

# **Out of the Box Coaching Newsletter**

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**Mary Bast & Clarence Thomson**

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## Our Filter-Tip Mind

*by Clarence Thomson*

The Enneagram is first of all a focus of attention. That basic assertion underlies a hundred books on the Enneagram. It explains why and how you procrastinate. Here's how it works and what it does for you and to you. The Hopi Indians called focus of attention "picture sitting." When they wanted to have something happen (passive) or accomplish something (active), they sat silently holding that picture in mind. Try to estimate the number of times you've read about focus in coaching. We all operate out of a picture, implicit or explicit.

Fast forward to 1957, Scientific American and the explanation of RAS (reticular activation system). Loosely paraphrased, SA asserted that at the base of our brain is a search/filter system that prioritizes, deletes, evaluates and interprets raw sensory information. We pay attention neurologically as well as by conscious discipline. That RAS is an image or at least functions like one. Our language reveals this. "I can't imagine working for her." "I can't see myself driving a mini-van; it just isn't me." It works from others to us also, "What the hell do you think you are doing?" Translation: "What picture are you holding in your mind that makes your behavior that's opaque to me intelligible to you?"

In the November newsletter I wrote about procrastination. I used a Two as an example. Now let's broaden this to explain how all of us procrastinate, using our filter-tip/RAS function. The Hopi Indians used visualization as a conscious control of that function. So do we. We cannot see how to do something until we see ourselves doing it. That's not tautological: we don't see "how" until we have a clear picture, because we won't notice the potential problems and solutions until we funnel the relevant information into our heads.

Bottom line: you procrastinate systematically. You don't put "everything" off; you put off those things you can't see yourself doing because your Enneagram trance prevents you from seeing yourself doing that. Let's try on a few: Would a Three see herself working hard without recognition or material rewards? Or would those activities slip out of sight and out of mind? Would a Four get right at a task that had no emotional juice or opportunity for creativity? Or would those kinds of tasks be completed right before hell froze over? Would a Five plunge eagerly into fixing his car before reading anything about it? I won't give you any more examples because I'm a Seven and you already understand I really can't see myself boring you with unnecessary examples.

Here's a prickly way to tell if you're being ill-served by your inner pictures. If you have a clear picture of something, you'll take complex and intelligent action. If you do not have a clear picture of what you want to accomplish or what you think you're doing, you usually take simple, stupid and repetitive action. In which case it may be desirable to take no action—procrastinate. Need an audio/visual aid for that? Here's an example: The shopping season is upon us. Watch the cashier who doesn't know how to run the computer yet. If he's trying to act out of a series of incompletely memorized steps but "doesn't get the picture," you're in for a long wait. Watch his behavior: steps forward, steps back/repeats/fumbles. He doesn't have a clue. Clue means picture. Then go home and watch your youngest friend play a complex video game that has one goal: explosions. Note the speed, variety, alacrity, creativity and absorption. When the outcome is clear, the methods are supple and varied. When the outcome is not clear, the methods are often simple, repetitive and wrong. When we experience that, we wisely procrastinate, offering the usual consolation: "I've done enough damage for one day."

Now, that RAS function and the Hopi focusing tradition have a wonderful side also. Once you have the clear picture, you do complex, intelligent things. Let me tell you how Bill did it. Bill was a bright, lazy, 8th grade English student in my class years ago. When I announced a test, his RAS kicked in immediately. He would ask a dozen questions, each of them excluding what he did not have to learn. Then he would only do what he absolutely had to do. That is precisely how you procrastinate. You filter out (asking what will be on the test) so you only do what you have to do! What you filter out is what you “procrastinate.” That is, you put off until outside forces (hunger, jail, spouse appeasement) insist you do them.

There’s an Enneagram confusion that helps us here. In the early stages of Enneagram study, students often use their Enneagram style as an identity. “I AM a Six.” That’s almost right, but awfully wrong. We “identify” with what our filter/RAS sees as our reality. You are NOT a Four; you have the focus and strategy habits of style Four. We do identify, in the same sense that you “identify” with a place of origin or sports figure. That’s how powerful it is, but don’t push it to the first meaning of identity. Our Enneagram style is not our personal identity. It’s not even technically correct to say “I AM a Seven.” Every person is much more than her Enneagram style. However, that identification with our image of our “self” is what prevents us from doing things—procrastination. If you’ve read Eckhart Tolle, he calls this pseudo-identity “identifying with our thought forms.” When we identify with our Enneagram style, we procrastinate whatever doesn’t mesh with our ego-identity.

What you do about that is complex and often lengthy. But if you want one helpful hint, start paying attention to what pictures you hold in your head. Visualization often slips into magical thinking but the reason it does is that it’s so effective, it seems like magic. When I coach people, I give them my business card: Merlin Consulting: It only seems like magic. When you break/weaken/dilute/divert/ interrupt/educate your Enneagram trance, it does feel like magic. Get the picture?

## Nine Times Nine = Two

*by Mary Bast*

Understanding your clients' Enneagram style is a powerful tool to enhance their personal effectiveness and spiritual development. The Enneagram is even more powerful when explored in the context of relationships with others. Much Enneagram literature on relationships focuses on what could go wrong in a particular combination and what each should consider in supporting the other. I want to explore the dynamics of Enneagram combinations from the perspective of mutuality.

All our clients seek mutually satisfying relationships that nurture their potential and help them find purpose in life. When the partnership is mutual, they're willing to learn, grow, and change in response to the other's development – a dynamic process where the relationship is continually recreated. They can learn from exploring how habitual responses may create negatively self-fulfilling patterns, and they can transcend these routine behaviors, creating mutually developmental interactions.

For example, if a Three and an Eight are friends or partners, they may each – for different reasons – fail to have full access to authentic emotions. It would be mutually developmental for this pair to reinforce each other for eliciting and honoring emotional responses, perhaps with something like active listening. Or when a Two is in partnership with a Five, both could benefit from agreeing the Two will give the Five a little more space and the Five will be open to the Two's desire for a bit more interaction, both stretching beyond their habitual Enneagram responses while each is supporting the other's growth.

Often, our clients' changes confuse, or even alarm, their friends and intimates. But when they commit to actions that could benefit both, the partnership becomes mutually supportive – which reinforces desired changes and builds greater intimacy. An added and important element is knowing your clients' subtypes. According to Peter O'Hanrahan ("Enneagram Instinctual Subtypes" in the 2008-09 Enneagram Monthly), "We can appreciate the different subtype priorities which need attention in order to establish security and rapport for each partner."

An interaction between two Nines will illustrate how your coaching can be more effective when it helps clients create mutually developmental partnerships based on their Enneagram styles and subtypes. One Nine Social subtype we'll call "Sally," the other One-to-One Nine we'll call "Oona." These two women have been good friends and colleagues for ten years. They have similar values of honesty and integrity in relationship and share growing concerns about social and environmental problems Yet Oona made two criticisms of Sally at a dinner party where several friends were present.

Oona's first criticism occurred when their friend, Betty, expressed concern about possibly losing her government-supported job and Sally responded with a passionate discourse about state politicians and their poor allotment of financial resources. Oona listened for awhile, then said, "What does that have to do with Betty's concern about losing her job?" Oona commented again when Sally said she felt Obama's choices of cabinet members would lead to more of the same problems experienced with the Bush administration, adding that she was happy the U.S. has progressed enough to elect a Black president. Oona said she found it interesting that while Obama has both white and black parents people refer to him as "black." Sally tried to explain that she meant her comment as a celebration of liberalism, but Oona – in what she considered to be a statement of philosophy, not a personal criticism – looked toward the ceiling and said, "Well, I find it offensive."

Oona promptly forgot about both of her comments. But Sally agonized over them for two days, worried that she seemed insensitive to Betty's situation and that she expressed her views in ways that turned people off. She called Oona and explained how terrible she felt. Being reminded of what she'd said, Oona was concerned she'd been unfairly harsh. They agreed to meet for lunch and talk things through. Both took time before they met for lunch to think about and take responsibility for their own behavior patterns, and both were committed to working out their differences. Notice how the changes they envisioned were mutually developmental: Oona admitted she'd been missing one-on-one time with Sally, because they now usually met with a group of friends. Oona also said she was overwhelmed by all the social problems Sally raised because she felt powerless to change anything, but had tamped down her feelings instead of confronting Sally directly.

Sally acknowledged she sometimes talked overlong when impassioned about global concerns, but said this was in part because she didn't always feel heard. She didn't see her friends responding with interest or taking the kinds of actions she felt were vital. She asked how she might talk about her concerns in ways that invited responsiveness and action.

At Oona's suggestion, Sally agreed to stop periodically, give Oona time to assimilate and ask questions, and help her think through what actions she could take so she didn't feel so powerless. Oona agreed to speak up more directly when she was feeling overwhelmed and to ask for specific ideas instead of tamping down her panic. At Oona's request, Sally also agreed to more one-on-one time.

Notice how, even though both are Nines, their focus of attention was quite different, and their agreements to change were mutually developmental and reinforcing. By speaking up more directly when overwhelmed, Oona could act against her habitual tendency to tamp things down, while also helping Sally break her pattern of talking so long and so intensely that Oona (and possibly others) would screen her out. Sally could feel appreciated that her passionate social concerns were important to Oona, while giving Oona one-on-one attention by discussing specific actions in Oona's areas of interest. They practiced this mutually reinforcing approach right away. Oona said she was interested in leadership attributes that could lead to new perspectives on world problems. Sally told Oona about a book that spoke to this interest and stopped by her house after lunch so she could loan the book to Oona. This became a shared, passionate topic for both of them in their future one-on-one encounters.

## Small Effort, Big Result

by Clarence Thomson

"I wore bright red lipstick everywhere!

I'm a graduate student with two children, and my makeup routine typically maxes out at Chap Stick. So the first day I wore fire-engine red lipstick, I felt incredibly self-conscious. People were staring at me in traffic! And quickly I discovered that red lipstick is high maintenance—you have to put it on perfectly or you look like a mess. Turns out it also requires white teeth, so when I should have been studying, I was digging out the Crest Whitestrips that had been hiding in my bathroom instead.

Still, having red lips made me feel aggressively feminine. Even picking up my kids from school wearing sweats, I felt like a woman, not a tired, overworked mom. My husband noticed too. He didn't always love it (red lipstick does not go well with white work shirts), but I think he appreciated the confidence it gave me.

Now I feel bland when I go out bare-lipped. When I was wearing lipstick, I wasn't hiding from the world—and I was totally comfortable with myself. And that's an addictive feeling."

—Kathryn Ross, 35, Boulder, Colo.

Big result: *I got my sexy back*. You can read a dozen stories like this.

Do you understand why those single small symbolic changes made such a difference? If you understand the Enneagram you can make changes like these yourself, but you have to understand the Enneagram in some rather specific ways.

An Enneagram style is a trance. This trance is held in place, like any deep focus of attention, by an unconscious intention, by some beliefs about how the world works and how we should behave accordingly. Ross, above, felt like an overworked, tired, sexually drab mom. That was her self-image and she dressed accordingly. She most likely walked and talked accordingly. She made one small change. However, she made a symbolic change (lipstick means sexy to a lot of people). It worked for her because it flatly contradicted her current behavior. It was, in effect, a self-confrontation, or more precisely, it was a confrontation of her ego.

So if you want to change your life, change your lipstick? Not quite. In order to make an effective symbolic change, you have to make a change that breaks an Enneagram ego pattern. The woman at the link above who changed her life by talking to strangers was probably a 5. That wouldn't change an extravert's life. The change has to be symbolic. Symbols are highly compressed information and they bypass our usual rational way of doing things. When you employ a symbol, you are putting a large amount of discordant information into an information pattern that you unconsciously put in place and often have kept in place for a long time.

Frankly, there is where an Enneagram coach operates. When I talk to people I can soon tell what their Enneagram style is and then focus more specifically on what part of the style (the focus of attention, the

worldview, the energy sources and the personal strategies) has them stuck. Once we both understand what you are doing to keep yourself stuck, we work out some small symbolic changes.

Why didn't the woman above just start dressing sexy? Because "dressing" is a generalization. It lacks power. We see this every January 1st . "This year I'm going to be more patient, make more money and take care of my health." These always fail because they operate on the rational part of us. Symbolic change, like lipstick, engages our imagination. Will-power, rooted in reason, is a feeble candle compared to the sunlight of imagination. You already know that. You find yourself saying, "I can't imagine myself doing (fill in your limitation)." When you say that, you're utterly correct, and utterly helpless.

Making symbolic changes is not as easy as it appears. When we have a sharp focus of attention, we see things and ourselves in a certain way. The more unhealthy or stuck we are, the more sure we are right. So if we go to pick out a symbolic change, we will pick out an action that "fits" the way we see things and because it does, you may easily reinforce your dysfunctional pattern. The way we see things seems to us to be "the way it really is," so it seems stupid to do something that doesn't fit "with reality."

In reality, there is no "real world." The only "world" is the one we allow in through our filters and we have, since childhood, most likely, had the same view of the world and learned to behave accordingly.

Many symbolic changes can get past our rational construct of "the world according to me." For example, if you tell an Eight she will be happier if she acknowledges an opponent's argument, you will most likely be told you are (a) stupid (b) crazy (c) looking for a fight. But if you can persuade her to stage a debate within herself and see if she can articulate the other side as well as her own, she may move off her absolute position. What sneaks past her defense against vulnerability is that a debate always includes both positions. A debate is symbolic of sophisticated civil discourse. She can remain victorious, but her position will be softened or completed or in some way rendered less absolute – the usual position of an unhealthy Eight. If you'd like to see this position acted out on a national stage, you can check out Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly or Dennis Miller. Their certitude is inversely proportional to their Enneagram health.

So, I offer you irrational, symbolic coaching, but you have little to lose by making symbolic changes at home.

## On The Level

by Mary Bast

In AA the concept “one day at a time” means much more than “I won’t take a drink for the next 24 hours.” Gradually the intention to live one day at a time evolves into the intention to live one day at a time, as if you only have this one day to live. Because we’re all recovering Enneagram styles, this is an important concept:

As Enneagram coaches we want to help our clients become aware enough to see a patterned Enneagram response when it arises, notice (without judgment) how it operates, then engage it consciously – with one small change. This requires being present enough for awareness of the pattern to emerge.

Behind all our attempts to change lies the one fundamental truth – if we live one day at a time, if we are fully present, our habitual reaction to the world can no longer play out automatically. Many models for presence are founded in meditation. Certainly, learning to be present in meditation can transfer to greater awareness in everyday life. As J. Krishnamurti said: For many of us, though, the steady and consistent practice of sitting meditation can be elusive. Luckily, meditation is not the only way to learn presence. We also become more present when we listen deeply.

Most coaching schools emphasize a level of listening that goes beyond the obvious. In Co-Active Coaching, from Coach Training Institute (CTI), three levels of listening are described:

At Level I (Internal Listening) “We listen to the words of the other person but the focus is on what it means to us.” At Level II (Dialogue) “There is a sharp focus on the other person.” This is what is typically meant by “active listening.”

At Level III (Global Listening), “You listen at 360 degrees... as though you and the client were at the center of the universe receiving information from everywhere at once... as though you’re surrounded by a force field that contains you, the client, and a space of knowing... The key to

Level III listening is simply to take in the information and play with it and see what emerges.” “...the more you struggle to understand, the less you understand any problem. But, the moment you cease to struggle and let the problem tell you the whole story, give all its significance—then there is understanding, which means, obviously, that to understand, the mind must be quiet.”

Otto Sharmer (*Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*) offers similar but slightly more differentiated levels of listening:

“Listening 1 (from habits) – habits of judgment that lead to reconfirming old opinions and judgments,

Listening 2 (from outside) – factual listening and noticing differences that lead to new data;

Listening 3 (from within) – empathic listening that leads to seeing through another’s eyes and emotional connection; and Listening 4 (from Source) – generative listening that connects us with an emerging future and shifts our identity/self.”

The following example shows how greater self-awareness can move clients from habitual/internal listening to generative/global listening.

Jane, a widowed Seven is in love with Bob, who's compassionate, loving, helpful and who's been wonderful with her son and daughter. He supports Jane's parenting approach and also engages her two teenagers in activities that take the burden of full responsibility from her shoulders. Bob has been single for some time and his sisters in a large family have come to depend on him for help with repairs and other problems. One weekend, Jane and Bob carve out two hours alone together. Just as they're starting out on a long walk, Bob's cell phone rings with a desperate call from one of his sisters that her heat is off and she's freezing.

1. Although Jane agrees to go with Bob to help his sister, she listens to herself at *level 1*, "What does this mean for me?" and thinks, "This was supposed to be our time together. He has all these other demands on him. There will never be enough time for me."
2. Instead of reacting from this level, however, she stays with it and listens to herself at *level 2* ("What can I learn from the facts?") as Bob explains his sister Maggie's desperate financial straits and adds that he'd like to check in quickly, have Jane meet Maggie, and then he and Jane can continue their walk.
3. At Maggie's small house Jane talks with Maggie while Bob checks on the heating problem. Jane now listens to herself at *level 3* ("What do I see when I look through their eyes?") and notices how affectionately Bob and his sister treat each other. She empathizes with both of them and realizes that Bob's behavior with his sister comes from the same fountain of compassion Jane experiences from him.
4. She continues to stay present, now listening at *level 4* ("What is there to know that's beyond what I presently know?"). In this place of full presence, she sees that her initial, habitual reaction came from a fundamental Seven pattern: "There will never be enough for me." She shifts to a different sense of identity—"I am not my pattern"—and its hold on her is released.

## To Live the Law

by Clarence Thomson

(first published in the *National Catholic Reporter*)

President Obama, in my opinion, is a style One. Ones tend to be idealistic, guided by clear convictions of right and wrong, and work oriented. Every style has certain strengths and limitations. Style One is, in one way, unduly humble. Ones have a tendency to erase their personal feelings and unite, almost merge their personal agenda with the demands of an ideal or law or tradition or principle. If you ask Ones what they think, you will get your answer consciously or unconsciously filtered through principles that are larger than themselves and may be inherited from a book or tradition.

It is probably not accidental that Obama would study constitutional law. He will make his decisions based not as much on personal convictions as on the wisdom of the law. He will be a lawyer all day long. He may have some charisma, but he will not be “chatty” or intensely personal. He will have charisma, but not really panache. Ones have a tendency to erase themselves and over identify with a law or tradition. Because of that, they can become quite self-righteous.

Because Ones identify with their tradition, their personal convictions often have the emotional weight of the tradition. It's one thing to say, “I think,” but quite another to say “Our tradition/law/church says.” With the weight of the tradition or law behind him, Obama will exude a certitude that can seem arrogant. He will likely be criticized for that. He will make things worse if he gives in to the Oneish tendency to preach. Even as polished an orator as he is, after a while, those who disagree may find the oratory punishing.

Because Ones do not really consult their own preferences as much as the demands of the law or tradition or even custom, they tend to get their self-worth from work. Obama will have detractors but if the Enneagram is any predictor, no one will say he doesn't work hard. ‘No drama Obama’ means he will focus on work without much worry about how he and even those who work with him feel or think. The identification with the law and traditions makes Ones the champions of objectivity: not what do you or I think, but what are the facts and what are the rules?

As Ones believe in the traditions and laws, they are often masters of the system. Personal preferences yield to the needs of the system. We saw an early principle: the best person for the job. What was missing was any reference to how good a friend was the person to Obama. Obama will not likely be charged with cronyism – his objective criteria will prevail.

Ones are idealists. They're better critics than they are creators. So Obama will be much clearer about what is wrong than what is right. He'll see the possibilities of what might be, then criticize reality in the light of that. This can discourage people who are already trying hard. Obama will have to realize that the most obstreperous senator is doing the best he can under the circumstances he sees himself in – things like reelection, party loyalty and at times, limited insight. Obama will see that the senator is “objectively” terribly wrong and not have much inner compassion for the “subjective” conflicts the politician might have.

Obama will have to give lip service to compromise and the political process, but like most Ones, he will have a clear, almost either/or conviction about what is right. He probably won't do subtle nuanced considerations nearly as well as he'll be clear about what is right and wrong. Moral clarity may cost him flexibility. His early stance that he would hire “no” lobbyists was a typical Oneish statement of principle.

Then he had to make exceptions. That probably took some persuasion and he most likely decided the person was so valuable that he fit the criterion of “best person for the job,” so he had to compromise.

Obama’s idealism is not based on evidence. It is based on an inner conviction that right can and must prevail. This is a two-edged characteristic. On the one hand, it enabled him to work as a community organizer with defeat scribbled on every wall and etched in every defeated face. He kept going against the evidence. This could get him into trouble if he has a policy that is not working. He may believe it must work, even against the evidence.

He says he’s a pragmatist, but a real pragmatist does not work with the poor; that’s the domain of the idealist. The pragmatist becomes a corporate lawyer, not an advocate for the poor. This ability to keep on trying while failing is admirable on the south side of Chicago, but if he keeps on trying while failing in Afghanistan, that may not be the best idea.

Look for Obama to have rules. Besides the constitution and the laws of the land, his administration will have rules. House rules, procedure rules, written rules and unwritten rules. Ones are governed more by inner rules even than outer rules. Those who work with him will learn those rules quickly – he will make no effort to hide them and in fact will appreciate everyone knowing his inner rules. These are not just preferences or feelings – they are clearer and stricter than that. If he is healthy and has strong people around him, the oval office will be a paragon of efficiency. Because Ones are governed by inner rules, not emotional surges or suggestions from the latest consultant, we can look for his administration to be quite consistent. He will be as consistent as is politically possible. He will value it more than flexibility or even, at times, responsiveness to daily events. He will have more confidence in consistency than any other Enneagram style.

Ones are given to considerable self-criticism so criticism from without will echo a long way in. Though Obama won’t appear to be hurt by unjust criticism, he will be, because he is quite sure he is correct. He will know it comes with the turf, but it will hurt anyway. It will not hurt enough to make him change his mind. He may change policies under pressure, in order to get things done, but he will still retain his conviction that he is right. He is right, the law is right, and he knows the law and will govern and be governed by it.

(See also a fascinating article about Obama in [Systems Thinker](#))

## Serious Focus

by Clarence Thomson

We pick and choose, ignore or magnify, illuminate or dampen, expand up or obscure, affirm or deny, as our inheritance, adopted discipline or passionate pursuits dictate. At root is an esthetic response and we invest our esthetic response with sacred overtones. — Joseph Chilton Pearce, *The Crack in the Cosmic Egg*.

Enneagram study begins with an emphasis on the importance of a focus so profound it in effect induces a deep imperceptible trance. Pearce, in the above quote, notes that we invest our responses with “sacred” overtones. I write this on Memorial Day as America celebrates its trance of sacred violence. On this day we celebrate with military display and adulatory speeches those who were willing to kill and be killed for us. You may be surprised by the juxtaposition of “sacred” and “violence,” but Stanford anthropologist Rene Girard has established that many cultures, ours especially, employ both unauthorized violence (crime) and authorized (sacred) violence.

I will use our American culture to illustrate how profound a trance is and how it determines (more than just influences, really determines) our behavior. Then, look at your own Enneagram style and consider how your trance controls you.

President Obama has decided he wants to negotiate with Iran, Israel, Afghanistan and other military regimes. Notice, please notice, that many if not all the objections begin with “What if negotiation doesn’t work?” The implicit trance-assumption is that we can then resort to violence and that WILL work.

Our Enneagram style is the same: it is a default position. We know, in our basement, that our Enneagram style always works. If a Five tries negotiation with reality and that doesn’t “work,” then what is needed is more and better information. Eights go to battle, Nines to sleep, and Sevens to whatever is new.

Sherlock Holmes, a lovely Five, taught me to look for what is missing. I’ve never heard anyone say, “Well, what if violence doesn’t work?” That’s the emotional and political equivalence of sacred. Violence is sacred in the American trance, so its efficacy cannot be questioned. When we’re in a trance, some things cannot be asked because they literally cannot be thought. As Cheney tries to justify torture, his opponents keep saying “it doesn’t work,” not realizing that America really believes violence always works. Torture is an exception, it is illegal. Sacred violence has rules. The rules help give it acceptability – we only kill, maim, and destroy certain people in certain ways). Torture is being debated, not because it is violent, but because it doesn’t follow the rules of sacred violence. We debate whether or not to torture people after killing hundreds of thousands. If Cheney can bring torture under the umbrella of warfare (sacred killing) he will be exonerated, like a policeman killing a criminal.

Our violent trance shows up in our vocabulary. We declare “war” on poverty, terror, and cancer. Our local bishop just declared “war on abortion.” The trance is a belief that sincere effective action must be couched in the language of violence or it isn’t “real” or “sacred.” Al Gore had a problem convincing us to take care of the planet because he couldn’t come up with a violent metaphor. If he could have found a way to bomb pollution, we’d be home free.

So as you consider your personal trance, you might ask yourself, “What ‘always’ works for me? Our ego style is a coping mechanism and when we really want to succeed at something, we do what we do best.

The more entranced we are, the more rigid, defended and certain we become that we're correct. We become louder, narrower and righter (sic).

If you watch an argument on television, you'll notice they shout a lot for civilized and educated people. Shouting is verbal violence, so if they're threatened by the arguments of the opposition, they shout. They think shouting works. It doesn't work, day after day, yet they keep doing it. That's a good way to discern your Enneagram style: What do you keep doing that doesn't work? You might ask yourself when you shout. I don't mean outwardly, necessarily, but when you think to yourself, "that's crazy!"

Sometimes (think Dick Cheney) it really is crazy, but an effective way to shut yourself up (always salutary) is to ask "what good thing is that person trying to protect and how can I accommodate that value?"

When I coach, I often assign reading with a style or content that lies at the stress and security points of the client. For example, I will have style Ones read poetry (moving the One to Four), Sevens read heavy footnoted stuff (Seven to Five), Eights read biographies (Eight to Two), etc. Even better, just exposing clients to an alternative, having them do symbolic actions that in some way expose and/or violate their trance — like when I helped a Nine make a list of 10 excuses he'd used to not do something; then in another assignment I suggested if he didn't do it, he should pick one of the 10 excuses. He completed a long and difficult writing assignment: a 30-minute screen play! He was too embarrassed to use one of the excuses. Exposing the structure of his passive-aggression weakened it.

Weakening a trance is slow and surgical work, but over time we can relax our belief that if worse comes to worst, we can do our Enneagram style and solve our problems.

## Breaking Up is Hard to Do

by Mary Bast

I believe that the story of fixation, the story of ego identity, is actually true – on the level of fixation... Most of us spend our whole life either trying to get rid of the story, and/or striving to live our story in the best possible way. No matter what we do we are looking through the lens of our fixation, trying to fix the fixation with the fixation. Lissa Friedman, “From Fixation to Freedom,” *Enneagram Monthly*, May 2009.

I just love my ego, don't you? We get along so well together. And what a relationship! It's been life-long, predictable, we're safe—more or less. OK, fine, we get angry, we feel hurt, we challenge our constraints but, oh, the seduction of familiarity. As helpful as the Enneagram can be, we've all experienced personally and with our clients the tenacity of those familiar patterns. And typical of any long-standing relationship, breaking up is difficult — no matter how strong the desire to end it. As Lissa wrote, “There seems to be a point we all get to when we have done enough spiritual and/or psychological work; where we realize the work we have done has failed. We are still living within the story of our ego. It may have loosened, become less painful, but it is still doing its dance.”

Clarence and I have emphasized for years the importance of going beyond first-order change (e.g., coaching Nines to be more assertive doesn't address the underlying pattern of avoiding conflict); worse, that coaches can unwittingly reinforce a pattern (e.g., responding to a Nine's request for structure by outlining exactly what to do simply reinforces the Nine's fixation of following someone else's agenda). I've coached many clients to observe how their patterns operate and to loosen those patterns, but I must admit that for them (and for me) the ego has still seemed to be doing its dance. As the Nine described in Lissa's article, I can now attest that there is a way to help your clients free themselves at an even deeper level, by uncovering their fundamental story and accessing the belief that it is true:

... we stop and look it directly in the face, and acknowledge its truth, its reality...When the core of the ego story dissolves, the central theme of being is gone. It is like the center of identity has been removed. There is nothing for the fixation or ego to form around. There is no sense of resolution, of the issues, or the painful experience. It is just that the issues no longer exist. The basic core question no longer makes sense.

The workshop Lissa described in her article was born when she, a Two, despaired one day that she would never get her needs met, then realized that was her story — she would never get her needs met and any effort to meet her needs would still be within the story. When she surrendered “completely into the heart of the pattern,” she wrote, “I couldn't find the issues that had been so devastatingly disturbing; the story was gone. It seemed to have never been true.” As she described to me later in conversation, Lissa began to experience that sometimes her needs were met, sometimes not, but whether or not they were met was no longer an issue.

So for weeks before her workshop, I held the intention to experience the Nine's fundamental belief: I am inferior and being nice will not make me good or deserve to exist. I cannot avoid the reality of this awful feeling by not engaging life. Though I didn't consciously feel inferior, I was willing to give it a go, and for the first week or so began to notice how that story kept me from engaging fully. As a small example, I became aware of how fast I was reading, even when reading fiction or poetry for pleasure. I heard, as if magically radioed in from my past, “Mary is such a good girl. She does exactly what she's told and she does it quickly.” I remembered being praised for how many books I could read in a week. That expanded to memories of being praised at work for how quickly I completed projects. I had the insight that this was

designed to feed my story: “If I do things quickly, people will praise me, I’ll feel worthwhile, and this proves I have to keep doing things quickly so I’ll know I’m worthwhile.”

But I didn’t experience the belief, it was still an idea. This continued up through and past being interviewed and taped during the workshop — interesting insights, a deeper level of awareness, less defensiveness, a new perspective on coaching clients by looking for their fundamental stories, and an exchange with Carolyn Bartlett about Coherence Therapy (or Brief Deep Therapy):

How, in this person’s world of meaning, is the presenting problem cogently and compellingly necessary to have, even with the suffering or trouble it brings? The therapist keeps prompting the client to zero in on the emotional truth of the symptom—specific, unconscious personal themes, knowings and purposes that, in one way or another, powerfully and passionately require having the presenting symptom, even though consciously the client wants so much not to have it.

I had the sense that Lissa was onto something more, not refuting the story (a “disconfirming juxtaposition” in Coherence Therapy terminology), but fully surrendering into the story, believing it. Still, I hadn’t yet experienced the truth of my story.

Several weeks after the workshop, I eagerly turned on the DVD of Lissa interviewing me, and boom! I saw myself as fat, old, and BLAND. Those of you who are gut types will know what I mean when I say it was “a body blow.” I was completely crushed. I could not identify with that woman on the screen. For a full day my ego danced around looking for ways to accept the external evidence that contradicted my self-image (“Surely there’s something I can do to prove I have value”). I read about strategies for embracing growing old. I considered following the path of aging boomer artists Alice and Richard Matzkin (*The Art of Aging: Celebrating the Authentic Aging Self*) and painting a self-portrait, warts and all — still feeding the story by trying to refute it (“I am worthwhile! I am worthwhile!”)

Then, on the second day, I experienced the Nine’s fundamental story. I fully believed, “I am worthless.” I felt it down to my bones, my heart was full of deep shame, and I knew it to be true. It was real and it was horrible.

On the third day, I fell through. The phrase fell through is inadequate to capture the experience, but as Lissa acknowledged in her article, “Ultimately what I am trying to describe cannot be described in words, and cannot be understood by our minds.” What I can tell you is that when I subsequently viewed the DVD of my interview I felt compassion and even delight, a feeling akin to “Oh, so that’s the body and mannerisms my soul is riding in at the moment.” I’m not saying I’m transformed. In the immortal words of Michael in *Stranger in a Strange Land*, “I am just an egg.” But I am seeing a significant difference in how momentary defensiveness dissolves quickly — and in a way that’s very different from tamping down my feelings — a sensation of lightness, of each molecule breathing.

Lissa’s *Enneagram Monthly* article, including the stories of all nine is available at [my web site](#). And consider adding her DVDs to your Enneagram shelves: a full hour interview of each Enneagram style in a workshop format, including responses to audience questions. Lissa chose people to interview who are older and have worked on themselves for many years, her questions designed to guide them through their lives. When they talk about their earlier lives, you’ll hear a more fixated expression of their patterns. As they review their life paths, you’ll see the evolution of their patterns and the unique journey of each toward freedom. And you’ll see me looking fat, old, and — yes — perhaps a bit bland.

## That's My Story and I'm Stickin' To It

by Clarence Thomson

When Judge Sotomayor wanted to tell the world – and the senate – who she was, she simply told an abbreviated story. When the pundits talked about her chances of being confirmed, they frequently referred to how American her story was. Because her story fit the American myth of “rags to riches” it was politically powerful.

What is convincing politically is rooted in our own intuition that our identity is cradled in our stories. This is not altogether a good thing, but it is always a powerful thing. If we have a story that is self-defeating, we will eerily maneuver events to fit our story. If my story is of a creative child, I will find ways to be creative. Watch children at play. They invariably act out stories, and if you pay close attention you'll see they're “trying on” stories. On the news about a year ago was the event of a robbery based on the story line of a popular video game. We are story-shaped.

Contemporary scientific research demonstrates what we know intuitively – we retain and value information in story form more than any other format. Memory champions remember the sequence of numbers or cards or pictures by integrating them into a narrative. (Nature Reviews Neuroscience, Vol. 6, p. 90)

We will remember and attach more emotional weight to those events from our past that have been integrated into a narrative. As a coach I am delighted and secure about where clients are when they say in reference to something that happened, “Well, that's the story of my life.” I don't fail to become acutely curious about “the story of your life.” If the story of the life is defeat and failure, I know that's where the focus and “juice” will be. If the story is of unrequited love, that's what will soon show up.

Story functions in a number of ways. Its first function is a sorting tool. If I have 20 or 30 experiences as I go through my day, the ones I will remember, the ones I will consider important, the ones that have meaning for me are the ones that fit my story. A story's second function is inner consistency. We respect consistency. Nobody likes to be called inconsistent. Bill Gates' favorite term of scorn when he rejects an argument is “Well, that's random!” We call people who are inconsistent “wishy-washy,” “flipper-flopper,” and other derogatory phrases.

Amazon.com uses consistency on me all the time. “You bought that book, you should be interested in these.” One reason tragedy ruins many lives is that “this is not the way it is supposed to go.” Even winning a lottery can and does destroy many lives because the money ruins their story. Here they were, a hard-working mechanic/waitress/ Enneagram teacher and now all this money changes everything. “Changes everything” is more than most of us can handle.

Consistency can also be a problem. One of the characteristics of an ego-state is a certain rigidity. If our story is too grooved, we repeat our mistakes. When we do, the refrain is “It's the same old story.” So, given the richness and pitfalls of stories, how can we use them for our personal growth? First, of course, is to be aware of our story. I recommend writing two. The first is just plain “you.” Make it fairly short so you can see the skeleton on which you hang your interpretation of later events. Maybe 500 words.

Now, write a second story of the choices, experiences, affiliations, jobs, sorrows and joys that cluster around your Enneagram style. How does your experience articulate that style?

Then write the story into the future. As long as you're living out a story, it's a good idea to take control of it and shape the story consciously. If you reflect on what your expectations are, you'll probably find they're specific and a bit predictable. What would happen if you began to think about your future as living out a different story? Then after you write the story as you want it to happen, write this down: what changes would you have to or want to make for your future story to really be your life story?

## 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, Grow

by Mary Bast

I was in the 'City of Power Politics' with vested interests and terrified people intent on maintaining the status quo. Though I could do a cost-benefit analysis and was pretty good at organization, I had absolutely no idea what was really going on, why, or how to change it. This was crazy, and I didn't have the foggiest idea of how to deal with crazy. For sheer survival, if no other reason, I concluded I needed to understand crazy.

Reading those words in the preface to Ed Morler's *Finally Growing Up: Living an Authentic Empowered Life*, my day brightened considerably. In a world of thieving investment bankers, human trafficking, and strategically planned warfare, I applaud Morler's conclusion that the ultimate causal factor in human behavior is INTEGRITY, or the lack of it. He frames *Growing Up*, which integrates the Enneagram with his Six Levels of Emotional Maturity, as being "about consciously choosing to be responsible, and in that process, doing our best to discover and live our noble potential."

Consistent with our [Out of The Box Coaching](#) principles, Morler recognizes greater self-awareness as the key strategy to develop greater emotional maturity:

As we recognize and assume ownership of our self-generated and self-sustaining patterns—positive and negative—we exercise greater conscious choice in either working with them or letting them go... Integration is the result of a willingness to face and go through our fear. It is an exponential expansion of our willingness to be responsible and behave pro-actively, which broadens and deepens our sense of empowerment. It often tends to manifest as a dramatic, positive shift in our awareness of our being, doing and having. It is thus a major letting go of the compulsive, limiting aspects of personality. (Morler, *Finally Growing Up*)

He suggests six general levels of increasing emotional maturity: (1) Victim, (2) Manipulator, (3) Opposer, (4) Coper, (5) Doer, (6) Leader. Along this path, our questions change from "Am I getting enough?" to "Am I good enough?" to "Am I learning, growing, being enough?" to the secure realization, "I am enough."

In this essay, I want to illustrate increasing levels of emotional maturity as experienced by an Enneagram Six I've been coaching. When "Jake" and I first started working together he had some elements of the Six's 4th level of emotional maturity, the Coper ("dutiful, cautious, security oriented, ambivalent"). But he is extremely bright and self-aware, and his life experiences had created great readiness to learn more about himself and to develop his potential. During the early stages of coaching Jake explored his ambivalence about his career choices in the context of the Enneagram, and lived through many moments of staying with and facing his fears.

By the time he embraced the opportunity to take an executive position of great responsibility, Jake entered that job at a level of self-awareness that placed him soundly in the Six's 5th level of emotional maturity, the Doer ("highly practical, organizationally effective, analyzing, tenacious, troubleshooter, constructive critic, devil's advocate"). During the first six months of his job, however, the scope of his work demanded greater emotional maturity or he would fall into the same trap Morler described in the City of Power Politics.

Here, in his own words, is Jake's shift into empowerment as he continues to broaden and deepen his perspective toward the 6th level, an Enneagram Six Leader ("creator of security in and for others, dynamic interdependence, open, perspective, committed, engaging, playful"):

“I realized I’d been scared around people at higher levels. There are several very angry, insistent senior VPs in the company, some of whom I’ve known for ten years or more. Yet now that they’re at the top I found myself saying “Yes, sir!” I got to the root of what you and I talked about as systems thinking: the company is messed up and when they see something dysfunctional they ask the person reporting to them to find out what’s wrong and how to fix it. That results in many hours to prepare a summary, then the VP casts off what they’ve brought and says “You have to do twice as much.” People reporting to VPs say “Yes sir,” and then go flog the troops, as opposed to saying “I understand what you want and the urgency, but you can’t change gravity.” As I look back, all my insecurities were coming from saying yes to those people asking me to do things my gut told me not to do.”

“So last week I finally stood up to the VP, with my boss in the room. I acknowledged the company’s needs and the urgency, then said ‘Here’s the reality of the organization you have today.’ I told him what we can do, which is focus on things with the broadest appeal and realize it may not be perfect. The room was silent. The VP then turned his attention to someone else and started yelling at him. I stood up to him because it was the right thing to do. And it worked! So I started doing it with everybody. For example, my boss asked me for some calculations. I’d spent my first four months doing calculations, which left no time to do my job. So I told him “I’ll be glad to keep you posted, but I’m going to spend my time doing what you hired me to do.”

Jake was demonstrating the broader perspective of [systems thinking](#) by analyzing what Peter Senge would call his organization’s archetype. He interpreted what he’d observed as a form of abuse based on an historical top-down hierarchy the organization had been laboring under (and failing). I reinforced ways he was demonstrating how a Six moves from self-doubt to courage.

“There were a whole bunch of things I did to maintain my integrity,” Jake acknowledged, “but one sea change: I changed how I was responding and said what I believed to be true instead of holding back out of fear.”

Jake then planned with me a five-day teambuilding session he would facilitate, bringing his whole team in from around the world to be face-to-face, many of them for the first time. He organized the week around the Drexler Sibbet team performance model and became a beacon of empowerment for his team.

“My goal was for each person to have ownership in the results,” he reported afterwards, “and by the end of the week to have an entire plan with everyone knowing what they own and what they’re going to do. It worked! You suggested I keep modeling empowerment and when they saw me not taking over, it would reinforce what I said. So I intentionally stepped out of the meeting more and more as the week wore on.”

You can see evidence in the following comments of Jake’s moving from Level 5 (Doer) to Level 6 (Leader) of emotional maturity:

“I did find I had to keep monitoring myself. I kept wanting to solve problems that were on the table, but I think I did OK on that. At the beginning of the week I found myself diving in too much. Then as a gauge, I knew when I was feeling frustrated it was time to step back. We had two difficult things we needed to get done: to determine how long it would take, and how much it would cost to meet our goals. In the beginning, everyone on the team said we could not accomplish what we were expected to do in the given timeframe, but by the end of the week they’d figured out how to do it! We’re still on a scary precipice, but as long as

the family is tight and they know where they stand on things, we'll be able to accomplish what we need to do."

So far, there's every indication the collaborative change Jake encourages and models is holding. "When I came back to work the following week," he reported, "everyone was working and invigorated. I'd been wondering how to present to upper management what we'd done, and when I walked into my office found a presentation on my desk from one of my team members!" "My biggest challenge," he concluded, "is to change this culture, and to do it by example, as if I've walked into a black and white company and I'm able to pour color all over it."

One definition of enlightenment is freedom from the limitations of personality. Growing in maturity is, in part, about becoming increasingly free of the automatic compulsions of personality. Correspondingly, it is the freedom to be present with, embrace and appreciate—beyond the limiting and limited perceptions of personality—a much larger reality (wholeness). (Morler, *Finally Growing Up*)

## Procrastinate Now

by Clarence Thomson

We are trained to take advantage of the information lying in front of our eyes, ignoring the information we do not see. Nassim Taleb, *Foiled by Randomness*.

The point of departure for understanding and using the Enneagram for personal growth is our focus of attention. That focus shapes our history and destiny to a degree we can hardly comprehend. When I coach people, sometimes I have them write a short history of their life. Sometimes I have them write it twice: once as “straight” history and once “as a Two” or whatever number they display. The two histories are quite similar. What leaps out in a short history is the repetition of certain concerns (money, people, jobs or illnesses, for example) and with that repetition comes a corresponding deletion.

Procrastination is the visible evidence of what we delete. The self-help books usually say you spend more energy avoiding your procrastinated task than actually doing it. That’s true enough, but it doesn’t address the selectivity of what we procrastinate. I want you to look at procrastination as a form of ignored information.

It has fallen to my lot to coach three risk managers during the last several years, so I read Taleb’s advice on risk management. A coach’s role can be to point out unperceived personal risks. Taleb had this to say:

We tend to mistake one realization among all possible random histories as the most representative one, forgetting that there may be others. In a nutshell, the survivorship bias implies that the highest performing realization will be the most visible (emphasis his). Why? Because the losers do not show up.

Survivorship bias is not only in financial markets, it is in our Enneagram strategies also. We keep doing what worked for a while, perhaps when we were small children. Being a good girl worked for a One and she never learned the benefits of pushing the envelope of expectations and seeing what being a bad girl would have brought her.

Which leads me to the epistemological value of procrastination. What we procrastinate is our “road less traveled.” As such, it contains a lot of information about what we have not tried, what we have not paid attention to. Procrastination reveals our shadow self. When you read books about procrastination, you read all sorts of motives for putting things off. They assume that your procrastination is a fault. And in one narrow way it is, but it is understood better as your undeveloped side. What they don’t tell you is that what you put off may be an unexplored part of yourself and as such it may be a resource.

It is a resource because it is a balance to our narrow Enneagram focus. For example, if you are a Seven and you have gotten a great deal of mileage—money, pleasure, a variety of achievements—out of your ability to be spontaneous, you may notice that you procrastinate around things that require sustained discipline. If you are a One, you have been rewarded in a variety of ways for your exemplary work ethic, but you may have put off, in the name of virtue, a balance between work and play. All work and no play is—horrors!—a fault also. You pay a price for being a workhorse.

So instead of just beating yourself up for putting things off, look at procrastination as an undeveloped resource. In order to do that, it will work best if you ask some specific kinds of questions. What kind of work/play is this? If, for example, it is cleaning, then what kind of cleaning—finishing tasks, not starting

them, not having resources or not willing to spend the resources? Is this about people? Or information? Or is it physical or aesthetic or financial? What kinds of rewards will you get if you do it? Any? Will the reward come from an internal state or external approbation? Surprisingly, small rewards for doing what you said you would work better than large ones.

Why do small rewards work better? If you do something for the extrinsic reward, you don't engage the activity itself. So if you are trying to achieve some personal growth, you have to do the activity for its own sake, not for the huge reward. That's why collegiate athletics are often so much more authentic than the professional games: the real thrill is the game.

You are trying to learn what a new game has to offer, you are not trying to just get the job done. So instead of sighing or drinking or scolding yourself about what you have not done, learn from it. Risk management warns us that most disasters occur from places and in ways we did not expect. We worry about China invading us, but we didn't expect them to just buy us. A man worries about his career and takes every investment precaution and loses half his fortune when his neglected wife divorces him and marries his broker. Look at what you've been procrastinating about and realize it's something you really want to do in order to balance and enrich your life.

## Inside Out & Backwards

by Mary Bast

As coaches, we all have the occasional client who's trying to be a good parent to young children or has issues with adult children. Curious about how the Enneagram might play in understanding parent-child relationships, I bought a CD of Daniel Siegel and David Daniels' IEA 2005 presentation "Attachment Theory and the Enneagram," which led me to Siegel and Hartzell's *Parenting from the Inside Out*. In an Internet search to learn more about attachment theory, I found this table that summarizes the effects of healthy attachment on adult relationships:

<b>Characteristics of Secure Attachment</b>	
<b>As Children:</b>	<b>As Adults:</b>
1. Able to separate from parent.	1. Have trusting, lasting relationships.
2. Seek comfort from parents when frightened.	2. Tend to have good self-esteem.
3. Return of parents is met with positive emotions.	3. Comfortable sharing feelings with friends and partners.
4. Prefers parents to strangers.	4. Seek out social support.

A child's security of attachment is strongly connected to parents' understanding of their own early-life experience. Whether your clients had good parenting, "good enough" parenting, or even traumatic parenting, making sense of their childhood can lead to healthy relationships with their children. Both Daniels and Siegel believe the universal cure-all in any personal or spiritual growth approach is to develop neutral self-awareness, in this case clients' mindfulness of their own childhood dynamics and consequent worldview.

Siegel and Hartzell also introduce the concept of "mindsight"<sup>TM</sup>—the ability to perceive the minds of others as well as their own. For your clients, this means mindfulness about their own Enneagram style and mindsight about their children's. Research further indicates that intention, when followed by changes in behavior, can change how brains function. I'm particularly heartened to know this can be done "backwards"—no matter how old your clients or their children are, they can re-live their own childhoods and their children's through an Enneagram perspective, actually affecting brain chemistry in a way that can heal long-held wounds.

All Enneagram styles have strengths and challenges as parents, whether they had secure or insecure attachments when growing up. There's no research to back this up, but it's likely there will be an even distribution of attachment types across Enneagram styles, though each might react differently. Some potential interaction patterns are easy to guess.

Barbara Whiteside, in "Seeing Your Child" (September 2009 *Enneagram Monthly*), gives the example of a Three mother "who had a very easy time with her Seven daughter because they both had assertive energy and enjoyed lots of activity (but) struggled in understanding her Four daughter..." Many, if not most, of your clients with grown children will believe they could have done a better job as young parents. However, thinking "If only I'd known then what I know now" will be wishful thinking unless what they "know" now is based on deep self-reflection about their own Enneagram style along with mindsight about their child's, especially if different.

There are provocative "Inside-Out" exercises at the end of each chapter in *Parenting from the Inside Out*. In a recent workshop I gave on Parenting with the Enneagram, participants were inspired to deep inquiry with these two: "(1) Think of an experience from your childhood when your reality was denied. How did you feel? (2) Think of a time when you and your child had a different reaction to the same experience. Now try to see the events from your child's point of view." Your coaching will be enhanced when you engage in a similar exploration of your own Enneagram style and those of your children and can model that with your clients. What follows is the story I shared with my workshop participants.



The baby in this photo, taken more than forty years ago, is my daughter. With her personality barely forming, I naively assumed she would be like me. This was long before I learned about the Enneagram, and I had little capability as a young Nine mother to be present to an Eight daughter. A few years ago I wrote the poem "Swamp Magic" which likens my daughter as a baby to a tadpole, sleeping face-down with her knees bent outward ("still swimming in the amnion"), ending with these lines:

...What could we talk about?  
I was brought up to behave,  
bewildered by a frog princess  
who could be heard for miles.  
A ring-tongued, Mohawked  
Tarot reader, a hefty bike babe,  
she teaches me computer skills,  
and I accommodate the real.

As do all families, we had our good times and bad times over the years, but—as a typical Nine—I tended to forget the bad times and reacted defensively when my daughter's recollections were different from mine. Then three years ago she decided I would never see the world through her eyes, and we became politely estranged. I labeled this as "her" problem until I finally dropped my defenses and found a mother and daughter team, Alexandra Vance and Mariana Bernoski, who offer a workshop in "Mother-Daughter Conversations." Only then did I develop retrospective mindsight about my daughter.

Among the insights offered by Alexandra and Mariana was a summary of healthy, average, and unhealthy descriptions of a Nine mother. I could see I had shown little of the healthy Nine mother ("I encourage

differences from me in her” ... “we co-create a playful environment”), was mostly “average” (“I see myself as nobody special but see my child as idealized... not the actual person”), and to some degree “unhealthy” (“She needs my full presence and she doesn’t have it”).

Because of my lack of self-awareness, remoteness, and blindness to the significant differences between us, I was more than a bit backwards; I truly did not know who my daughter was.

When we first spoke with Alexandra and Mariana, I knew no words would convince my daughter I could be truly present to her worldview, and I would only gain her trust by hearing and acknowledging what her childhood was like for her as an Eight, not what I wanted it to be as a Nine. During our second session she was beginning to accept that maybe I had changed. Then, in a long phone conversation outside the workshop she said, in true Eight fashion, “It’s clear you’ve worked your ass off, Mom!” Affirming that both of us had matured significantly, we joked about the *Work Your Ass Off School of Coaching*, a playfulness long missing from our relationship.

I hope my story, and *Parenting from the Inside Out*, will help your clients get their you-know-whats in gear.

Making sense of life can free parents from patterns of the past that have imprisoned them in the present... By deepening our ability to understand our own emotional experience, we are better able to relate empathically with our children and promote their self-understanding and healthy development. (Siegel and Hartzell, *Parenting From the Inside Out*)

# Divided We Fall

by Clarence Thomson

Long before Karl Rove made polarization a national issue, psychologists were aware that it's an inner as well as a political reality.

Polarization is the division of a single reality into two opposing positions. Politically, it is right versus left, rich versus poor (notice the lament over the loss of the middle class). It is a destructive dynamic that functions the same within the person as it does in our nation. When a reality is polarized, each extreme depends on the other for its function.

In a group, in a marriage, in an employer/employee relationship, the pattern is the same. In a marriage, for example, the person who overachieves and does all the work will be angry with the person who underachieves, with little or no insight into the fact that his/her overachieving makes the underachieving possible. In a sense, the overachiever depends on the underachiever and vice versa. At work the bully depends on wimps.

Polarization creates a lot of energy, like stretching a rubber band. We sort of like polarization. Think of sports. The players are divided into opposition: what is good for one is bad for the other and they depend on each other for a game. Watch a high school or college game and notice the energy it creates. You have the same energy in political and religious extremists. Many people are highly successful because they overuse their Enneagram style. Think of a One like Martha Stewart, an Eight like Donald Trump, or a Five like Warren Buffet.

Our Enneagram style is held in place by a number of things, and polarization usually figures quite prominently. Carl Jung talked about us having a "shadow," and the understanding is that if we have an overt exaggeration in public, we would have a corresponding inner attitude that is the opposite. It is not enough to be a hypocrite, to say one thing publicly and hold another opinion privately. The public opinion and the private conviction are directly opposed to and dependent on each other. We often miss the dependency.

When coaching, you can usually help someone who is stuck if you can ferret out a polarization that's causing part of the problem. Because of personal history, we may have more than one polarization, but I'll list a polarization I've found in Enneagram styles.

- Ones can polarize between desire and virtue. They can be self-righteous and puritanical in public with a dark suspicion of sensual pleasure within. Think of some evangelical preachers like Jimmy Swaggart, preaching virtue on TV and cavorting in motels soon afterwards.
- Twos can polarize between needs. They will assume the familiar either/or thinking that goes with polarization. Either I can meet your needs or I can meet mine. The strategy for many Twos is I'll meet your needs and wait breathlessly for you to meet mine.
- Threes polarize between success and failure. The public proofs of success: money, medals, awards and trophies are often accompanied by an inner image of failure. Oprah is fabulously wealthy and famous and when she made a movie, it was about her slave heritage. Tony Robbins

opens his book on unlimited power with the image he carries of being overweight and sleeping in a bathtub.

- Fours can polarize around acceptance. They often seem snobbish, looking down on mortals with bad taste and crass insensibilities while secretly feeling they are defective. Their passionate pursuit of perfect love is cruelly balanced by a belief that they're unlovable. So if you love them, you've been duped. If you only knew.
- Fives can polarize around boundaries. On the one hand, they're acutely sensitive to the demands of others, on the other hand they demand privacy and advance notice of visits or requests. They maintain emotional distance while being affected by even small requests or gifts.
- Sixes do polarization in a comprehensive way. They polarize against themselves, second guessing decisions and playing devil's advocate. They look to authorities eagerly and then don't trust what the authority does. They suspect the worst of the people they love the most – it's called loyalty.
- Sevens often polarize between freedom and confinement. On the surface they are spontaneous and enthusiastic but inwardly they can feel trapped and confined, often taking jobs or creating situations that emotionally imprison them.
- Eights are overtly loud and powerful, while inwardly worrying about possible vulnerabilities. The NFL linebacker remembers vividly how he was beaten up by an older boy when he was seven.
- Nines are often described as passive aggressive, which blows their cover as polarized. They say yes to your face in response to your unreasonable request and then fulfill your request on the wrong day. Their polarization is between doing what you want and what they want. Within themselves these are felt to be opposed.

These are only examples I've seen or worked with. We have major and minor polarities and what might be a nuisance for one can be crucial for others.

Be especially careful if you use one word to characterize a style. You might tend to assume the polarization is around that word. If you think of all Ones only as perfectionists, you might miss the cultural polarization around American Puritanism, which is righteousness versus sensual pleasure. Our Enneagram style is—among other things—an energy and does not allow one-word accurate descriptions, even though in the beginning that may be helpful as a teaching device.