



# ENNEAGRAM TYPE EIGHT

## Key Traits

**Anger and the Willingness to Confront:** Of the three “anger types” at the top of the Enneagram, Eights, in contrast to Nines and Ones, usually have less resistance to confronting people, identifying their anger, and expressing aggressive feelings

**Rebelliousness:** The prototype of the revolutionary activist, Type Eights rebel in the sense that they don’t easily acknowledge an authority above themselves

**Punitiveness/Revenge:** When Eights get hurt by others they may not allow themselves to fully register the pain of that hurt; feeling pain might mean experiencing their vulnerability, which Eights automatically avoid.

**Dominance:** Naturally assertive and ready to show aggression when necessary, they can energetically dominate others even without consciously meaning to.

**Insensitivity:** Eights can be perceived as insensitive. This characteristic understandably grows out of their tendency to minimize the presence of softer, more vulnerable emotions like fear, hurt, and weakness.

**Autonomy:** Not wanting to be seen as weak or to find themselves in a vulnerable position, Eights disavow their dependency on others.

**Sensory-Motor Dominance:** Eights are firmly rooted in the physical, in the “here and now” sphere of the senses, and in a kinesthetic, body-based way of functioning.

## OVERVIEW

Type Eight represents the archetype of the person who denies weakness and vulnerability by taking refuge in fearlessness, power, and strength. This archetype tends to express instinctual drives in a less inhibited way and to push back on whatever might restrict them. A personality with this archetype focuses on asserting control in big ways through an “expansive solution” characterized by domination and intensity. This approach entails identification with a glorified self (rather than a diminished sense of self).

The shades of this archetype exist in similar form in Freud’s concepts of the “id” and with his and Jung’s ideas about “libido.” These concepts seek to describe the energetic force behind the central human instinctual drives—the forceful energy or momentum that moves us to get our animal needs met undeterred. The Eight archetype thus conveys the intense drive energy within the dynamic system of the human psyche. The id is the basis of sexual energy in particular, but it is also the desire or charge or energy that motivates all action to get instinctual needs met.

Type Eights' have an automatic ego reaction opposing any limitations on their instinctual drives causing an auto-rebellion against the rules of society or established authority. Just as Type One represents the “anti-instinctual” force within the human personality, Type Eight represents the “pro-instinctual” force inside all of us.

In addition to this human drive, the Eight archetype also represents an aspect of the masculine principle, or the animus. Just as the Type Two archetype embodies a version of “the inner feminine” principle, the Type Eight archetype communicates the archetypal idea of “the masculine” in women and in men. Naranjo points out that we can see elements of this masculine archetype in Western culture’s focus on rationality and taking action, its devaluation of softer emotions, and our prevalent ways of becoming desensitized to violence.

Type Eights are thus the prototype for that tendency in all of us to feel the need to “get big” and take the most direct route to get what we need by pushing back on internal and external forces that seek to restrain our instinctual impulses. As Enneagram scholar Sandra Maitri puts it, the Eight archetype represents our identification “with the body and with its drives and biological imperatives.” Just as the Three archetype represents the way we all take on a personality and the Four archetype highlights the universal presence of the Shadow, the Eight archetype channels the energetic momentum of our animal drives to fulfill our need to thrive and multiply. The Type Eight personality is lusty, intense, energetic, and powerful. This “under-social” stance motivates rebellion against the restrictive authority of established authorities, rules and conventions. The Type Eight habit of mind motivates them to go up against external powers and limitations both as a way of asserting their control and as a way of combating oppression and protecting the weak. This archetype is strong in people who believe in “taking justice into their own hands, rather than delegating to institutions.

As with all the archetypal personalities, however, Type Eights' gifts and strengths also reflect their “fatal flaw” or “Achilles heel.” Their strength and power often represent overcompensation for not wanting to feel weak or own their vulnerable feelings. Accordingly, Eights may judge themselves or others for having softer feelings or expressing any kind of vulnerability. And because they deny their vulnerability—and don’t realize that true strength comes from being able to be vulnerable—they can overdo their forcefulness. Eights often fail to see the negative effects they create by expressing too much power without a balanced recognition of normal human weaknesses. They can be intense and fun-loving, but they may also be overbearing, impatient, and intolerant of frustration. However, when they can balance their personal power and strength with a more conscious awareness of their own weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and impact, they can be courageous (and even heroic) leaders, partners, and friends.



## FOCUS OF ATTENTION

Eights naturally focus their attention on power and control—who has it and who doesn't, and how it's wielded. They think in terms of the big picture and (mostly) dislike dealing with details. They see the world as being divided into “the strong” and “the weak,” and they identify with “the strong” to avoid feeling weak.

## THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

Emotionally, Eights usually have easy access to anger and (unconsciously) avoid registering vulnerable feelings. They typically appear fearless and can be intimidating to others, often without meaning to be. They like to be in control, engage in black and white thinking, think they know what's best or true, and do not like to be told what to do.

## BEHAVIOR PATTERNS

Eights have a lot of energy, can accomplish big things, can confront others when necessary, and will protect people they care about. They can be workaholics, taking on more and more without acknowledging their physical limits, and refuse to experience vulnerable feelings that might slow them down. They can sometimes overwork themselves, even to the point of physical illness.

## BLIND SPOTS

- Their own weaknesses—vulnerability and vulnerable feelings
- Limitations to their power and strength—seeing cases where taking a softer approach may be more effective
- Balance strength and power with an awareness of their own weaknesses; become softer and more approachable through sharing vulnerability
- How they intimidate others or pigeonhole others into “good or bad.”
- Their impact on others—times when they apply too much pressure or have a negative effect they may not intend through being direct, strong, or assertive

## WHEN BLIND SPOTS ARE INTEGRATED

- Moderate their tendencies to dominate or control situations
- The negative effects of being too action-oriented
- Take time to think and consult others before taking action
- Develop more empathy for others by accessing more of their own emotions
- Understand the impact they have on others—recognize when they may be applying too much strength



## THE PASSION IS LUST

The passion that drives Type Eight is lust. As the core emotional motivation behind this type, lust is excess—a passion for excess in all types of stimulation. It especially implies seeking excessive fulfillment through the senses or physical experience, although it does not necessarily refer to anything sexual. For Eights, lust also implies an impatience or urgency to have their desires satisfied. They don't like to wait or negotiate or feel limited. They tend to be impatient, imposing, and rebellious against anyone who tries to limit or control them. They usually resist any constraints around pleasure and the satisfaction of their physical, emotional, and intellectual appetites—whether for food, fun, sex, or even work. They describe themselves as “working hard and playing hard,” and this reflects their lustful disposition.

## THE VIRTUE IS INNOCENCE

Innocence is the virtue that provides an antidote to the Type Eight passion of lust. In a state of innocence, this type becomes less guarded and aggressive and gains a new-found heart-based capacity to stay undefended. This allows them to stop being so intense and excessive in life and relationships. They respond to people and situations rather than reacting to them. They have a more positive outlook and know that conditions (and people) will not be as harsh as they expect. They trust that others—and they themselves—are inherently good, not bad. They no longer need to be in charge of everything or override life's natural rhythms. They realize that, if they stay non-reactive and disclose themselves to others more, they will not be attacked. They, in a sense, learn to disarm others by putting down their own weapons first. And they no longer allow other people's aggression to determine their state of being.

## THE PATH FROM LUST TO INNOCENCE

The Type Eight paradox is grounded in the polarity between the passion of lust and the virtue of innocence. This type must recognize the fear and sadness they hold within to transform. They must discover that their deeper emotions have been denied and hidden by lust. By acknowledging and owning this, they take an important step toward innocence and gain the ability to stay in touch with their vulnerability and open their hearts. Innocence opposes lust by allowing Type Eights to respond in a fresh way to each moment, free of expectations or judgments. It reflects the softness, calmness, and gentleness of the heart that does not need intensity to feel satisfied.



# THE TYPE EIGHT SUBTYPES

## SELF-PRESERVATION EIGHT: SATISFACTION

Self-Preservation Eights express the passion of lust through a focus on getting what they need for survival. SP Eights have a strong desire for the timely satisfaction of material needs and an intolerance for frustration. SP Eights know how to survive in difficult situations and feel omnipotent when it comes to getting what they need. They are the least expressive and the most armed of the three Eight subtypes.

## SOCIAL EIGHT: SOLIDARITY

### *The countertype*

Social Eights express lust and aggression in the service of others. A social antisocial person, this is the countertype of the Eights, a helpful Eight who appears less aggressive and more loyal than the other two Eight subtypes. The name “Solidarity” emphasizes their tendency to offer help when people need protection.

## SEXUAL EIGHT: POSSESSION

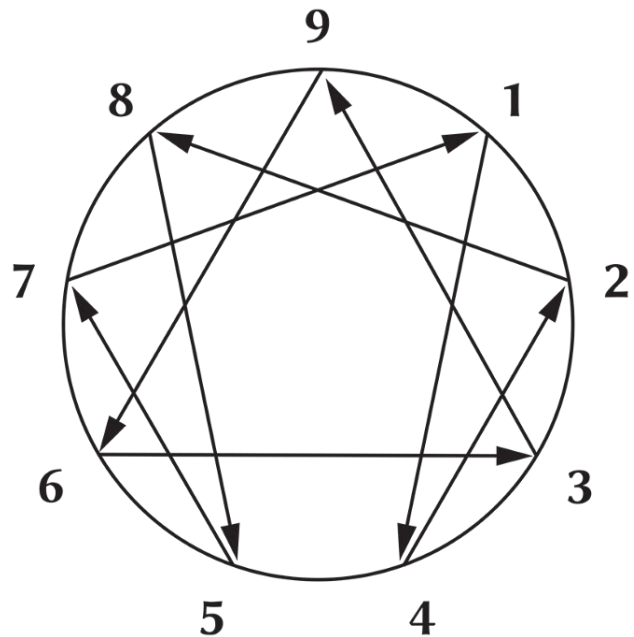
Sexual Eights express lust through rebellion and the need to possess everyone’s attention. Sexual Eights are intense, charismatic characters who want to have control and influence. Instead of seeking material security, they try to get power over things and people. The name “Possession” refers to an energetic takeover of the whole scene—a need to feel powerful through dominating the whole environment.



# GROWTH PATH

As Eights work on themselves and become more self-aware, they learn to escape the trap of limiting themselves through opposing limits on themselves by developing a clearer awareness of their softer side, tempering action with more thinking and feeling, and learning to moderate their impulses and impact.

For Eights, the growth process involves observing the ways in which they express their power and avoid feeling weak and dependent; exploring how they deny the deeper truth of early and ongoing hurts and overcompensate through being strong; and making active efforts to balance their forcefulness and autonomy with a greater awareness of their emotional depths and relational capacities



## 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 2

The path of growth for Type Eights calls for them to reclaim their ability to actively open up to their empathy for others and their need to be appreciated. Eights' early impulses to be seen and loved by others were not particularly recognized and supported in childhood. As children, Eights may have felt that they had to decide between the vulnerability of needing affection and the power of not needing anything from anybody – and they chose to take refuge in a position of strength.

Without awareness around the move to Type Two, Eights can act out the Two habits of “giving to get” and seducing through charm and helpfulness. They may compulsively and expansively do things for others, give advice, or express physical affection as a way of forging connections. Eights may go to Two in anxious ways—in an unconscious search for the comfort of relationship when they are stressed—or as a way to act out the disowned need for love they usually don't allow themselves to feel. As Sandra Maitri observes, “within the tough and no-nonsense Eight who delights in testing her grit...dominating and controlling life, and triumphing over adversity, lies a needy, clingy and lonely little Two-ish child who is desperate to be loved and held.”

Navigated consciously, however, Eights can use the move to Two developmentally, to reestablish a healthy balance between attuning to others' feelings and needs and asserting their own needs. Eights can focus on the qualities of this “child–heart” point to understand the needs they may have had to deny in themselves in their youth in order to get along in the world. Moving back to Two can thus be a way for Eights to consciously re-engage a lost sense of their needs for comfort, love, and care, and their desire to adapt to and please others as a way of relating.

By reincorporating Type Two qualities, Eights can consciously remind themselves that it's okay to care about what other people think and feel about you; and that it's important to value your needs for love, understanding, affection, and acceptance. Instead of hiding their need for love and connection in a pose of strength and autonomy, Eights can seek to embody the high side of Two and open up a channel to loving and supportive relationships. They can use the wisdom of Two to adapt to meet the needs of others and to express their care and affection to other people more consciously. In this way, Eights can balance their talent for acting boldly in the world with the capacity for experiencing the vulnerability of needing support and care. They can use their Two “child–heart” point as a way of reclaiming their inner child's need for care and affection and opening up to a deeper participation in the give-and-take of loving relationships.



# MOVING AHEAD TO TYPE 5

The Inner Flow growth path for Type Eights brings them into direct contact with the challenges embodied in Type Five, allowing for a balance between withdrawal and forward momentum and between thinking and acting as a way to marshal inner resources to develop “nonattachment.” Not surprisingly, the Eight move to Five may represent an extreme response to an intense experience of stress, as it can be a mode of retreat that Eights are driven to when their normal reliance on power and action has failed. To the normally expressive Eight, the experience of Five may feel like a bunker where they take shelter when threatened or when conditions have dealt them a severe setback. The Five Point offers Eights a way to protect themselves through withdrawal to a remote place of safety where they can regroup rather than use power and strength. But this experience of Five, when consciously and mindfully managed, can help Eights develop a capacity for careful analysis conducted from a distance in place of overreliance on force, aggression, and bold (sometimes precipitous) action to get what they need.

The Eight working consciously in this way can make ready use of the tools healthy Fives use: analytical skills and economical use of energy and resources in support of self-protection and self-expression. The Five stance has a basis in observation, objective thinking, and a cautious focus on boundaries, and it can serve to balance out Eights’ tendencies toward impulsivity, excess, and intimidation. Fives’ judicious use of inner resources can help Eights focus more intentionally on self-regulation and moderation in the things they do. The mental activity, conscientious research, and planning characteristic of Fives can remind Eights to think more thoroughly about what they want to do before they move into action. And the way in which Fives automatically prioritize their own safety, maintaining a safe distance from danger, can help Eights develop a more conscious ability to take care of their “inner child.” Valuing their need for time alone, energetic self-regulation, and personal space balances the Eights habitual reliance on brute force and over-action.

