

Personality 7

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TYPE SEVEN: The Enthusiast. Fun, spontaneous and adventurous, they are motivated by a need to be happy, to plan stimulating experiences and to avoid pain.

The Fear or Head TRIAD (5, 6, 7).

These numbers are **driven by fear**—Five externalizes it, Six internalizes it, and **Seven forgets it**. They take in and relate to the world through the mind. They tend to think and plan carefully before they act.

Sevens are every bit as fearful as Fives and Sixes. Where they differ is in the way they defend themselves against it—Fives ward off fear with knowledge, Sixes with pessimism and Sevens with inexhaustible optimism.

DEADLY SIN

SEVENS: Gluttony. To avoid painful feelings, Sevens gorge themselves on positive experiences, planning and anticipating new adventures, and entertaining interesting ideas. Never satisfied, the Seven's frenzied pursuit of these distractions eventually escalates to the point of gluttony.

Type Seven “The Enthusiast”

Just think of happy things, and your heart will fly on wings!

Peter Pan

Healthy Sevens know that often “less is more.” They are aware of the energy they have invested in manufacturing happiness, and they know that joy is a gift or grace that can only be received. They have embraced a full range of human emotion and they are growing in their ability to accept life as it is rather than as they want it to be. They are able to incorporate pain and disappointment into the whole of their lives, rather than merely avoiding it. When Enthusiasts are in a healthy space, they are not only fun and adventurous but also spiritually grounded, practical, and resilient.

Average Sevens reframe almost everything that is sad, limiting or could be perceived as failure, changing the narrative so that even the most negative events are recast in an affirming way. They find most of their happiness in anticipation and much of their sadness in the reality that their expectations are seldom realized. These Sevens entertain to feel safe and to claim their place in a group. Though they are very popular, they find commitment to be a challenge and have great trouble finishing projects, often jumping from one thing to the next.

Unhealthy Sevens see themselves and their environment as inadequate, feeling sorry for themselves and often believing they’ve been dealt an unfair hand. They try to avoid pain at any cost, which leads to irresponsible behavior and seeking instant gratification. These Sevens are often reckless, risking more than they can stand to lose, and are more prone to addiction than any other number.

Sevens embody joy and a boundless love for life. Most mornings they burst into life like kids who just found out it’s a snow day. As is the case with every Enneagram type, what’s best about their personality is what’s worst about their personality. Their gift is also their curse. Scratch the vibrant paint on the surface of a Seven and what you’ll find underneath is the need to avoid pain. I can’t say that strongly enough—Sevens don’t want to feel unpleasant emotions, particularly that swirl of fear and emptiness they register at their core. No one enjoys feeling frightened, sad, bored, angry, disappointed or frustrated, but for Sevens, emotions like these are intolerable.

...for Sevens, the sin of gluttony ... is a reflection of their compulsive need to devour positive experiences, stimulating ideas and fine material things in order to fend off suffering, hurtful memories and a feeling of chronic deprivation. Sevens crave stimulation. Ask one how much is enough and they'll say, "Just a little more." And that's the problem—there's never enough, at least not to satisfy a Seven's voracious appetite.

Sevens cope with their inner tumult by gorging themselves on interesting ideas, acquiring choice material possessions, jamming their calendars with activities and adventures, fantasizing about a future filled with exciting possibilities, and planning their next great escapade.

According to the Enneagram, the opposite of gluttony is sobriety. For Sevens, sobriety doesn't mean giving up drinking but rather slowing down, living in the present moment, exercising self-restraint, reining in their restless "monkey minds" and getting down to the business of ordinary life.

All of us have ways of defending ourselves against pain. For Sevens, it's keeping things lively and positive. The question Sevens are always asking themselves is, How can I jam as many pleasurable experiences into this moment as possible? Their source of satisfaction is never found within them or in the present moment; it's always external and in the far-distant future.

All this hopped-up behavior is how Sevens divert their attention away from the unacknowledged and unintegrated losses and anxieties that haunt them. Most people know that unpleasant feelings and truths can't be avoided indefinitely, but not Sevens. They believe they can outrun them forever.

Sevens will go out of their way to avoid pain and introspection, which makes the self-awareness that's needed for growth more of a challenge for Sevens than for most other types.

Not all Sevens become addicts, but their impulsivity and difficulty with delaying gratification, combined with their desire to escape afflictive emotions at all costs, make them more addiction-prone than any other number on the Enneagram.

Sevens are spin doctors In the blink of an eye they can take a bad situation and recast it in a positive light to skirt feeling the pain you and I would experience if the same thing happened to us. This defense mechanism is unconscious, instantaneous and impressive.

If you call Sevens on the carpet for acting selfishly or having a bad attitude, or you caution them against making a dumb decision, they'll come up with a million good reasons for doing whatever it is they want to do no matter what it will cost them or others. Their litany of justifications is no more than a strategy against having to feel guilty for being selfish or stupid for making an unwise decision.

Sevens don't want to be tied down. Sevens need flexibility and avoid making long-term, option-limiting commitments. They live for the next adventure. These pleasure seekers savor the anticipation. For them the best part of a meal, a party or a trip isn't when it comes; it's the thrill of expectancy leading up to it. This is why sevens sometimes feel a little down when the meal appears, the party guests arrive, or they're actually standing at the base of the Eiffel Tower. Unfortunately, Sevens have so much trouble remaining in the present moment they never fully enjoy the adventures they're having because they're already thinking and planning the next one.

SEVENS AS CHILDREN

Sevens often describe childhoods filled with pleasant adventure. If you succeed at getting Sevens to open up about their childhood, they will describe times when they were made to feel overwhelmed or abandoned and without support.

In their developmental years, Sevens heard the wounding message, “You’re on your own. No one’s here to support or take care of you.” In response Sevens said, “I’ll do it if no one else will.” ... Young Seven’s strategy involved creating a pain-free Neverland in their mind where they could hide out and think happy thoughts until their pain dissolved.

Regardless of the underlying factors, as kids Sevens adopt a strategy of going up into their heads to plan adventures, entertain captivating ideas, and imagine a life where the sky’s the limit to diffuse scary emotions they fear will overwhelm them. Like Peter Pan they truly believe in magic. They live in imaginary scenes in their rooms, their backyards and the back seat of the car. They are happy to play with others and content when they are alone.

Curiosity defines Sevens, which is part of the gift they are to themselves and to the world. But boundless curiosity is also part of the problem. Seven kids find rules insufferably limiting.

Seven children are not achievement oriented so much as experience oriented. That’s not to say they are lazy – far from it! Sevens are always on the go: they’re the kids who want to stay longer and play longer. Limitless energy is available day after day in their world, they never seem to want to stop.

For these children, feeling good instead of bad seems to be a choice, so they are confused by sadness in others. Sevens learn to move away from fear and pain early in childhood and they carry that strategy into adulthood.

SEVENS IN RELATIONSHIPS

More than any other type Sevens need spontaneity. If you’re not ready and raring to go somewhere at a moment’s notice, your relationship with a Seven probably won’t last.

Sevens want nothing to do with confining relationships. They’re classic commitment phobes.... As Helen Palmer observes, because they treasure their

independence Sevens have to be made to believe a relational commitment is their idea rather than something you imposed on them.

Sevens are wonderful companions. Because their talk style is *storytelling*, they can keep a group on the edge of their seats while they excitedly act out a story of something that happened to them. They're always interested in your inner life. They'll want to know your life story and draw into their exciting world. Fear of bad feelings that arise in conflict will trigger denial in a Seven. You might have to light your hair on fire before you get a Seven to face up to the fact that something is not working. Their repression of emotions can make some Sevens appear callous or lacking empathy.

Sevens always want to keep their options open. They're the people who say they'll get back to you. It's not unusual for a Sevens friend to say they have felt abandoned by them on occasion. They tend to overcommit socially, since a seven abhors a vacuum and an empty calendar threatens them with boredom.

People unknowingly rely on Sevens to bring their supply of infectious enthusiasm to every activity they do with them.

Sevens would rather eat glass than suffer boredom. When it surfaces Sevens get hyperactive and overly talkative, their minds race faster than usual, and they become bad-tempered.

When adult Sevens begin frantically running around or flitting from one project to the next without finishing any, they need friends or partners to stop them and say "get present."

Sevens are fascinated with other people's lives, and they're counterintuitively attracted to people who have suffered. To be clear, Sevens can enter dark emotional spaces, but they can only stay there for so long before they have to escape.

SEVENS AT WORK

Sevens need to find work that in fast paced, creative environments that afford them independence, a variety of activities and flexibility. Sevens are dreamers and initiators. Their ability to synthesize information from a wide range of subject areas, spot unseen patterns and connect the dots inside complex bodies of knowledge and notice where systems overlap make them prolific idea generators. Add to that Sevens' keen analytical skills and their capacity to envision an organization's preferred future, and you've got someone who will adrenalize teams and make invaluable contributions to advancing the mission of any organization. Sevens are rock stars when it comes to working on short-term projects or getting start-up companies off the ground. Their optimism and creative juice and sprite energy move things along at a quick pace. Be forewarned, however: Sevens aren't managers or maintainers, so you'll need to find someone else to oversee the execution phase. Also, Sevens are marvelous team players. Friendly and popular, they bring variety and some much-needed spontaneity to the workplace.

Sevens work best under conditions that offer both firmness and flexibility. They need to be held accountable to keeping on track, but it's best to give talented Sevens a long leash, a multifaceted job description and encouragement to stay the course. Sevens make great leaders as long as they don't have to carry the weight of too much responsibility.

WINGS

Sevens with a Six wing (7w6). These sevens are more settled than other Sevens. Fueled by the conscientiousness of the Six, they give both projects and people more time before moving on to the next thing. These Sevens are sensitive and a bit more anxious, but they successfully use charm to disarm. Once they commit to a relationship, they have a good chance of staying connected and working out challenges in it. These Sevens are dutiful and loyal to family and friends. They are funny, entertaining, and accepting of others.

Sevens with an Eight wing (7w8). The 7w8s are competitive, bold and aggressive. Reflecting the Eight's characteristic bravado, they are persuasive and assertive in relation to their ideas and agendas, and they usually get their way. Still, they are playful, and having a good time is more important to them than gaining power. These Sevens are easily bored, so they often start things they don't finish. They enjoy being in relationships as long as they can contribute to the happiness of their partner. Living inside an unhappy relationship is very frustrating for these Sevens, and yet endings are devastating.

STRESS AND SECURITY

Stress. When they're under stress, Sevens can adopt the unhealthy and perfectionistic behavior of the Ones. They become pessimistic, judgmental, and argumentative. They start blaming others for their problems and lapse into black and white thinking.

Security. When Sevens feel secure, they can start to behave like healthy Fives. Here they stop consuming and start contributing, are more comfortable with silence and solitude, become more serious, and begin to think about the meaning and purpose of their lives. Sevens on the positive side of One explore things on a much deeper level than other Sevens and are able to face their fears. Sevens connected to the positive side of Five can experience satisfaction in the truest sense of the word.

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Who else can awaken our childlike wonder, rescue us from taking ourselves too seriously or help us appreciate the miracle of life quite like a Seven?

But here is the hard truth: pain is unavoidable. On the road to spiritual transformation, Sevens have to learn how to embrace and steward their suffering rather than run from it. Seven's strategies for avoiding pain create more suffering for them.

Until they learn this Sevens are like addicts who will have to keep upping the dosage of fascinating ideas, novel experiences and self-generated pleasant feelings to repress the ones they want to keep outside their conscious awareness. It's time for Sevens to stop consuming and start contributing. True happiness and satisfaction can't be taken by force or manufactured whenever we need them; they are the result of living a focused and productive life that gives something back to the world.

“In a world of tension and breakdown it is necessary for there to be those who seek to integrate their inner lives not by avoiding anguish and running away from problems, but by facing them in their naked reality and their ordinariness.” Thomas Merton

The healing message Sevens need to hear and believe is *God will take care of you*. It will take courage, determination, honesty, the help of a counselor or a spiritual director, and understanding friends to help Sevens confront painful memories and to encourage them to stay with afflictive feelings as they arises in the present moment. If Sevens cooperate with the process, they'll grow a deep heart and become a truly integrated person.

TEN PATHS TO TRANSFORMATION FOR SEVENS

1. Practice restraint and moderation. Get off the treadmill that tells you more is always better.
2. You suffer from “monkey mind.” Develop a daily practice of meditation to free yourself from your tendency to jump from one idea , topic, or project to the next.
3. Develop and practice a spiritual discipline of solitude on a regular basis.

4. Unflinchingly reflect on the past and make a list of people who have hurt you or whom you have hurt; then forgive them and yourself. Make amends where necessary.
5. Give yourself a pat on the back whenever you allow yourself to feel negative emotions like anxiety, sadness, frustration, envy, or disappointment without letting yourself run away and escape them. It's a sign you're starting to grow up.
6. Bring your self back to the present moment whenever you begin fantasizing about the future or making too many plans for it.
7. Exercise daily to burn off excess energy.
8. You don't like being told you have potential because it means you'll feel pressure to buckle down and commit to cultivating a specific talent, which will inevitably limit your options. But you do have potential, so what career or life path would you like to commit yourself to for the long haul? Take concrete steps to make good on the gifts God has given you.
9. Get a journal and record your answers to questions like "What does my life mean? What memories or feelings am I running from? Where's the depth I yearn to have that will complement my intelligence?" Don't abandon this exercise until it is finished.
10. Make a commitment that when a friend or partner is hurting, you will try to simply be present for them while they are in pain without trying to artificially cheer them up.