

## Personality Type 8

Cron, Ian Morgan; Stabile, Suzanne. *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery* (p. 27). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

**TYPE EIGHT:** The Challenger. Commanding, intense and confrontational, they are motivated by a need to be strong and avoid feeling weak or vulnerable.

**The Anger or Gut Triad (8, 9, 1).**

**These numbers are driven by anger—Eight externalizes it, Nine forgets it, and One internalizes it.** They take in and respond to life instinctually or “at the gut level.” They tend to express themselves honestly and directly.

### **DEADLY SIN**

**EIGHTS: Lust.** Eights lust after intensity. It can be seen in the excessiveness they evidence in every area of life. Domineering and confrontational, Eights present a hard, intimidating exterior to mask vulnerability.

**HEALTHY EIGHTS** are great friends, exceptional leaders and champions of those who cannot fight on their own behalf. They have the intelligence, courage and stamina to do what others say can't be done. They have learned to use power in the right measure at the right times, and they are capable of collaborating and valuing the contributions of others. They understand vulnerability and even embrace it at times.

**AVERAGE EIGHTS** tend to be steamrollers more than diplomats. They are dualistic thinkers, so people are good or bad, opinions are right or

wrong, and the future is bright or bleak. They prefer to lead, struggle to follow and use aggression to emotionally protect themselves. Many Eights are leaders, and others follow them with little or no hesitation. They have little patience with people who are indecisive or who don't pull their weight.

**UNHEALTHY EIGHTS** are preoccupied with the idea that they are going to be betrayed. Suspicious and slow to trust others, they resort to revenge when wronged. They believe they can change reality, and they make their own rules and expect others to follow them. Eights in this space destroy as much as they create, believing the world is a place where people are objects to be used and contributions from others have little or no lasting value.

Eights are called Challengers because they're aggressive, confrontational, high-voltage people who approach life the way Alaric and his Visigoths approached Rome: they sack it. The deadly sin of the Eight is lust, but not in the sexual sense. Eights lust after intensity—they are high-voltage human dynamos who want to be wherever the action and energy are, and if they can't find any, they'll cook it up. Eights have more energy than any other number on the Enneagram. They are fiery, zestful, earthy, full-throttle people who drink life down to the dregs and then slam their glass down and order a second round for everyone else at the bar.

When Eights walk into a room you feel their presence before you see them. Their larger-than-life energy doesn't fill a space; it owns it.

The defining feature of an Eight is the overabundance of intense energy they radiate wherever they go.

Spiritually healthy, self-aware Eights love to do what others say can't be done. When their energy is harnessed and channeled they can change

the course of history. Think Martin Luther King Jr. On the other hand, a spiritually undeveloped Eight who tests poorly on the self-knowledge scale is someone you want to keep away from the kids. Think Joseph Stalin.

## **ALL ABOUT EIGHTS OR CHALLENGERS**

Anger is the dominant emotion in an Eight's life. They are fiercely independent people whose oppositional energy expresses itself in a need to be strong and go up against power. Eights assume others are untrustworthy until they've proven themselves otherwise. It's no surprise, then, that anger is their go-to emotion. It's so close to the surface that you can sometimes feel like it's radiating off them like a space heater. And because anger is so easy for them to access, an average Eight can be a little too quick to the draw, firing off a few rounds at people without thinking beforehand about the consequences. Their flashes of anger, however, are unconscious defense maneuvers to avoid acknowledging or revealing weakness or vulnerability. Eights use anger like a palisade to hide behind and defend the softer, more tender feelings of the open-hearted, innocent child they once were, the one they don't want others to see. Eights don't come equipped with dimmers. They are on or off, all in or all out. They "go big or go home." They want to express their animal drives and satisfy their appetite for life without limitations or constraints being placed on them by anybody. This impulsive, all-or-nothing approach to life leaves Eights prone to being overindulgent and excessive. They can overwork, overparty, overeat, overexercise, overspend, over-anything. For an Eight, too much of a good thing is almost enough.

All this hot-blooded, passionate and combative energy can feel overwhelming and threatening to people who aren't Eights.

Eights don't see themselves as angry people. In fact, they're genuinely surprised when they learn other people experience them as intimidating, insensitive and domineering.

Eights see themselves as honest, straight-talking people who aren't afraid to go nose to nose with whatever life throws at them and always leave everything on the field.

Eights care deeply about justice and fairness. They are fierce advocates for widows, orphans, the poor and the marginalized. They have no problem speaking truth to power, and they are perhaps the only number on the Enneagram who are brave enough to confront and take down the oppressors and dictators of the world.

Having witnessed or experienced the negative consequences of powerlessness as a child, the Eight identifies with the easily prayed upon and rushes to their aid.

This is a temptation to Eights who are more often dualistic than non-dualistic thinkers. They see things as black or white, good or bad, fair or unfair. People are friend or foe, weak or strong, streetwise or suckers. In an Eight's mind, you and I have opinions while they have facts. They absolutely believe their viewpoints or positions on issues are irrefutable. They reject taking a nuanced view of anything because not having clarity or absolute certainty about your position represents weakness or – God forbid – cowardice.

For Eights a good old-fashioned verbal brawl gives them the opportunity to “get big” and disabuse people of any illusion they might previously have held about the Eight being weak. Eights value truth, and there's nothing like a nose-to-nose confrontation to bring light to it. Eights know other people can show their hands in the heat of a fight. A confrontation can expose what's really happening behind the scenes,

force people's real intentions or hidden agendas into the open or reveal whether people can stand their ground and be trusted.

The talk style of Eights is *commanding*. Often their sentences are littered with imperatives and end with exclamation marks.

## **EIGHTS AS CHILDREN**

A common story for Eights as children is that something happened during their formative years that required them to prematurely abandoned their childlike innocence in order to take responsibility for their own lives and often the lives of others. Some Eights were raised in unstable environments or homes where toughness was rewarded with praise. Others report they were bullied at school until it became clear they could rely on no one but themselves.

Regardless of the root cause, as kids Eights picked up the message that "the world is a hostile place where only the strong survive, and the weak or innocent get emotionally beaten up or betrayed. So put on your armor and never let them see your soft side.

Eights worry a lot about betrayal. It's why many of them won't trust more than a small circle of friends over the course of their lives.

As they grew a little older, Eights looked around the sandbox or their home and saw a "might makes right" world in which there were two types of people – those who controlled others and those who submitted. Eights don't feel like the have to be the person in control – *they just don't want to be controlled*. You will never fully understand Eights if you don't grasp this distinction.

Eights are not characteristically bullies. Bullies act out to compensate and cover their own fears, while Eights aren't afraid of anyone. Because

of their concern for justice and desire to instinctively protect and defend the disadvantaged, Eights are more likely to stand up to bullies.

Young Eights will get in line when limits are placed on them, but their motive has less to do with pleasing and more with hoping they'll be rewarded with more freedom and independence for good behavior. They don't feel the need to conform, but they know when it's to their advantage to follow the rules.

The downside to their independence and self-reliance is that these kids can forget their innocence much too early, and it is difficult to reclaim it later in life. They need to recover a little of the open-heartedness that defines childhood for others. They need to remember that time in life when they didn't need to be in charge or control to feel safe, when they could trust others to protect them. They need the lessons that mistakes and weakness teach us: the value of an apology, the experience of forgiveness and the lessons we only learn from following another leader.

## **THE CHALLENGER IN RELATIONSHIPS**

**Eights are not easy in relationship.** The care and energy you have to expend to be their friend or partner is worth it.

**Eights want people to challenge them right back.** Eights admire strength. They won't respect you if you're not willing to stand toe to toe with them. They want others to be their equals and stand up for what they believe.

**Eights want the unvarnished truth.** Never lie or send a mixed message to an Eight. You have to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Information is power, so Eights want to know the facts. They don't want you to protect them from the facts or coddle them by

leaving out unpleasant details. In an Eights mind, there's a lot at stake. If they don't know the truth, then they don't know what's really happening, and if they don't know what's really happening, they they're not in control, and not in control is where Eights *never* want to be. This is not about control of the situation it is about being in control of themselves and their choices. If you hold back any relevant information, Eights will feel like you've left them flapping in the wind and dangerously exposed. You don't want to lose an Eight's trust. It takes a long time to get it back, *so always lead with the truth.*

**Eights want to be in control.** They often don't say "I'm sorry." If you tell them they've said or done something that hurt you, they may even make matters worse by accusing you of being too sensitive. Eights who lack self-awareness are super quick to blame others rather than take responsibility for their own mistakes. Spiritually immature Eights, consider expressing remorse or admitting their part when something has gone wrong represents weakness.

Eights are imposing, commanding personalities who need to be "the boss." Unless you put the brakes on they will take charge of everything.

If you're in a romantic relationship with an Eight, you have to know who you are and be independent. They don't want you to draft off their energy; they want you to bring your own. Friends and partners have to keep them in check. "self-forgetting" is a hallmark of all three numbers of the Anger Triad (8,9,1)

Eights forget they are not superhumans. Many eights feel phusically bigger and more powerful than they are, so they 'll place unreasonable demands on their bodies and put their health and well being at risk. They'll bristle when you say it, but Eights need to me reminded that moderation is a virtue, not a restraining order.

**Eights have a tender side** – Beneath all the intensity and anger energy of an Eight there is a heart brimming with tenderness and love.

Feel honored when an Eight displays tenderness or shares vulnerable thoughts or feelings with you. A big problem for Eights is confusing vulnerability for weakness, so they rarely let down their guard to allow others to see their fragility or their deep desire to be understood and loved.

Eights are eager to support people who want to realize their potential. They know how to empower and bring out the best in others all they ask is that you show up and give 150 percent of yourself.

When eights are in a healthy space they're a blast. They laugh easily, entertain generously and tell the kind of jokes that make you donkey snort. But they are serious competitors as well. Eights hate to lose more than they love to win.

## **FEMALE EIGHTS**

Gender plays a role in how life unfolds for Eights. Eights are hard driving, tough, decisive, innovative, resourceful and accomplishing what people say can't be done. They just make things happen. Female Eights are the most misunderstood and unfairly treated number on the Enneagram. In our culture a male Eight is respected and revered. People lionize men who "kick ass and take names." Sadly, we all know the word people use to describe a woman in the workplace or community who takes charge, stands up for what she believes, refuses to take crap from people and gets the job done. Many female Eights go through life scratching their heads and thinking, *Why do people experience and treat me this way?*



## WINGS

### **Eights with a Seven Wing (8w7)**

Eights with a Seven wing are outgoing, energetic and fun, reflecting the Seven's sunny personality. They are also ambitious, impulsive and sometimes reckless. These Eights live life to the fullest. They are most energetic of all numbers and the most entrepreneurial.

### **Eights with a Nine wing (8w9)**

Eights with a Nine wing have a more measured approach to life. They are more approachable and more open to cooperation over competition, in keeping with the Nine's tendency to play a peacemaking role. 8w9 can be conciliatory. They are supportive, modest and less blustery, and others are happy to follow their lead. When the Nine's gift of seeing both sides of everything is available to Eights, they become successful negotiators in situations both big and small.

## STRESS AND SECURITY

**Stress.** When Eights get stressed out, they move to and take on those qualities you'd associate with unhealthy Fives (the Investigators). Here they withdraw and become less connected to their emotions. Some experience insomnia and neglect to take care of themselves, eating poorly and not exercising. In this space Eights become secretive and hypervigilant about betrayal. They also may dig their heels in and become even more uncompromising than usual.

**Security.** Eights move to the healthy side of Two in security, where they become more caring and aren't so conscious of hiding their tender and gentle nature. Eights in this space don't insist their belief and opinions are absolutely right but learn to listen and value other people's points

of view as well. They start to trust in something bigger than themselves, and allow others to take care of them – which, if even for a short time, makes everyone happy. Eights connected to the positive side of two realize that justice is usually a reality beyond their control and that vengeance is something best left up to God.

## **SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION**

In his book *The Holy Longing*, Catholic writer Father Ronald Rolheiser describes *eros* as “an unquenchable fire, a restlessness, a longing, a disquiet, a hunger, a loneliness, a gnawing nostalgia, a wildness that cannot be tamed, a congenital all-embracing ache that lies at the center of human experience and is the ultimate force that drives everything else.” Suzanne and I have a hunch that Eights are more in touch with, or perhaps even endowed with, a greater measure of this divine *eros* than the rest of us. That’s a lot to manage. When contained correctly, their fire can safely welcome and warm people. But like all fire, if not surrounded with a hearth of self-restraint, it will burn your house down.

When Eights are spiritually on the beam and self-aware, they are powerhouses: fearless, magnanimous, inspiring, energetic, supportive, loyal, self-confident, intuitive, committed and tolerant toward those who are weaker than they are.

When Eights switch their lives over to autopilot and spiritually fall asleep at the wheel of their personality, they become shamelessly excessive, reckless, arrogant, bull-headedly uncompromising and sometimes even cruel.

Eights truly need help to tap into the childhood innocence they gave up too early and restore their trust in humanity. They need to work on accepting that betrayal does happen (we are only human , perfection is

beyond our ability) and there is enough love and forgiveness available to not only survive but heal the harsh blows that this unpredictable world can inflict.

The healing message Eights need to know, believe and feel is this: THERE ARE LOTS OF TRUSTWORTHY PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, AND THOUGH THE RISK OF BETRAYAL IS ALWAYS REAL, LOVE AND CONNECTION WILL FOREVER ELUDE THEM UNLESS THEY WELCOME AND RECONNECT TO THE INNOCENT, LESS DEFENDED CHILD THEY ONCE WERE. YES, BETRAYAL IS EXQUISITELY PAINFUL, BUT IT DOESN'T HAPPEN AS OFTEN AS EIGHTS FEAR IT DOES. AND IF OR WHEN IT DOES, THEY'LL BE STRONG ENOUGH TO SURVIVE IT.

Living behind a façade of bluster and toughness to mask one's fear of emotional harm is cowardly, not courageous. Are you strong enough to come out from behind the mask of boast and brusqueness? That's the real question.

I recommend Eights read and reread Berne Brown's books *The Power of Vulnerability* and *The Gifts of Imperfection*.

## TEN PATHS TO TRANSFORMATION FOR EIGHTS

1. Too often, your intensity and lust for life runs the show. Give a friend permission to tell you when you're going overboard or exhibiting extreme behaviors. Remember "Moderation, moderation, moderation."
2. To recover a piece of your natural childhood innocence, tend and befriend your inner child. I know, you don't have time for this sort of crap, but it helps.
3. Watch out for and avoid black-and-white thinking. Gray is actually a color.

4. Broaden your definition of strength and courage to include vulnerability. Risk sharing your heart at deeper levels with someone in your life.
5. Remember, your tendency is to act impulsively. It's "Ready, aim, fire!" not "Fire, aim, ready!"
6. You don't have a corner on the truth market. In the heat of battle, stop and ask yourself, *What if I am wrong?* Say that 100 times a day.
7. Your personality is twice as big and intense as you think it is, and what feels like passion to you often feels like intimidation to others. Offer an unqualified apology when people tell you that you ran over them.
8. Don't always play the part of the rebel and try not to pit yourself against appropriate authority figures. They're not all bad people.
9. When you power up and get angry, stop and ask yourself whether you're trying to hide or deny a vulnerable feeling. What feeling is it? How do you use aggression as a way to hide it or defend against it?
10. Don't judge yourself or others as weak for sharing tender feelings. It takes courage to drop your guard and expose your inner child (I know, you still hate that phrase)