind the praise.
5. When playing the role of devil's advocate and pointing out the potential flaws in other people's ideas and plans, be sure to acknowledge the positive dimensions of it as well. You don't want to develop a reputation for being a wet blanket.
6. Limit your exposure to the twenty-four-hour news cycle or to books and films that unnecessarily reinforce your anxious or pessimistic view of life. (Frankly, let's all do this.)
7. Be alert in the early days of a relationship to see whether doubtful thoughts and feelings arise about your partner's commitment to you. What's causing you to alternately question or cling to them?
8. Learn to recognize the difference between legitimate fear and free-floating anxiety, and ascribe different values to them.
9. Memorize and repeat Julian of Norwich's beautiful prayer, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."
10. The contrary virtue to the deadly sin of fear isn't courage but faith, which is a gift. Pray for it.

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A SEVEN

1. I'm always the first person up for a last-minute adventure.
2. I am an optimist to a fault.
3. I don't like making hard and fast commitments to things.
4. I suffer from FOMO—fear of missing out.
5. Anticipation is the best part of life.
6. People close to me say I can be argumentative and act superior.
7. Variety and spontaneity are the spice of life.
8. Sometimes I get so eager for the future I can hardly wait for it to get here.
9. It's hard for me to finish things. When I get close to the end of a project I start thinking about the next thing, and then I get so excited I sometimes just move on.
10. I usually avoid heavy conversations and confrontations.
11. When people I care about are having a hard time, I help them look at the bright side of the situation.
12. Other people think I am sure of myself, but I have lots of doubts.
13. I'm popular and have lots of friends.
14. When things get too serious for too long I usually find a way to get people to lighten up, often by telling jokes and funny stories.
15. I don't like endings, so I usually wait for people to break up with me.
16. I quickly get bored with the same routine and like to try new things.
17. Almost everything can be more fun and entertaining with a little effort.
18. I think people worry more than they should.
19. Life is better than people imagine. It's all about how you explain things to yourself.
20. I don't like it when people have expectations of me.

TYPE SEVEN

THE ENTHUSIAST

*Just think of happy things,
and your heart will fly on wings!*

PETER PAN

Healthy Sevens know that often "less is more." They are aware of the energy they have invested in manufacturing *happiness* and they know that *joy* is a gift or grace that can only be received. They have embraced a full range of human emotion and they are growing in their ability to accept life as it is rather than as they want it to be. They are able to incorporate pain and disappointment into the whole of their lives, rather than merely avoiding it. When Enthusiasts are in a healthy space, they are not only fun and adventurous but also spiritually grounded, practical and resilient.

Average Sevens reframe almost everything that is sad, limiting or could be perceived as failure, changing the narrative so that even the most negative events are recast in an affirming way. They find most of their happiness in *anticipation* and much of their sadness in the reality that their expectations are seldom realized. These Sevens entertain to feel safe and to claim their place

in a group. Though they are very popular, they find commitment to be a challenge and have great trouble finishing projects, often jumping from one thing to the next.

Unhealthy Sevens see themselves and their environment as inadequate, feeling sorry for themselves and often believing they've been dealt an unfair hand. They try to avoid pain at any cost, which leads to irresponsible behavior and seeking instant gratification. These Sevens are often reckless, risking more than they can stand to lose, and are more prone to addiction than any other number.



One Saturday my wife, Anne, asked whether I would make a Whole Foods run to pick up a few items for dinner and take our eight-year-old son, Aidan, along. I'm not a cheapskate, but buying groceries at Whole Foods makes as much fiscal sense to me as buying your lawn equipment at Tiffany's. My health-nut wife's insistence that our kids eat only pesticide-free food has long been a point of contention between us. It didn't matter. Every morning for fifteen years I snuck a bag of Cheetos into their lunch bags so they could have some semblance of a normal childhood. She still can't figure out why they love me more than her. But despite my frustration, I headed to Whole Foods with Aidan.

The first thing you see when you walk into our local Whole Foods Market is the apple display—a giant, perfectly arranged pyramid of Honeycrisps and Galas. It's so imposing and artfully organized it makes you wonder whether they commissioned sculptor Andy Goldsworthy to design it. Like any young boy, the first thing Aidan did that day was charge straight toward it.

"Don't touch those apples!" I commanded in a loud voice.

Startled, Aidan jumped back from the apple display, and I turned around to continue my search for almond milk. Not five seconds

later I heard a muffled thump—almost like the sound of a tennis ball landing on the roof of a canvas camping tent—followed by a few more low-toned thumps. I heard the collective gasp of my fellow customers mixed with the roar of what we now refer to in our family as the Apple-anche of 2006. When I whipped around I found Aidan on all fours, desperately grabbing at rolling fruit as if he thought he had time to collect and restack them before I discovered the nature of his evil.

Aidan looked terror stricken when he saw me walking toward him wearing my “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” face. But then, as if arrested by a brilliant, last-minute idea to stay his execution, he broke out in a grin, leapt to his feet . . . and began dancing.

When I say dancing, I mean “James Brown Live at the Apollo Theater in 1962” dancing. Now brought up short, I watched as he segued into the famous John Travolta peace-sign-across-the-eyes dance from the movie *Pulp Fiction*. Where does an eight-year-old learn such things? Few things will dissolve a father’s fury quite like the sight of a giggling little boy wearing a “Life is Good” T-shirt dancing in a scree of apples. Lord knows I tried, but I couldn’t prevent myself from laughing along with everyone else in the aisle as he thrust out his little butt and moved into doing the twist. How do you reprimand a kid like that? For the umpteenth time in his brief life Aidan had managed to turn a crime into a comedy.

Now a freshman in college, Aidan moonwalks whenever we pass the apple display at Whole Foods as a reminder to me of how he managed to elude certain death that day. And yes, it still makes me laugh. He’s a quintessential Seven on the Enneagram.



THE SEVEN'S DEADLY SIN

I want to be a Seven. When healthy, they might be my favorite number on the Enneagram.

Sevens embody joy and a boundless love for life. Most mornings they burst into life like kids who just found out it's a snow day. At the same time, I'm not naive. Because Aidan and many of my closest friends are Sevens on the Enneagram, I'm well acquainted with their dark side. As is the case with every Enneagram type, what's best about their personality is what's worst about their personality. Their gift is also their curse.

Scratch the vibrant paint on the surface of a Seven and what you'll find underneath is the need to avoid pain. I can't say that strongly enough—Sevens don't want to feel unpleasant emotions, particularly that swirl of fear and emptiness they register at their core. No one enjoys feeling frightened, sad, bored, angry, disappointed or frustrated, but for Sevens, emotions like these are intolerable.

I thought for sure I was a Seven when I learned that *gluttony* is their deadly sin. Spend a week in Italy with me and you'll know why I mistyped myself. But for Sevens, the sin of gluttony isn't about their fondness for *pennete al salmone* as much as a reflection of their compulsive need to devour positive experiences, stimulating ideas and fine material things in order to fend off suffering, hurtful memories and a feeling of chronic deprivation.

Sevens crave stimulation. Ask one how much is enough and they'll say, "Just a little more." And that's the problem—there's never enough, at least not to satisfy a Seven's voracious appetite. The psychiatrist and author Gabor Maté likens addicts to "hungry ghosts," ravished creatures who have "scrawny necks, small mouths, emaciated limbs and large, bloated, empty bellies." It's a ghoulish visual, but it's an apt description of the

FAMOUS SEVENS

Robin Williams
Wolfgang Amadeus
Mozart
Stephen Colbert

Seven's dilemma. Like "hungry ghosts," Sevens cope with their inner tumult by gorging themselves on interesting ideas, acquiring choice material possessions, jamming their calendars with activities and adventures, fantasizing about a future filled with exciting possibilities, and planning their next great escapade.

According to the Enneagram, the opposite of gluttony is sobriety. For Sevens, sobriety doesn't mean giving up drinking but rather slowing down, living in the present moment, exercising self-restraint, reigning in their restless "monkey minds" and getting down to the business of ordinary life. You know, all the stuff regular civilians like us have to do.

All of us have ways of defending ourselves against pain. For Sevens, it's keeping things lively and positive. The question Sevens are always asking themselves is, *How can I jam as many pleasurable experiences into this moment as possible?* Their source of satisfaction is never found within them or in the present moment; it's always external and in the far-distant future. There's always something they haven't tried, something more to do, some new exploit to plan. All this hopped-up behavior is how Sevens divert their attention away from the unacknowledged and unintegrated losses and anxieties that haunt them. Most people know that unpleasant feelings and truths can't be avoided indefinitely, but not Sevens. They believe they can outrun them forever. As Richard Rohr says, "Sevens try to imagine a life where there is no Good Friday, and it's Easter all the time."

It's hard to get your head around it, but Sevens are every bit as fearful as Fives and Sixes. Where they differ is in the way they defend themselves against it—Fives ward off fear with knowledge, Sixes with pessimism and Sevens with inexhaustible optimism.

If you gave me only three minutes to describe the coping strategy of a Seven I'd simply sing you a few verses of the song "I Whistle a Happy Tune" from the musical *The King and I*:

Whenever I feel afraid
 I hold my head erect
 And whistle a happy tune
 So no one will suspect I'm afraid.

So it is with Sevens, whose determination to deny entrance to negative feelings winds up costing them their most authentic self. They fool themselves as well—and no amount of novel experiences and exciting adventures can ever quite fill that void.

ALL ABOUT SEVENS OR ENTHUSIASTS

Living for tomorrow and turning a blind eye to the inevitable dolorous ordeals of today may sound like a great way to go through life, and there are certainly times when Sevens' indomitable optimism is a gift. But sometimes such behavior can create problems for Sevens and those who love them.

Sevens want to avoid pain. Sevens believe they can *think* their way out of pain. I once asked my friend Juliette to describe what life is like for her as a Seven. Among other things, she shared how she copes with negative emotions by intellectualizing them. "For me worry or stress are easier to deal with because I can work with them in my mind," she said. "Feelings like disappointment, grief or sadness are much harder because I actually have to feel them."

When I asked Juliette whether she'd ever seen a therapist, she laughed and said, "Yes, but whenever a counselor succeeds at getting me too close to a painful topic I instantly tell a joke or a funny story about something goofy the kids did that week to get them off topic and around negative emotions." Sevens will go out of their way to avoid pain and introspection, which makes the self-awareness that's needed for growth more of a challenge for Sevens than for most other types.

"Let us step
 into the night and
 pursue that flighty
 temptress, adventure."

J. K. ROWLING

But the ways that they avoid pain are just so freaking entertaining. If my experience in Whole Foods with Aidan tells you anything, it's that charm is one of the first lines of defense for Sevens. Angry parents, teachers and coaches find it all but impossible to discipline puckish Sevens. They can talk their way out of almost anything. If Adam and Eve had been Sevens we'd all still be living in the Garden of Eden.

When situations become too emotionally intense or distressing, Sevens will feel an irrepressible urge to lighten things up a little. They're the ones who slip a grimace-worthy joke into a eulogy, laugh uncontrollably during a sad scene in a movie or feign a bad case of the hiccups to distract people while their boss is announcing mandatory layoffs. While the choices Sevens make to deal with anxiety or unpalatable feelings can earn them popularity for being the class clown, they can't seem to make a connection between their immature behaviors and the fact that people say they lack intellectual and emotional depth. If they never do their work, adult Sevens develop a reputation for not being able to swim outside the shallow end of the pool.

The last thing I would want is a world without Sevens. They're wonderful human beings, particularly when they've learned to face up to the fact that life consists of both agony and ecstasy moments. The problem is too many settle for being Peter Pan—they never want to grow up.

Sevens are vulnerable to addiction. Several mornings a week I attend twelve-step meetings. It's not often I see so many Sevens gathered in one place at one time. Not all Sevens become addicts, but their impulsivity and difficulty with delaying gratification, combined with their desire to escape afflictive emotions at all costs, make them more addiction-prone than any other number on the Enneagram. Why suffer a flood of awful and frightening emotions when half a bottle of wine, a few hours on a porn site, a handful of

oxycontin, a blackjack game, a quart of ice cream or a shopping binge offers an easy, fast-acting source of pain relief?

"I'm not an alcoholic, but one day I realized that whenever I go to parties I end up drinking three glasses of wine to put a protective layer between myself and that one Eeyore-like person who wants to drag me into a conversation about a depressing topic," Juliette told me. "I pretty much don't like anything or anyone who brings me down."

In my opinion Sevens are particularly vulnerable to pornography addictions. Think about it—you get to enjoy an erotic rush that numbs negative feelings, and as an added bonus you can trick yourself into believing you're having an intimate experience with another person without having to step up to the plate and make a commitment to them—something Sevens are hesitant to do. Gambling, too, is a particular temptation for Sevens, whose natural optimism convinces them that this next hand will be a winner or that their luck is about to turn. Gambling is all about the things that Sevens find attractive, like exciting possibilities and future good fortune, so it's all too easy for them to be pulled in. Like I said, not all Sevens become addicts, but they have to watch themselves.

Sevens are spin doctors. Sevens are masters at what's termed "reframing." In the blink of an eye they can take a bad situation and recast it in a positive light to skirt feeling the pain you and I would experience if the same thing happened to us. This defense mechanism is unconscious, instantaneous and impressive.

At one time my friend Bob was one of the most sought-after music video producers in the world. After a while he became so bored and disgusted with directing four-minute movies of half-naked women dancing to atrocious music that he promised himself he'd never produce one again.

Recently over lunch Bob told me how a few months earlier he had reneged on his vow by agreeing to shoot a video for a big country act because "the money was just too good to pass up." That morning the

artist's manager had called to tell him they were disappointed with his footage and were hiring another director to reshoot the video.

"Honestly, I think it's a blessing," Bob explained. "I see it as God's confirmation that I should stay away from making music videos and continue down my new career path."

Bob and I have been friends a long time and he's pretty well versed in the Enneagram, so I asked him whether his response to the call wasn't just a textbook example of a Seven duct taping a silver lining to a black cloud. He danced around my question until he finally gave up and laughed, saying, "I always have a pocket full of silver linings."

"You ought to get around to having your feelings about losing that gig," I said.

"I'll *think* about it," he said, knowing that was the perfect answer from someone in the Head Triad.

(For the record, Bob's new career path involves hanging out the door of a helicopter and shooting aerial videos of lions running around the Serengeti. He sells the films to adventure tour companies who use them as promotional pieces for their websites. I know, it's perfect beyond words.)

Watch and be amazed when Sevens start to rationalize. If you call Sevens on the carpet for acting selfishly or having a bad attitude, or you caution them against making a dumb decision, they'll climb the barricade and defend to the death the reasonableness of their position. They'll come up with a million good reasons for doing whatever it is they want to do no matter what it will cost them or others. Their litany of justifications is no more than a strategy against having to feel guilty for being selfish or stupid for making an unwise decision.

Because they're bright and such quick learners, Sevens can develop an inflated sense of their own giftedness, intelligence and achievement, and become arrogant. They love to debate ideas and are so articulate and fast on their feet that they rarely lose in a battle

of wits even when they know less about the topic than their opponent. They can definitely suffer from a superiority complex.

Sevens are escapologists on par with David Blaine. They always need and will have an escape hatch or backup plan in the event life gets scary, boring or uncomfortable. On our way into a movie theater one night, my friend Bob and I passed an art gallery where people were gathering for the opening of a photography exhibit. "Perfect!" he said. "If the movie stinks we can slip out and head over to that instead." It's stunning, really.

Sevens don't want to be tied down.

Sevens need flexibility and avoid making long-term, option-limiting commitments. Anne and I often say we regret not knowing the Enneagram when our kids were growing up. In fifth grade Aidan showed promise as a drummer, but he bristled whenever we suggested he join the school band. Having to make a commitment to attending band practice twice a week after school sounded more like voluntary incarceration than fun. Anne and I eventually convinced Aidan to try band just once. His response afterward was predictable. "I hated it," he groaned. "The band director said I had to stick to playing the notes on the page like everyone else. I like to *improvise!*"

From personal experience, I can tell you not wanting to stick to playing what's on the page is a pattern with many Sevens. Helen Palmer calls them the Epicures because of the way they delight in all the best possibilities in life. If you don't believe me, take a Seven to dinner. They're usually the first person to smell what the menu special is. "Holy smokes, do you smell that curry?" they'll revel, with a euphoric expression on their face.

If you really want to see Sevens swoon, take them to a buffet-style restaurant. They're the guys in the line who load their plate because they can't bear the idea of not sampling a little bit of everything! If

"It's never too late
to have a happy
childhood."

TOM ROBBINS

you take them to a restaurant they've been to before, they definitely won't order the same thing a second time, even if they loved it. What kind of person would settle for the same old fare when they can try something different and exciting?

Sevens live for the next adventure. Sevens know exactly what Andy Warhol meant when he said, "The idea of waiting for something makes it more exciting." These pleasure-seekers savor anticipation. For them, the best part of a meal, a party or a trip isn't when it comes; it's the thrill of expectancy leading up to it. This is why Sevens sometimes feel a little let down when the prime rib appears, the party guests arrive, or they're actually standing at the base of the Eiffel Tower. The real deal couldn't possibly live up to their expectations. The pleasure is in the waiting, not the sating. (Yes, I came up with that last line. Feel free to use it.)

Sevens make sure they always have something to do lest an adverse feeling break through a crack in their schedule. "I know I'm anxious when I keep looking at the calendar to see what's coming up," my friend Juliette confessed to me.

Aidan spent his junior year of high school studying classics in Italy. A few weeks before it was time to return home he called to tell us about a summer program in classics being offered at Oxford. "It would look great on my college applications," he said. "Not only that, but the flights from Italy to England are cheap right now." I knew exactly what my champion rationalizer was doing. Rather than feel sad about having to say goodbye to friends and face the prospect of coming home to attend his tenth and final year of summer camp, he had jumped on his computer to trawl around the Internet in search of another adventure.

Unfortunately, Sevens have so much trouble remaining in the present moment they never fully enjoy the adventures they're having because they're already thinking and planning the next one.

SEVENS AS CHILDREN

Sevens often describe childhoods filled with tree swings, lazy summer afternoons spent fishing with Uncle Henry, winter days building snow forts and going to sleep-away camp. Seriously? No one gets off this easy.

If you succeed at getting Sevens to open up about their childhood, they will describe times when they were made to feel overwhelmed or abandoned and without support—the night Mom and Dad sat them down to announce they were splitting up, their brother contracting a lifelong serious illness that sucked Mom's attention away from them for years, the last-minute move that happened so quickly they barely had time to say goodbye to their friends, or the loss of someone whose death felt more like a desertion.

In their developmental years, Sevens heard the wounding message, "You're on your own. No one's here to support or take care of you." In response Sevens said, "I'll do it if no one else will." But whereas Fives dealt with this same crisis by reducing their need to depend on anyone and Sixes solved it by attempting to anticipate every possible disaster, young Sevens' strategy involved creating a pain-free Neverland in their mind where they could hide out and think happy thoughts until their pain dissolved.

Regardless of the underlying factors, as kids Sevens adopt a strategy of going up into their heads to plan adventures, entertain captivating ideas and imagine a life where the sky's the limit to diffuse scary emotions they fear will overwhelm them. These kids are not merely entertained by Peter Pan; they are the ones who, like Peter, truly believe in magic. They live in imaginary scenes in their rooms, their backyards and the back seat of the car. They are happy to play with others and content when they are alone.

Curiosity defines Sevens, which is part of the gift they are to themselves and to the world. But boundless curiosity is also part of the problem. Rules are necessary, but Seven kids find them insufferably

limiting. The grass is always greener just beyond the fence line. When they are restrained by limits of some kind, they retreat into their heads, where they rely on their imagination to provide all the entertainment they need until the restrictions are lifted.

Seven children are not achievement-oriented so much as experience-oriented. They like the fun part of Boy Scouts but aren't terribly interested in earning badges or advancing toward a goal. That's not to say they're lazy—far from it. Sevens are always on the go: they're the kids who want to stay longer and play longer. Limitless energy is available day after day in their world, and they never seem to want to stop.

Emotionally, young Sevens are already learning the art of denying negative feelings. For these children, feeling good instead of bad seems to be a choice, so they are confused by sadness in others. They move away from the negative and toward whatever is positive, even if that means reframing their experiences to make for a happier narrative. Sevens learn to move away from fear and pain early in childhood, and they carry that strategy into adulthood.

SEVENS IN RELATIONSHIPS

There's never a dull moment with Sevens. More than any other type, they need spontaneity. They are either planning and talking about their next escapade or asking you to join them on one. Whether it's a night of exotic fare at a new ethnic restaurant, a day of naked sky-diving, a lecture on cubist art at the museum, an evening of opera or a last-minute road trip, Sevens are the first to yell "Shotgun!" and race you to the car. If you're not ready and raring to go somewhere at a moment's notice, your relationship with a Seven probably won't last.

Sevens want nothing to do with confining relationships. They're classic commitment phobes. To Sevens, "stuck" and "commitment" look and feel like the same thing. As Helen Palmer observes, because they treasure their independence Sevens have to be made to believe

a relational commitment is their idea rather than something you imposed on them. Over the long term, some of them have a hard time sticking to a partner through thick and thin.

If you are or have ever been in a committed relationship with a Seven, you know what wonderful companions they are. Because their talk style is *storytelling*, they can keep a group on the edge of their seats while they excitedly act out a story of something that happened to them. They're always interested in your inner life. They'll want to know your life story and draw you into their exciting world. At times, however, the Seven's fascination with your life is more a symptom of their gluttony than a sign of genuine interest. Regardless, your relationship with a Seven will have to keep evolving over time or they'll start looking for the fire exit.

Fear of the bad feelings that arise in conflict will trigger denial in a Seven. You might have to light your hair on fire before you get a Seven to face up to the fact that something's not working. Of course, the pivotal moment comes when Sevens can't stall having to decide about whether to make a long-term commitment to you or not.

For some Sevens, the end of a relationship can be very difficult. It's hard to outrun or repress the sadness associated with a breakup. But some Sevens and their friends have told me that they can walk away from relationships with hardly any negative feelings at all. This repression of emotions can make some Sevens appear callous or lacking in empathy.

Sevens always want to keep their options open. They're the people who when you ask them to join you for dinner on Friday night will say they'll get back to you. After all, what if someone asks them to do something more exciting between now and Friday?

It's not unusual to hear a Seven's friends say they have felt abandoned by them on more than one occasion. They tend to overcommit socially, since a Seven abhors a vacuum and an empty calendar threatens them with boredom. Sometimes, their well-established

relationships get last priority when Sevens rush off chasing new friends and exhilarating experiences.

People unknowingly rely on Sevens to bring their supply of infectious enthusiasm to every activity they do with them. We figured this out on a recent family trip to Italy. Every morning our family would meet over breakfast to plan the day's activities. One day in Florence, Aidan said he wanted to take a gondola ride on the Arno River, while the rest of us voted to make the famous climb to the top of the duomo, the city's main cathedral. Like all Sevens, Aidan will occasionally become ornery when others put the kibosh on his plans, but on this day he shrugged and agreed to go.

There are 463 very steep stairs to the top of the duomo. If Aidan had been his usual exuberant self, the ascent would have been a breeze. All the way up he would have been telling jokes or racing ahead and yelling back to us to hurry up. That day, however, Aidan was more oatmeal than ice cream. He wasn't acting sullen or exacting revenge on us. What we'd chosen to do had simply turned the dial settings that control the flame on his enthusiasm from its default setting of high down to medium low. Climbing the duomo without the benefit of Aidan's characteristic enthusiasm felt like climbing Everest without the benefit of oxygen.

My kids are well-versed in the Enneagram, so over dinner that night we talked about how much we as a family had come to depend on Aidan to infuse our activities with his ebullient spirit. We assured him he didn't need to play the role of the court jester for us anymore. But we had learned our lesson—if the next morning he had announced he wanted to straighten the Tower of Pisa we'd have agreed to help so long as he was pumped about it. We know now that there ain't no sunshine when he's gone.

Sevens would rather eat glass than suffer boredom. When it surfaces Sevens get hyperactive and overly talkative, their minds race faster than usual, and they become bad-tempered. I'm often reminded

of a friend who has two young boys who go off the deep end when they have nothing to do and begin racing circles around the house like Adderall-crazed racehorses. To interrupt the circuit he has to grab them, make them take ten deep breaths and repeat the phrase “Be here now.” Similarly, when adult Sevens begin frantically running around or flitting from one project to the next without finishing any, they need friends or partners to stop them and say “get present.”

Sevens are fascinated with other people’s lives, and they’re counter-intuitively attracted to people who have suffered. It’s as if they instinctively know these folks possess an emotional depth they yearn for but don’t know how to develop. It also may be they don’t want to face the fact that suffering is the only point of entry into a deeper life.

To be clear, Sevens can enter dark emotional spaces, but they can only stay there for so long before they have to escape. Many Sevens balk when you describe their need to avoid pain. “I’m always listening to melancholy movie soundtracks, spending time alone and thinking about my life,” they protest. It’s true; from time to time Sevens will choose to dip their feet in the waters of sadness, but it’s always on their own terms and under their control.

SEVENS AT WORK

Sevens would kill for the opportunity to take over Anthony Bourdain’s job as host of the cable food and travel show *Parts Unknown*. To jet the globe exploring new cultures, meeting fascinating people, eating strange meals, and never knowing what lies around the next corner—are you kidding? Gigs like that don’t come along very often, but Sevens need to find work in similarly fast-paced, creative environments that afford them independence, a variety of activities and flexibility.

Sevens are dreamers and initiators. Give them a dry-erase marker and a white board and step out of the way. Their ability to synthesize information from a wide range of subject areas, spot unseen patterns and connect the dots inside complex bodies of knowledge,

and notice where systems overlap make them prolific idea generators. Add to that Sevens' keen analytical skills and their capacity to envision an organization's preferred future, and you've got someone who will adrenalize teams and make an invaluable contribution to advancing the mission of any corporation.

Sevens are rock stars when it comes to working on short-term projects or getting start-up companies off the ground. Their optimism and creative juice and sprite energy move things along at a quick pace. Be forewarned, however: Sevens aren't managers or maintainers, so you'll need to find someone else to oversee the execution phase while you set the Seven loose on a new venture. Also, Sevens are marvelous team players. Friendly and popular, they bring variety and some much-needed spontaneity to the workplace.

Sevens don't like being told what to do, so working for a controlling leader who imposes too many limits on them rarely works out well. Sometimes they manipulate authority figures with charm and charisma, but this is not a tenable situation for the long term. Sevens work best under conditions that offer both firmness and flexibility. Yes, they need to be held accountable to keeping on track, but it's best to give talented Sevens a long leash, a multifaceted job description and encouragement to stay the course. Sevens can make great leaders as long as they don't have to carry the weight of too much responsibility. Sevens often have trouble with professional decision making. After all, saying yes to one thing means saying no to another, and that means reducing options.

WINGS

Sevens with a Six wing (7w6). These sevens are more settled than other Sevens. Fueled by the conscientiousness of the Six, they give both projects and people more time before moving on to the next thing. These Sevens are sensitive and a bit more anxious, but they successfully use charm to disarm. Once they commit to a relationship

they have a good chance of staying connected and working out challenges in it. These Sevens are dutiful and loyal to family and friends. They are funny, entertaining and accepting of others.

Sevens with an Eight wing (7w8). The 7w8s are competitive, bold and aggressive. Reflecting the Eight's characteristic bravado, they are persuasive and assertive in relation to their ideas and agendas, and they usually get their way. Still, they are playful, and having a good time is more important to them than gaining power. These Sevens are easily bored, so they often start things they don't finish. They enjoy being in relationships as long as they can contribute to the happiness of their partner. Living inside an unhappy relationship is very frustrating for these Sevens, and yet endings are devastating.

STRESS AND SECURITY

Stress. When they're under stress, Sevens can adopt the unhealthy and perfectionistic behaviors of Ones. They become pessimistic, judgmental and argumentative. They start blaming others for their problems and lapse into black-and-white thinking.

Security. When Sevens feel secure they can start to behave like healthy Fives. Here they stop consuming and start contributing, are more comfortable with silence and solitude, become more serious, and begin to think about the meaning and purpose of their lives. Sevens on the positive side of One explore things on a much deeper level than other Sevens and are able to name and face their fears. Sevens connected to the positive side of Five can experience satisfaction in the truest sense of the word.

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

What would we do without Sevens? They bring so much joie de vivre to our lives! Who else can awaken our childlike wonder, rescue us from taking ourselves too seriously or help us appreciate the miracle of life quite like Sevens can?

But here's a hard truth: pain is unavoidable. On the road to spiritual transformation, Sevens have to learn how to embrace and steward their suffering rather than run from it.

As Michel de Montaigne once said, "He who fears he shall suffer already suffers what he fears." In other words, Sevens' strategies for avoiding pain create more suffering for them. Until they learn this Sevens are like addicts who will have to keep upping the dosage of fascinating ideas, novel experiences and self-generated pleasant feelings to repress the ones they want to keep outside their conscious awareness. It's time for Sevens to stop consuming and start contributing. True happiness and satisfaction can't be taken by force or manufactured whenever we need them; they are the result of living a focused and productive life that gives something back to the world. As Thomas Merton wrote, "In a world of tension and breakdown it is necessary for there to be those who seek to integrate their inner lives not by avoiding anguish and running away from problems, but by facing them in their naked reality and in their ordinariness."

The healing message Sevens need to hear and believe is *God will take care of you*. I know, easier said than done. It will take courage, determination, honesty, the help of a counselor or a spiritual director, and understanding friends to help Sevens confront painful memories and to encourage them to stay with afflictive feelings as they arise in the present moment. If Sevens cooperate with the process, they'll grow a deep heart and become a truly integrated person.

TEN PATHS TO TRANSFORMATION FOR SEVENS

1. Practice restraint and moderation. Get off the treadmill that tells you more is always better.
2. You suffer from "monkey mind." Develop a daily practice of meditation to free yourself from your tendency to jump from one idea, topic or project to the next.

3. Develop and practice the spiritual discipline of solitude on a regular basis.
4. Unflinchingly reflect on the past and make a list of the people who have hurt you or whom you have hurt; then forgive them and yourself. Make amends where necessary.
5. Give yourself a pat on the back whenever you allow yourself to feel negative emotions like anxiety, sadness, frustration, envy or disappointment without letting yourself run away to escape them. It's a sign you're starting to grow up!
6. Bring yourself back to the present moment whenever you begin fantasizing about the future or making too many plans for it.
7. Exercise daily to burn off excess energy.
8. You don't like being told you have potential because it means you'll feel pressure to buckle down and commit to cultivating a specific talent, which will inevitably limit your options. But you do have potential, so what career or life path would you like to commit yourself to for the long haul? Take concrete steps to make good on the gifts God has given you.
9. Get a journal and record your answers to questions like "What does my life mean? What memories or feelings am I running from? Where's the depth I yearn to have that will complement my intelligence?" Don't abandon this exercise until it's finished.
10. Make a commitment that when a friend or partner is hurting, you will try to simply be present for them while they are in pain without trying to artificially cheer them up.

SO NOW WHAT?

THE BEGINNING OF LOVE

The beginning of love is the will to let those we love be perfectly themselves, the resolution not to twist them to fit our own image. If in loving them we do not love what they are, but only their potential likeness to ourselves, then we do not love them: we only love the reflection of ourselves we find in them.

THOMAS MERTON

Suzanne's friend Rebecca is a nurse who works with children with profound visual impairment. As part of her job, she leads support groups for parents whose kids have just received a diagnosis. These parents, mostly young mothers, are confused, hurt and sometimes angry, and Rebecca provides guidance about navigating challenges they never suspected life would visit on them.

Apart from the practical advice, the most invaluable part of the workshops comes when Rebecca hands the parents eyeglasses that correlate to each child's specific disability. Almost always, the parents burst into tears. "I had no idea that this is the way my child sees the world," they tell her. Once they have the experience of observing through their children's eyes, they never experience the

world in quite the same way again. They may still be angry about the diagnosis, but they're not frustrated with their child, because even a brief exposure to the reality of how hard life is for these kids inspires in their parents only compassion.

This is the gift of the Enneagram. Sometimes people talk about the Enneagram as a tool that reveals the lens through which people see the world. When you realize that your Loyalist Six husband views it as a place filled with danger and uncertainty, and he in turn understands that when you get up in the morning you as a Performer Three feel an urgent need to compete and excel at everything you do, it's amazing how much more compassion you can have for each other. Everything isn't so personal anymore. You understand that your loved one's behavior is born out of a singular biography, a particular wound, a fractured vision of life.

Now that you understand the basics of the Enneagram, Suzanne and I hope two things happen for you. The first is simply that it sparks greater compassion for others and for yourself.

"Compassion is a verb."

THICH NHAT HANH

If we all could have nine pairs of Enneagram glasses and swap them, we could be moved to extend infinitely more grace and understanding to one another. Such compassion is the foundation of relationships. It changes everything.

The Enneagram shows us that we can't change the way other people see, but we can try to experience the world through their eyes and help them change what they *do* with what they see. I like the way Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh explains this. "When our hearts are small, our understanding and compassion are limited, and we suffer. We can't accept or tolerate others and their shortcomings, and we demand that they change," he says. "But when our hearts expand, these same things don't make us suffer anymore. We have a lot of understanding and compassion

and can embrace others. We accept others as they are, and then they have a chance to transform.”

Ponder that last line for a moment. It’s when we stop trying to change people and simply love them that they actually have a shot at transformation. The Enneagram is a tool that awakens our compassion for people just as they are, not the people we wish they would become so our lives would become easier.

After reading this book, we hope you feel stirred to widen the circle of compassion to include more and more people around you—even yourself. I said earlier in the book that I long for people to know that God beholds us with the same soft gaze the adoring mother beholds her sleeping infant with. If we could look at ourselves with that same quality of affection, how much healing could take place in our souls?

This idea of self-compassion raises the other issue we want you to take away from this book: every number on the Enneagram teaches us something about the nature and character of the God who made us. Inside each number is a hidden gift that reveals something about God’s heart. So when you are tempted to prosecute yourself for the flaws in your own character, remember that each type is at its core a signpost pointing us to travel toward and embrace an aspect of God’s character that we need.

Ones show us God’s perfection and his desire to restore the world to its original goodness, while Twos witness to God’s unstoppable, selfless giving. Threes remind us about God’s glory, and Fours about the creativity and pathos of God. Fives show God’s omniscience, Sixes God’s steadfast love and loyalty, and Sevens God’s childlike joy and delight in creation. Eights mirror God’s power and intensity, while Nines reflect God’s love of peace and desire for union with his children.

The problems arise when we exaggerate these characteristics, when we grab hold of a single trait and turn it into an ultimate value

or an idol. When we privilege one of these nine characteristics above all else, that's when it becomes grotesque and unrecognizable or—dare I say—sinful.

Ones' passion to improve the world goes bad when they start to believe that in order to be loved they have to be perfect and not make mistakes. Twos' self-donating love devolves into an unhealthy codependence. Threes take their love of glory and disfigure it into a narcissistic need for constant praise. Fours descend into self-absorption as they give free rein to their overcharged feelings, while Fives have nearly the opposite problem, withdrawing into their minds and cutting themselves off from the unavoidable risks intrinsic to all human relationships. Sixes are unable to trust in a future in which God is already waiting for them, and Sevens flee the pain that deepens the soul in favor of a party that only distracts it. Eights' need to be right and to challenge others can deteriorate into intimidating the weak, and Nines' desire to avoid conflict at all costs means that they are all too willing to accept peace at any price.

"For me to be a saint means to be myself."

THOMAS MERTON

Behind each of these distortions is a misguided strategy to grab for happiness and love the way Adam and Eve overreached and grabbed for fruit. We are trying to steal that which can only be received as a gift from God.

Part of the Enneagram's goal is to help us relax our paralytic grip on that one dimension of God's character so we can open our hands to receive the other characteristics of God our clenched fists will not allow. A One may never fully stop reaching for perfection, but he can open his hands to receive the gifts other numbers hold. A Six is not going to entirely stop being anxious, but she can begin to perceive and cultivate the gifts that come with a Seven's *joie de vivre* or an Eight's assertiveness, counterbalancing her own anxiety.

What we all want to do is seek health within our own number and respect and recognize that we have access to all the gifts of these other numbers. What we're after is *integritas*, or wholeness.

In his landmark work *New Seeds of Contemplation* the Catholic monk Thomas Merton wrote, "For me to be a saint means to be myself. Therefore the problem of sanctity and salvation is in fact the problem of finding out who I am and of discovering my true self."

Though it has taken me twenty years to grasp the meaning of Merton's insight, I understand it now. We most delight and reflect the glory of God when we discover and reclaim our God-given identity, with which we lost connection shortly after our arrival in this fallen world.

We owe it to the God who created us, to ourselves, to the people we love and to all with whom we share this troubled planet to become "saints." How else can we run and complete the errand on which God sent us here?

And now allow us the joy of passing on to you John O'Donohue's Blessing for Solitude, which Br. Dave prayed over me as I embarked on my Enneagram journey of self-discovery and self-knowledge.

May you recognize in your life the presence, power, and light of your soul.

May you realize that you are never alone, that your soul in its brightness and belonging connects you intimately with the rhythm of the universe.

May you have respect for your individuality and difference.

May you realize that the shape of your soul is unique, that you have a special destiny here, that behind the façade of your life there is something beautiful and eternal happening.

May you learn to see your self with the same delight, pride, and expectation with which God sees you in every moment.

Amen. Let it be so.

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