

Using the Enneagram as an Aid in Creating Fictional Characters

The enneagram is a system of classifying personality types into nine categories. Many people like the enneagram because it is a system that provides plausible-sounding explanations for human behavior. The enneagram simplifies and organizes the details of people's many characteristics and preferences and offers the illusion of reality, the illusion of presenting people as they are. Thus it can be a useful tool for fiction writers, whose job is not to present reality but the illusion of reality.

If you get stuck in a story because you are not sure how a character would behave or you are not sure how the plot will unfold, maybe considering enneagram types will get you going. Examine the 9 personality types in the enneagram, identify your character as one type, then apply those characteristics to the character in your story. These 9 types, in a brief sketch, are:

- One, the Achiever — an intense, hard working, focused perfectionist.
- Two, the Helper — an empathetic, service-oriented, flattering rescuer.
- Three, the Succeeder — an image-oriented, accomplished, efficient performer.
- Four, the Individualist — a self-absorbed, sensitive, creative overanalyzer.
- Five, the Observer — a noncommittal, deliberate, reflective loner.
- Six, the Guardian — a responsible, opinionated, community- oriented moralist.
- Seven, the Dreamer — an analytical, entertaining, self-indulgent fantasizer.
- Eight, the Confronter — a competitive, blunt, passionate maneuverer.
- Nine, the Preservationist — a secretive, unemotional, affable problem solver for others.

Further information on the 9 types:

1. The Perfectionist

(also called The Achiever): Idealistic, principled, orderly and conscientious people. Motivated by their need to be right and to be balanced, they are fearful of being bad or defective.

World View: The world is an imperfect place. I work toward improvement.

Basic Desire: to be right

Basic Fear: of being condemned

strong standards, responsible, honest, ethical, quality-oriented

Wants: Perfection

Needs: Growth

Vice: Anger

Virtue: Serenity

Leadership Style: fair, ethical, methodical, follows standards and procedures

ONE

I am a highly ethical person who believes that there is such a thing as right and wrong. I can be critical of others particularly because I am quality-oriented, and find myself frustrated at times because others don't hold the same standards that I do. I am much more critical of myself than I

am of others. I tend to procrastinate at times. I have a keen eye for detecting what's wrong or where the errors are. I find myself overworking at times in an effort to produce a perfect product. I put a lot of energy into what I do.

2. The Helper

Caring, generous, warm and attentive people. Motivated by their need to be needed and loved, they are fearful of not being worthy of being loved.

World View: People depend on my help. I am needed.

Basic Desire: to be loved

Basic Fear: of being unloved

cheery, positive, relational, people/customer-oriented

Wants: Service

Needs: Acceptance

Vice: Pride

Virtue: Humility

Leadership Style: supportive, mentoring, encouraging, warm, friendly

TWO

I would describe myself as a helpful person. I am a good example of a people-person. I have often been a mentor to others and sincerely enjoy bringing out the best in others. I have many personal and business contacts and would describe myself as an extrovert. I have high energy, and am pretty upbeat and optimistic for the most part. I can sense what others may need before they do.

3. The Achiever

Self-confident, adaptable, energetic and outgoing people. Motivated by their need to succeed and be the center of attention, they are fearful of failure and of being worthless.

World View: The world values a champion. Avoid failure at all costs.

Basic Desire: to be admired

Basic Fear: of being rejected

competitive, efficient, goal, task, success-oriented, just do it

Wants: Achievement

Needs: Dependence

Vice: Deceit

Virtue: Truth

Leadership Style: motivational, social task and results-oriented

THREE

I would describe myself as an achiever. I like efficiency, and am always looking for better and more efficient ways of getting things done. Daily, I have long to do lists which I apply a tremendous amount of energy in completing. I genuinely enjoy going after what has to be accomplished - I rarely procrastinate. I often rise to positions of leadership, and I enjoy the limelight. I feel comfortable in front of groups, and I can usually tell how they are responding to

me.

4. The Artist

(also called The Individualist): Intuitive, creative, sensitive and expressively warm people.

Motivated by their need to be special and be understood, they are fearful of being misunderstood.

World View: Something's missing. Others have it. I'm different from them because I don't.

Basic Desire: to understand self

Basic Fear: of being defective

unique, intuitive, creative, aesthetic, get to the heart of the matter

Wants: Excellence

Needs: Reality

Vice: Envy

Virtue: Equanimity

Leadership Style: creative, intuitive, focusing on each persons uniqueness

FOUR

I would describe myself as an intensely idealistic person, particularly when it comes to what I think is possible in the realm of how humans could be with one another. I have a lot of energy. I would describe myself as a reflective, sensitive and creative person. I am deeply moved by what is beautiful to me. I am artistic; full of unrealized potential. Love and beauty interest me. I am emotionally intense and can often be melancholic.

5. The Observer

Analytical, perceptive, reflective and self-contained people. Motivated by their need to know and understand, they are fearful of meaninglessness and of being considered incapable.

World View: The world is invasive and confusing. I need privacy to think.

Basic Desire: to understand the world

Basic Fear: of being overwhelmed by the world

detached, private, non-intrusive, knowledgeable, information-oriented

Wants: Knowledge

Needs: Involvement

Vice: Avarice

Virtue: Detachment

Leadership Style: reflective, systematic, ideas assembled into vision

FIVE

I would describe myself as a quiet, analytic person who is much more of a thinking type in contrast to a feeling type. I am very private, and make great use of my alone/private time. I often rehash my experiences after the fact and, if its been an enjoyable experience, I can savor it long after the event has gone by. I would not describe myself as spontaneous, although in any given moment I can often see the humor in a situation. I'm told that I have a dry wit. I spend lots of time researching the subject matters that are of interest to me. I have an ability to concentrate deeply and a keen sense of observation.

6. The Supporter

(also called The Guardian): Loyal, dutiful, hospitable and caring people. Motivated by their need for security and belonging, they are fearful of making mistakes and of not being able to survive on their own.

World View: The world is a threatening place. I need to look to authority, but I question it.

Basic Desire: to be secure

Basic Fear: of being abandoned

logical, good contingency planner, questioning minds, group oriented

Wants: Security

Needs: Faith

Vice: Fear

Virtue: Courage

Leadership Style: team-directed, group-oriented, delegates responsibility

SIX

I would describe myself as a cautious person - someone who is often prepared ahead of time. My mind tends to think readily of contingency plans and worst-case scenarios. My way of making decisions is quite logical, but I can still make a decision and have my doubts about whether it was the right thing to do. I like developing mastery, have many interests, and enjoy being part of a team. I consider myself quite loyal when I can trust someone, and often test people and situations to assess the character and trustworthiness of someone. I can be cause-oriented and have been a champion of the underdog on more than one occasion.

7. The Optimist

(also called The Dreamer and The Enthusiast): Fun-loving, gregarious, impulsive and charming people with many irons in the fire. Motivated by their need to be happy, they are fearful of pain and deprivation.

World View: The world is full of opportunity and options. I look forward to the future.

Basic Desire: to be happy

Basic Fear: of being deprived

inspirational, fun-loving, optimistic, novel, imaginative, upbeat

Wants: Happiness

Needs: Balance

Vice: Gluttony

Virtue: Temperance

Leadership Style: inspirational, positive, cheerful, creative ideas

SEVEN

I would describe myself as a high-energy, optimistic kind of person. I genuinely enjoy many things and think life is wonderful and there are bountiful experiences to be had. I have a terrific imagination. At times, planning is almost as much fun as having an experience. I'm very future-oriented. I believe in possibility. I don't see much value in dwelling on anything negative. I

sometimes have difficulty committing to ideas or projects because I like keeping things somewhat open-ended. Life is to be enjoyed.

8. The Boss

(also called The Confronter and The Leader): Resourceful, self-confident, energetic and earthy people. Motivated by their need to be in control, they are fearful of being vulnerable and at the mercy of others.

World View: The world is an unjust place. I am strong and I defend the innocent.

Basic Desire: to be self-reliant

Basic Fear: of submitting to others

direct, impulsive, fearless, in charge, confrontational, control oriented

Wants: Control

Needs: Tenderness

Vice: Lust

Virtue: Simplicity

Leadership Style: powerful, confident, persuasive, confrontational

EIGHT

I am a can do person. I usually know what it will take to accomplish a job, and I do not shy away from doing what is needed. I can get very angry, but usually when I do it blows over right away. I don't mind a good fight. I lose respect for people who don't stand up for what they believe in. I can be intolerant of stupidity. Once I lose respect for someone, its over I can easily write them off. I can be generous. I like being in control. I like directness I cant stand indirectness or indecisiveness. I don't shy away from opportunity.

9. The Mediator

(also called The Peacemaker and The Preservationist): Calm, laid-back, unpretentious and reassuring people. Motivated by their need to be calm and at peace, they are fearful of conflict, separation from others and losing peace of mind.

World View: My efforts won't matter to the world. It's best to keep the peace.

Basic Desire: to find union and peace

Basic Fear: of separation

conflict avoidant, accepting of people and viewpoints, cant say no

Wants: Peace

Needs: Action

Vice: Sloth

Virtue: Diligence

Leadership Style: collaborative, mediating differences well, accommodating

NINE

I can relate well to bits and pieces of virtually every statement I've read so far. People would describe me as laid back. I enjoy things being peaceful and calm. I don't like conflict, and I avoid it, although I am very good at being a mediator for other peoples conflicts and differences. Part of

that is due to the fact that I can genuinely see a situation from all perspectives. I see myself as a helpful person for virtually anyone who needs it - at times I've gotten distracted by assisting others and losing my own agenda. I have a great variety of interests.

There's more to each of the 9 types; given here are only brief sketches. Also, there is the concept of 'wings'--a person of any type can share secondary characteristics with those on the types on either side. This is good news since it expands ways writers can use the enneagram. It is also bad news because as the system becomes too complex, it loses its usefulness as a basis for creating fictional characters.