



ENNEAGRAM TYPE FOUR

Key Traits

Inferior Self-Image: Fours believe that goodness exists outside of them, which means that they view themselves as lacking positive traits and qualities.

Focus on Suffering: This focus can function as a defense for Fours and can be an expression of their unique capacity to feel things deeply.

Aesthetic Sensibility: Fours have an affinity for artistic processes as a way of communicating emotional truth, and easily see the beauty inherent in things.

Emotional Sensitivity and Empathic Ability: Fours value emotional intensity and authenticity, they tend to feel deeply and find comfort in feelings like melancholy or sadness.

Push-Pull Pattern in Relationships: Fours tend to idealize their loved ones when they are far away and can push them away when they are closeby

OVERVIEW

Type Four represents the archetype of the person who experiences an inner sense of lack and a craving for that which is missing, and yet can't allow for the attainment of what might provide satisfaction. This archetype's drive is to focus on what is lacking as a step to regaining wholeness and connection but through an over-focus on the experience of a flawed self, they become convinced of an inner deficiency that prevents fulfillment. While this entails an understandable frustration with regard to deprivation, an overidentification with the frustrated, deprived state leads to an inability to take in that which would provide fulfillment.

Type Fours overidentify with those parts of ourselves we'd rather others don't see. Although Fours may also recast their sense of deficiency as being "special" or "unique" as a way of valuing themselves on a surface level, they identify with a deficient self more than an idealized self. Type Fours are thus the prototype for that part in all of us that feels dissatisfied with who we are. We all have the capacity to feel bad about what we see as our flaws and to grieve and long for what we see as lacking in our lives. We can all become depressed in the face of feeling inadequate when we don't fit the idealized image of what we believe we have to be to get the love we want. This archetype thus represents the tendency we all have to develop an "inferiority complex," which makes it difficult to feel good about ourselves and take in what is good from the outside.

The natural strengths of Type Fours include their large capacity for emotional sensitivity and depth, their ability to sense what is going on between people on the emotional level, their natural feel for aesthetics and creativity, and their idealistic and romantic sensibility. Relatively unafraid of intense feelings, Fours value the expression of authentic emotion and can support others with great care, respect, and sensitivity when they are experiencing painful emotions. Fours are highly empathic and can see the beauty and power in painful feelings that other types habitually avoid.

Fours' "superpower" is that they are naturally emotionally intuitive. Fours' regular contact with their own emotional terrain gives them a lot of comfort and strength in being with intense feelings and empowering others to feel and accept their emotions. Although it would be wrong to think that all Fours are artists or all artists are Fours, they do have an artistic impulse that enables them to see and respond to the poetry in life, and to highlight for others the way everyday experiences can be viewed and communicated in creative and even transcendent ways.

As with all the archetypal personalities, however, Type Fours' gifts and strengths also represent their "fatal flaw" or "Achilles heel:" they can overdo their focus on pain and suffering, sometimes as a way of avoiding a deeper or different kind of pain. While they have a gift for emotional sensitivity, they can become attached to their feelings in a way that can prevent them from thinking objectively or taking action. They can see what's missing so clearly that they may be blind to what is good or hopeful in a situation, often to their own detriment. However, when they can wake up to the ways in which they dwell in suffering or dramatize their emotions as a way of distracting themselves from their deeper need for love, they can express a special kind of wisdom that is informed by deep emotional truth.



FOCUS OF ATTENTION

Fours focus attention on their own feelings, the feelings of others, and interpersonal connection and disconnection. They feel a sense of deficiency about their own worth, so they seek idealized experiences of qualities they perceive as outside themselves.

THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

Fours value authentic expressions of a wide range of emotions. Their thought patterns center on what is missing in a given situation and on longing for whatever they perceive as ideal and somehow unavailable. They appreciate meaningful interactions rooted in real feelings and have a keen aesthetic sensibility based on the translation of emotional experience into artistic expression, but they tend to overidentify with feelings and dwell in melancholy (or anger).

BEHAVIOR PATTERNS

Fours can be reserved and withdrawn, or energetic and active, or both. They are emotionally intuitive, empathic, and intense. While specific behavior patterns vary according to subtype, Fours generally aren't afraid of conflict, will work tirelessly when they feel passionately connected to something, and can see what's missing and speak to it.

BLIND SPOTS

- what's going well
- own positive qualities and strength
- over-identification with emotions
- consequences of comparing self to others
- what gets ignored when focusing excessively on their internal world

WHEN BLIND SPOTS ARE INTEGRATED

- balance what is missing with what is present
- develop more confidence
- draw on the wisdom of their emotions, while being objective and practical
- balance their inner focus with consideration of those around them
- avoid being distracted by specific emotions



THE PASSION IS ENVY

Envy manifests as a painful sense of lack and a craving toward that which is felt lacking. For Fours, Envy grows out of an early sense of loss that leads to a perception that something good is outside the Four's experience—and that this something is necessary but missing because of an inner deficiency.

THE VIRTUE IS EQUANIMITY

Equanimity, understood as a state of emotional balance that allows you to rise above the ups and downs of emotional experience and see equal value in all people, feelings, and situations, helps this type grow beyond their need to feel extraordinary to have value.

THE PATH FROM ENVY TO EQUANIMITY

The Type 4 paradox arises from the polarity between the passion of envy and the virtue of equanimity. By recognizing their need to be special and unique while also feeling inferior, this type can come to understand the ways their envy operates and learn to rise above the pain of lack. As they make progress on their path to equanimity, they begin to experience a sense of inner calm, a greater capacity to modulate the ups and downs of their emotions and an acceptance of the truth that everyone is essentially equally worthy.



THE TYPE FOUR SUBTYPES

SELF-PRESERVATION FOUR: TENACITY

The countertype

The Self-Preservation Four is long-suffering. As the countertype of the Fours, SP Fours are stoic in the face of their inner pain and they don't share it with others as much as the other two Fours. This is a person who learns to tolerate pain and to do without as a way of earning love. Instead of dwelling in envy, SP Fours act out their envy by working hard to get what others have and they lack. More masochistic than melodramatic, these Fours demand a lot of themselves, have a strong need to endure, and have a passion for effort.

SOCIAL FOUR: SHAME

The Social Four suffers more, feels more shame, and is more sensitive than the other two Fours. Envy fuels a focus on shame and suffering as they employ a strategy of seducing others into meeting their needs through an intensification of pain and suffering. They experience a sense of comfort in feeling melancholy. Envy also manifests in lamenting too much, taking on the victim role, and focusing on a sense of their own inferiority. Social Fours don't compete with others as much as they compare themselves to others and find themselves lacking.

SEXUAL FOUR: COMPETITION

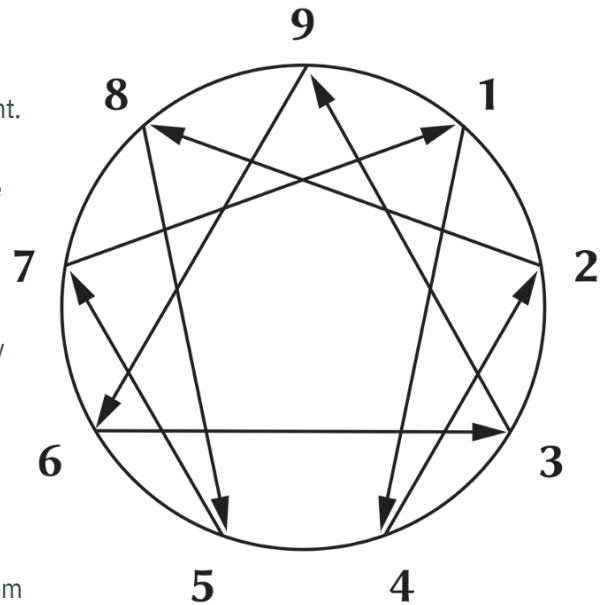
Sexual Fours make others suffer as an unconscious way of trying to rid themselves of painful feelings of deficiency. In denying their suffering and being more shameless than shameful, they express their needs more and can be demanding of others. In seeking to be the best, they express envy in its manifestation as competition. They express "an envy that wants," unconsciously turning their pain at inner lack into feelings of anger about not getting what they need from others.



GROWTH PATH

For Type Fours, the key to embracing their true selves lies in gradually shifting their focus from what they view as negative or missing and allowing themselves to see what's positive and present. For many people, this is difficult, as the ego tells us we are not enough, or we need to be more, or we aren't perfect enough, or we don't meet some arbitrary standard. But this type can only rise above their self-defeating habit of trying to escape to an idealized past or future by becoming conscious of their personality patterns and the ways they stay stuck in them. In fact, the only moment any of us can experience is the present. By being more present, 4s develop the ability to access their true selves and learn that all is well as it is.

When Type Fours courageously give up their defensive stance of proactively rejecting themselves in order to protect themselves from abandonment, they begin to integrate their "positive Shadow." They own their true goodness and accept themselves as they are. This leads them from a flawed sense of self to a realization that their inadequacy is an illusion—a strangely safe illusion, but a fantasy based on the fear of being hurt again. As they progress on their path, they come to embrace their own essential wholeness—and they become uniquely gifted in supporting others on that same journey from envy to equanimity.



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 1

The path of growth for Type Fours calls for them to reclaim their ability to use self-evaluation, self-discipline, and structure as ways to support themselves rather than as ways of devaluing and punishing themselves. As children, Fours may have had to downplay their natural ability to use their ideals and follow the rules as a way of taking action to feel good about themselves and be productive in the world. In response to early loss or deprivation, Fours more typically took refuge in a flawed self-image and an experience of longing for what might have been, which can pull their focus away from working hard to prove their worth. The strategy of trying to be good as a way of earning approval may not have worked if they had to cope with an overwhelming sense of loss or deep feelings of deficiency.

Fours tend to cope by attaching to a feeling of hopelessness or melancholy, to avoid being hopeful about things they believe might not happen. In doing this, they may have had to give up One attributes such as the active capacity to enact practical ideals and a belief in their ability to control what happens through hard work. They may not have been able to provide structure for themselves through routine and adherence to standards and rules because they had to focus on coping with a specific experience of loss or deprivation.

Fours can consciously draw on the strengths of the One Point, using them to gain the support they need in their growth toward the Two Point, by taking action to manifest their ideals. Being more perfectionistic—not by controlling or stirring emotions, but by actively improving themselves or their environment—can give Fours a sense of control and accomplishment.

Regular patterns and repetitive work can help a Four find peace and containment amidst a life in which they can get lost in the ups and downs of their shifting moods. By reincorporating their ability to work hard in support of improving themselves or others, Fours can take action and feel more powerful and confident, which can support their growth and development instead of holding them back in a search for something they lost in the past.



MOVING AHEAD TO TYPE 2

The Inner Flow growth path for Type Fours brings them into direct contact with the challenges embodied in Type Two: allowing for a balance between self-referencing and other-referencing, between meeting your own needs and meeting the needs of others, and between being your authentic self and adapting to other people. Under stress, Fours can get defensive when pressed toward the Two Point and act out the lower side of Two by giving compulsively in an effort to be liked, or giving up what they need in an attempt to buy others' love or acceptance. But when Fours can consciously manage the challenges embodied in the Two "stress-growth" opportunity, they can use the high side Two qualities to bring themselves out of their self-absorption, intense feelings, and isolation, find creative ways to express who they really are and open themselves up to connecting with others.

The Four working consciously in this way can make ready use of the tools that healthy Type Twos use: a sensitivity to the needs and preferences of others, a positive view of what's possible in relationship, and the conscious management of feelings and needs in light of the feelings and needs of others.

The Two stance of adapting to please others can help Fours learn to be more adaptable and supportive of others in a way that also enlarges their view of their own worth and value to others. Fours can get lost in their own interior emotional worlds, but they can temper this tendency in service of their growth by reaching out more to nurture others. Finding ways to provide support and understanding to other people can be a good way for Fours to balance out their over-focus on their inner experience of lack or on a particular mood or emotional reaction. Consciously embodying an attitude of service to others can highlight Fours' qualities of optimism, generosity, and cheerfulness—attributes that they might not always see and value in themselves. Through consciously balancing self-referencing with other-referencing, and the ability to dwell in darker feelings with the ability to be light, Fours can use the Two Point as a way to embody a more full and more whole sense of who they really are, and work against the self-deprecating tendency.

