



# ENNEAGRAM TYPE SEVEN

## Key Traits

**Self-Referencing:** In Type Sevens, the focus of attention is the Seven's own inner experience—their thoughts, preferences, desires, needs, and feelings.

**Positive Reframing/Optimism:** Habitually oriented to keeping their mood upbeat, and automatically attentive to “the bright side,” they are relentlessly optimistic; they easily reframe negatives into positives without much conscious effort.

**Hedonism:** In the Seven's focus on hedonism, the goal of a pleasure-filled life rationalizes the avoidance of suffering. If one of your central values is that seeking pleasure in itself is an important and desirable goal, you can avoid questioning the deeper motivations that drive the “gluttonous pleasure bias.”

**Rebelliousness:** Given that Sevens want to do what they want to do when they want to do it—that they don't want to have limits imposed on them by other people—it follows that, like their fellow head-based types, they are essentially anti-authoritarian.

**Lack of Focus/Discipline:** Type Seven tendency to avoid limits also leads to difficulty in maintaining focus and self-discipline.

## OVERVIEW

Type Seven represents the archetype of the person who seeks pleasure in different forms as a distraction from the discomfort, darkness, and downside of life. This archetype's drive is to defend against the experience of pain using intelligence, imagination, charm, and enthusiasm, and to avoid fear through an optimistic outlook.

The Jungian concept of the “puer” or the “divine child” is another form of this archetype. It represents a “symbol for future hopes...the potentiality of life, newness itself... frivolity, pleasure, and play.” Jung characterizes this archetype as the “Eternal Child,” who resists growing up as a way of trying to avoid taking on responsibility, along with its commitments, encumbrances, and difficulties.

This archetypal character predominantly focuses on the lighter sides of life, the “enlivening, charming, and refreshing elements of human experience,” avoiding the darker Shadow aspects of human experience. The Type Seven personality and the puer archetype embody a highly positive idealism, a youthful enthusiasm, and a focus on future hopes. This archetype’s dark side reflects the opposite of these qualities in its unconscious unwillingness to face the pain of separation, aging, and mortality.

Pain is part of what motivates the desire for personal development, and conscious suffering represents a key part of the growth process. Most people decide to do the difficult work of the “inner journey” in order to ease their suffering and find happiness. We must necessarily face our fears and childhood pain in the course of this journey, like an acorn has to go underground and have its shell crack open. For any of us to become all that we can be—expand into the “oak tree” of our higher Self—we have to find the courage to see wisdom and truth in the darkness as well as the light. To truly develop, we must face our fears and our Shadow parts. This hard truth is what the Seven’s path of growth teaches us.

As with all the archetypal personalities, however, Type Sevens’ gifts and strengths also represent their “fatal flaw” or “Achilles heel,” as their talent for reframing “negatives” into “positives” can cause them to ignore important data that doesn’t fit their positive frame. Although they are fun and enjoyable companions, Sevens have difficulty in relationships when called on to confront problems and deal with the pain or discomfort of conflict. And while they excel at brainstorming, their dislike of the routine and mundane aspects of life can lead them to be avoidant, distracted, irresponsible, and noncommittal in long-term projects.



## FOCUS OF ATTENTION

Type Sevens avoid unpleasant feelings by focusing on what feels pleasant and by keeping the mood upbeat to the point of reframing negatives into positives. A fear of being trapped in discomfort fuels quick thinking, creative problem-solving, and a focus on positive future possibilities.

## THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

Type Sevens have quick, synthesizing minds, with which they find links between the commonalities in different subjects, making rapid mental associations. Emotionally, Sevens like feeling happy or joyful emotions and dislike feeling fear, anxiety, sadness, boredom, pain, or discomfort. Their attitude is, "Why feel pain if you can feel happy instead?"

## BEHAVIOR PATTERNS

Sevens are energetic, fast-paced, innovative, and active. They usually have many interests and activities, which they pursue with enthusiasm. Sevens like planning for fun and maintaining many options, so they can keep their mood up and shift to the most pleasant option if one plan becomes undesirable or untenable.

## BLIND SPOTS

- Focus on pleasure as a way of avoiding pain and so may inadvertently create more pain (or problems) through avoiding it
- The negative data inherent in a situation
- Their deeper emotions related to discomfort and anxiety
- What's meaningful in the present moment (vs. living the future)
- Slow down and sink more into the present moment without distractions

## WHEN BLIND SPOTS ARE INTEGRATED

- Embrace the experience of pleasure as well as pain as the experience of living
- Develop the ability to tolerate discomfort and limitation as valuable indicators of what's real
- Understand that it's just as problematic to focus only on the positive data as it would be to see only what's negative
- Develop the ability to be imaginative while dealing with constraints



## THE PASSION IS GLUTTONY

Gluttony is the passion that drives Type Seven. In its expression as the core emotional motivation of this type, gluttony fuels the desire to experience pleasure without limits, to taste a little bit of every experience, and to stay open to myriad possibilities. Gluttony can be understood as a passion for variety, not just over-indulgence in food and drink. It motivates this type to want to experience all the possibilities in life and avoid any constraints that might force them to experience less. They put a lot of effort into guaranteeing that they can indulge in many different kinds of pleasures and satisfy their immediate desires, including those connected to the mind. They usually have very busy, quick, and active minds that constantly and rapidly come up with new ideas and make plans in imaginative ways.

## THE VIRTUE IS SOBRIETY

Sobriety is the virtue that provides an antidote to Type Seven gluttony. Sobriety opposes gluttony as the heart's capacity to feel a deep sense of satisfaction in focusing on one important thing at a time. Sobriety helps this type appreciate sticking with an experience all the way through to the end. In this context, it means reducing excess movement and coming to stillness. In sobriety, this type becomes more committed to things and people and rejects their exaggerated need for mental stimulation and distractions. They feel more serious and less relentlessly happy—but still happy enough. Sobriety offers this type a clear goal to work toward after consciously observing their gluttony and the patterns that flow from it.

## THE PATH FROM GLUTTONY TO SOBRIETY

The Type Seven paradox arises from the polarity between the passion of gluttony and the virtue of sobriety. For this type, recognizing the things they have missed in their lives because of their attachment to pleasure and diversity allows them to become more aware of a central aspect of their passion—the tendency to skim along the surface of life and avoid a deeper engagement with their life experience. By becoming more aware of how gluttony operates, they learn to say “no” to lesser priorities and focus on one thing at a time. They develop the capacity to be more present and still.



# THE TYPE SEVEN SUBTYPES

## SELF-PRESERVATION SEVEN: KEEPERS OF THE CASTLE

The Self-Preservation Seven expresses gluttony through making alliances and creating opportunities for gaining an advantage. Pragmatic and self-interested, these Sevens find safety through networking and being alert to opportunities that support their survival. The name “Keepers of the Castle” refers to their way of establishing a partisan network of allies through which they create safety and satisfy their needs. Cheerful and amiable, they have a love of pleasure and tend to get what they want.

## SOCIAL SEVEN: SACRIFICE

### *The countertype*

As the countertype, Social Sevens go against gluttony through conscientious efforts to be of service to others. Conscious of wanting to avoid exploiting others, they have a need to be good and pure and to sacrifice their own needs in supporting the needs of others. They have a passion for being seen as good for the sacrifice of their own desires. They express an ascetic ideal and make a virtue of getting by on little. They express idealism and enthusiasm as a way of making themselves feel active and valued in the world.

## SEXUAL SEVEN: SUGGESTIBILITY

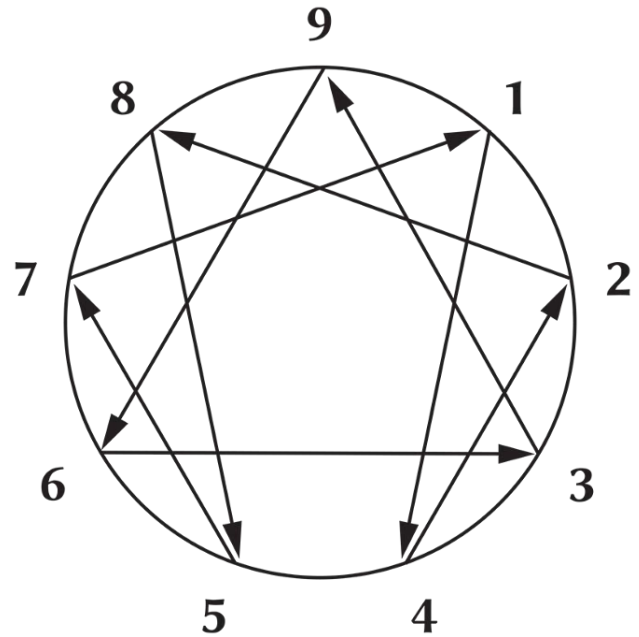
Sexual Sevens express gluttony through a need to imagine something better than ordinary reality. Gluttons for things of a higher world, they are idealistic dreamers with a passion for living in their imaginations. Sexual Sevens look at things with the optimism of someone who is in love; they see the world through rose-colored glasses. “Suggestibility” refers to being somewhat naive and easy to hypnotize. Light-hearted and enthusiastic, they focus on exciting possibilities and pleasurable fantasies, and they believe they can do everything.



# GROWTH PATH

As Sevens work on themselves and become more self-aware, they learn to escape the trap of pursuing more superficial pleasures and avoiding the enjoyment of a deeper experience of themselves. They do this by slowing down and allowing themselves to be present, appreciating the value of their fear and their pain, and finding the joy in personal connections that comes when they connect with their own depths.

For Sevens, growth involves observing the ways they avoid the deeper parts of themselves (and life) to stay comfortable; exploring the ways they lose contact with themselves when they defend against pain and seek out pleasure; and making active efforts to reconnect with themselves and reengage with life on a deeper and more immediate level. It is particularly important for them to learn to endure the pain involved in inner work with the understanding that true joy, contentment, and aliveness come from facing what we tend to run away from and integrating what scares us.



# 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 5

The path of growth for Type Sevens calls for them to reclaim healthy restraint and the ability to withdraw and reflect that is characteristic of Type Five. Sevens may have had the experience in childhood that their need to retreat to a private space as a way of avoiding fear wasn't okay. They may have felt like their natural sense of fear and the associated desire to retreat was unacceptable, so they became more active in managing the outside world through charm to disarm the limiting potential of outside authorities. For one reason or another, it may not have been safe or desirable for Sevens to show their fear or express their need to hold on to precious resources. Sevens may thus "go to Five" under conditions of stress or security as a resource point to which they can withdraw to find a safe place to rest or to consolidate their position and generate internal support. The move to Five can thus represent a desire to be less social and less "out there"—to be more boundaried and safely removed from the social whirl.

For these reasons, "moving back to Five" can be a way that Sevens retreat from others and moderate their need to be excessively social. Consciously drawing on the high side of the Five Point can help them find a healthy way to be more internal and more involved in their thoughts in a less manic way. But because the Five point represents a natural part of Sevens that they had to repress in childhood and thus may return to compulsively, Sevens risk getting stuck in the back-and-forth between the overly optimistic, excessively enthusiastic gregariousness of the Seven and the total withdrawal of the Five.

When Sevens return to the Five Point in an anxious or unconscious way, it's likely that Sevens are not so much reclaiming a healthy sense of privacy and inner calm as they are temporarily shutting down as an escape from overcommitment and excessive activity. In addition, as Sandra Maitri suggests, the usually happy-go-lucky Seven experiences the move to Five as a childish sense of inner scarcity motivated by the fear of loss and inner emptiness.



# MOVING AHEAD TO TYPE 1

The Inner Flow growth path for Type Sevens brings them into direct contact with the challenges embodied in Type One: allowing for a clearer perception of what is ideal and “right” in a larger sense as a way of stabilizing a focus on taking action in service of a higher good. Not surprisingly, Sevens can find the anxiety and frustration they might feel as they move to One (and potentially become perfectionistic or self-critical) uncomfortable. But an experience of Type One managed mindfully, can help Sevens move out of their dreams and fantasies, and into a more realistic acceptance of standards and limits.

When done unconsciously, this shift may involve an anxious resistance or adherence to the constraints imposed by rules and routines; but when done more consciously, it can open Sevens up to the possibility of a supportive structure based on standards and precision that can help Sevens actualize their ideals. Instead of getting caught up in living for an imagined or idealized future, Sevens can find ways to accept the specific constraints that will allow them to put their plans into action in more pragmatic ways in the present. Sevens can thus be inspired by the high side of the One Point in ways that both help them express their impulse toward creative invention and ground what they actually do in larger notions of the “good” or the “perfect.”

Sevens’ focus on planning and play can, in the extreme, prevent them from moving forward in serious and disciplined ways; moving to One can help Sevens make the possibilities they imagine more practical, achievable, and polished.

