



ENNEAGRAM TYPE THREE

Key Traits

Other-Directedness. The Three personality is shaped around playing to an audience and becoming what others value.

Achievement Orientation. Threes work hard to set and reach goals based on social or cultural conceptions of what makes a person successful.

Focus on Success. Threes have a keen eye for what constitutes as success and have the willingness and drive to do what they need to do to achieve it.

Competitiveness. Threes can be ruthless and competitive, pragmatic, and specialize in targeting specific achievements and doing what it takes to make them happen, playing to win.

Image Manipulation. Threes are so good at manipulating their image to gain the admiration of their audience, it can be hard for Threes to see more deeply into themselves beyond their image and achievements. In doing this, they deceive themselves, creating a false pretense in place of a true self that might fail or be judged as inadequate.

OVERVIEW

Type Three represents the archetype of the person who seeks to create an image of value and success and to gain the admiration of others, through active efforts in both work and appearance. This drive provides defensive protection in a world that rewards achievement and attractiveness and emphasizes what things look like on the outside. This archetype also exists as Jung's concept of the "persona," the individual's "system of adaptation to, or the manner in which he assumes in dealing with, the world." Taken from the term used to describe the mask worn by an actor, the persona is our conscious outer social face, the role we play, or the image we show to others "to give form to our outward sense of self." The persona takes its form and function from external, collective reality.

Type Threes are the prototype for the way in which we all adopt a personality as an external public face in order to survive in the world and mediate between the inner self and the social environment. It is the model for the desire we all have to "put on a good face" or wear a social mask as a means of both protection and a marketing effort. This archetypal stance prioritizes looking good and matching social ideals of value and status as a way of feeling accepted and earning approval.

This effort also necessarily involves inhibiting or covering over aspects of the “real self” that don’t fit with the constructed social mask. Type Threes tend to lose contact with the deeper emotions they naturally have that might interfere with the design of the image they create for others and thus may become overidentified with their persona and under-identified with who they really are.

Type Three individuals work very hard and know how to make a good impression. They are extremely competent and effective doers who get a lot done and make it look easy (even though it requires much effort). Threes are skilled at using goals to motivate their efforts and are resourceful and productive in achieving those goals. They know how to present themselves to others and fit the image of whatever context they might be in. Their specific “superpower” is their ability to make things happen by finding the most direct path to their goal, removing obstacles that might get in the way—and looking good the whole time. They know how to assure their own success by working diligently, completing the tasks necessary to reach their goal, and exuding an image of success and competence.

As with all the archetypal personalities, however, Type Threes’ gifts and strengths also represent their “fatal flaw” or “Achilles heel:” they exhaust themselves by working too hard, and they lose sight of who they really are apart from the persona they’ve adopted to achieve their goals. And they can be hard-hearted and insensitive to others in their race to the finish line. However, when they can learn to balance their focus on work and achievement with a focus on the needs and feelings of their true self, they can blend their skill at actualizing goals with the creativity and depth of who they are, producing positive results that can enhance life for themselves and others.



FOCUS OF ATTENTION

Threes focus attention on tasks and goals to create an image of success in the eyes of others. Threes identify with their work, believing they are what they do, and lose touch with who they really are.

THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

For a Three, thinking centers on “doing” —on accomplishing tasks and goals. Though a heart type, Threes (unconsciously) avoid their feelings because getting caught up in emotion prevents them from getting things done. When they slow down enough for emotions to surface, they may feel a sense of sadness or anxiety related to being recognized for what they do and not for who they are. Threes tend to express impatient anger if someone or something gets between them and their goal.

BEHAVIOR PATTERNS

Threes tend to be fast-paced workaholics. They find it very difficult to slow down and just “be.” They can be extremely productive and effective because of their laser-like focus on getting things done and reaching their goals.

BLIND SPOTS

- their own and others’ feelings,
- their “real self” as different from image or work identity,
- the value of slowing down,
- their impatience gets in the way of connecting authentically to others,
- importance of emotions,
- and the potential value of failure.

WHEN BLIND SPOTS ARE INTEGRATED

- use emotions as guidance,
- base decisions and goals around who they really are as opposed to their image,
- allow more time to think things through,
- relate to others before moving forward on tasks,
- balance relationship and work goals,
- and embrace failures as learning experiences.



THE PASSION IS SELF-DECEIT

Self-deceit is the passion that drives Type Three. In its expression as the core emotional motivation of this type, self-deceit is an unconscious tendency to shapeshift to present themselves in a way others will approve of and admire. This type creates and maintains an ideal image or persona, and then identifies with (or sees themselves as) that persona.

THE VIRTUE IS VERACITY

Veracity is the virtue that provides an antidote to the Type Three passion of self-deceit. For this type, veracity involves being more fully conscious of the deception implicit in their personality structure. It means recognizing their false selves as false and learning not to find their identity in what others want them to be or how they would like to appear to others.

THE PATH FROM SELF-DECEIT TO VERACITY

The Type Three paradox is grounded in the polarity between the passion of self-deceit and the virtue of veracity. By recognizing the need they have to be viewed positively at all costs and to earn the admiration of others, this type begins to see their self-deceit in action. If you identify with this type, you must examine all the ways you deceive yourself. By learning to tell the difference between your false self (your ideal image) and your true self, you move from the conviction that you are what you do, to realizing from the inside who you truly are. As you become aware of your own self-deceit, you begin to know and state what you really want and how you really feel—first to yourself and then to others.



THE TYPE THREE SUBTYPES

SELF-PRESERVATION THREE: SECURITY

The countertype

Thee Self-Preservation Three has a sense of vanity for having no vanity. This Three also wants to be admired by others but avoids openly seeking recognition. Not just satisfied with looking good, the SP three strives to be good. They are determined to be a good person—to match the perfect model of how a person should be. Being the perfect model of quality implies virtue, and virtue implies a lack of vanity. SP Threes seek a sense of security through being good, working hard, and being effective and productive.

SOCIAL THREE: PRESTIGE

Social Threes focus on achievement in the service of looking good and getting the job done. They act out vanity through their desire to be seen and have in-fluence with people. They enjoy being on stage in the spotlight. Social Threes know how to climb the social ladder and achieve success. These are the most competitive and most aggressive of the Threes. They have a driving need to look good and possess a corporate or sales mentality.

SEXUAL THREE: CHARISMA

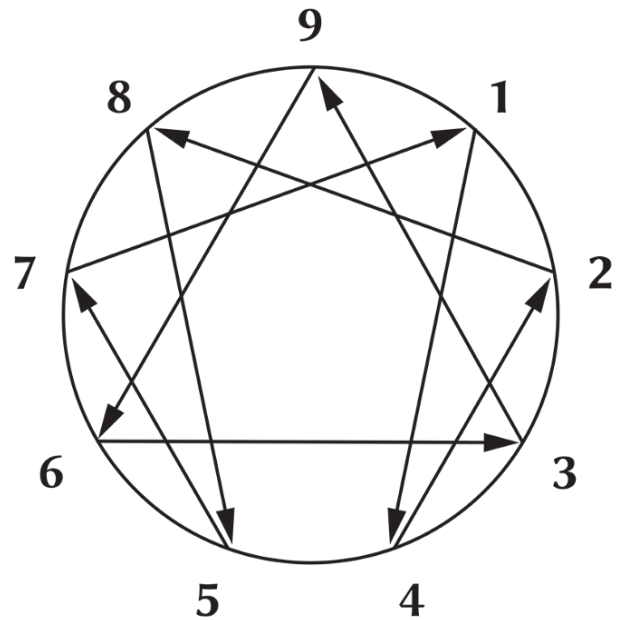
Sexual Threes focus on achievement in terms of personal attractiveness and supporting others. In this Three, vanity is not denied (as in the SP Three) nor embraced (as in the Social Three), but is somewhere in between: it's employed in the service of creating an attractive image and promoting important others. These threes have a harder time talking about themselves and often put the focus on others they want to promote. They put a lot of energy into pleasing others and they have a family/team mentality.



GROWTH PATH

For Type Three, the key to embracing their true selves lies in gradually learning to know and like their authentic selves more than their egoic selves. This happens as they strengthen their sense of who they are without needing to take on a specific role or persona. When they become conscious of their tendency to deceive themselves and learn to catch themselves in the act of shape-shifting, they learn that their true selves can be available for love and connection while their false selves cannot.

When Type Threes take the journey of self-development, they can bring the richness of who they are to the world in ways they can't even imagine. They realize that true success lies in their ability to know who they truly are and begin to live from a grounded sense of being in touch with their depths. And when they do this, they not only open the door to truly loving themselves, they make themselves available to be deeply loved by others for who they really are.



WINGS AND ARROWS

In using the Enneagram to further growth, as it is intended, the first steps involve observing yourself to make the patterns and habits associated with your main, or “core,” type more conscious. After you have done this for a while, you can create further growth shifts by using the wings and arrows as pathways for growth.

The Enneagram’s arrow lines point in the direction of each type’s specific path of psychological and spiritual growth and away from important characteristics and experiences we had to repress in childhood (but periodically return to for a sense of security). These connection points indicated by the Enneagram diagram help us see how we can aim to embody the higher aspects of these two specific points to further our inner journey: the point ahead of our core point represents key challenges we need to master to become more whole and the point behind our core type along the arrow lines represent issues from the past that we need to re-integrate such that we can reclaim what we disowned in childhood to ground and support our forward movement along the path indicated by the arrows.



MOVING BACK TO TYPE 6

The path of growth for Type Threes calls for them to reclaim their ability to access their fears as a way of slowing down to more carefully consider the path to their goal. In response to a lack of protection early on, Threes often became doers, even if this required them to bury their anxieties as a way of finding security. Young Threes may have felt like they didn't have the luxury of feeling their fear, so they coped by getting active to accomplish things. A conscious return to Six can be a way for them to allow themselves to get in touch with the fears and concerns that can force them to slow their pace in helpful ways. Pausing to reflect on potential threats and problems gives them more space to pay attention to their feelings and intuitions. For these reasons, "moving back to Six" can be a healthy way for Threes to make space for thinking through more aspects of their plans than they usually leave time for.

Navigated consciously, a Three can use the move to Six to re-establish a healthy balance between moving forward and pausing for reflection. They can consciously insert a healthy round of questioning before moving ahead so quickly, and they can make sure to assess what is happening at a deeper level than they normally do. Focusing on what they are afraid of can be a way for Threes to tap into a deeper emotional level within themselves, which can also be a way to highlight their need to allow for support from others. Threes can relax more if they don't always need to be the one in control and can call on the high side of Six to have more faith in others, allowing someone else to take the lead in solving problems and providing protection. Questioning and self-doubt can be good for Threes in that it opens up a channel to the vulnerability they often hide behind an image of self-confidence. All of these efforts to increase awareness of the move to Six can provide Threes with a grounding in a deeper sense of themselves that will better equip them in their forward progress toward the high side of Type Nine.



MOVING AHEAD TO TYPE 9

The Inner Flow growth path for Type Threes brings them into direct contact with the challenges embodied in Type Nine: allowing for being without doing, prioritizing others and not just goals and tasks, and being connected to people without losing yourself. Threes can find the move to Nine difficult, and they often go there unconsciously in times of stress when they have worked themselves to the point of collapse. But considered consciously, Threes can use the Nine-Point as a path of growth by learning to be more in their bodies, to include different points of view when completing a task, and to slow down and broaden their focus of attention. Nines are particularly good at “going with the flow,” and Threes are not usually happy unless they are directing the flow and controlling progress toward a goal. Threes can use the Nine-Point to consciously let go of their need to control things—to have things move forward at a certain pace in a certain way—and allow themselves to follow others more.

The Three working consciously in this way can make ready use of the tools healthy Type Nines use: a reliance on inclusion and consensus as important factors in getting the job done well, an ability to follow others’ lead and not always have to be the center of attention, and a sense of “gut knowing” as a way to direct their efforts. The ability of conscious Nines to take “right action” based on both deeply understanding others’ perspectives and taking their own gut knowing into account in directing forward movement can balance out the Three’s tendency to forge ahead and rush toward a goal without stopping to consider a wider range of opinions. The more passive stance of Type Nine can usefully counter the active approach usually taken by Threes. And Nines’ ability to relax and just be, helps Threes learn how to slow down the doing and risk being.

