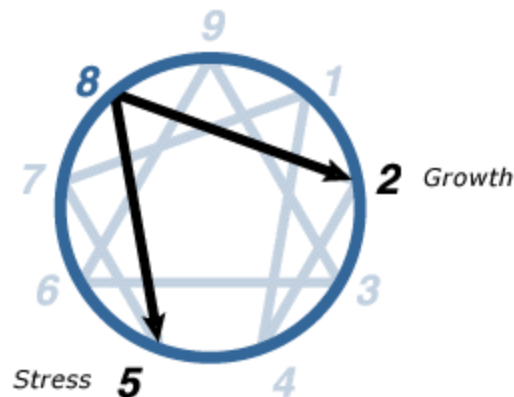


Enneagram Type 8 - The Challenger

The Powerful, Dominating Type:

Self-Confident, Decisive, Willful, and Confrontational



Type Eight in Brief

Eights are self-confident, strong, and assertive. Protective, resourceful, straight-talking, and decisive, but can also be ego-centric and domineering. Eights feel they must control their environment, especially people, sometimes becoming confrontational and intimidating. Eights typically have problems with their tempers and with allowing themselves to be vulnerable. *At their Best*: self-mastering, they use their strength to improve others' lives, becoming heroic, magnanimous, and inspiring.

- **Basic Fear:** Of being harmed or controlled by others
- **Basic Desire:** To protect themselves (to be in control of their own life and destiny)
- **Enneagram Eight with a Seven-Wing:** "The Maverick"
- **Enneagram Eight with a Nine-Wing:** "The Bear"

Key Motivations: Want to be self-reliant, to prove their strength and resist weakness, to be important in their world, to dominate the environment, and to stay in control of their situation.

The Meaning of the Arrows (in brief)

When moving in their Direction of Disintegration (stress), self-confident Eights suddenly become secretive and fearful at Five. However, when moving in their Direction of Integration (growth), lustful, controlling Eights become more open-hearted and caring, like healthy Twos. [Learn more about the arrows.](#)

Examples: G.I. Gurdjieff, Richard Wagner, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Oskar Schindler, Fidel Castro, Martin Luther King, Jr., Lyndon Johnson, Mikhail Gorbachev, Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi, Saddam Hussein, Senator John McCain, Donald Trump, Pablo Picasso, Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer, Toni Morrison, Serena Williams, James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Keith Richards, Queen Latifah, Courtney Love, Jack Black, Chrissie Hynde, Pink, John Wayne, Frank Sinatra, Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Bette Davis, Mae West, Sean Connery, Paul Newman, Clint Eastwood, Tommy Lee Jones, Jack Nicholson, Susan Sarandon, Russell Crowe, Sean Penn, Harvey Keitel, Matt Damon, Alec Baldwin, Roseanne Barr, Barbara Walters, Rosie O'Donnell, "Dr. Phil" McGraw, "Tony Soprano"

Type Eight Overview

We have named personality type Eight *The Challenger* because, of all the types, Eights enjoy taking on challenges themselves as well as giving others opportunities that challenge them to exceed themselves in some way. Eights are charismatic and have the physical and psychological capacities to persuade others to follow them into all kinds of endeavors—from starting a company, to rebuilding a city, to running a household, to waging war, to making peace.

Eights have enormous willpower and vitality, and they feel most alive when they are exercising these capacities in the world. They use their abundant energy to effect changes in their environment—to “leave their mark” on it—but also to keep the environment, and especially other people, from hurting them and those they care about. At an early age, Eights understand that this requires strength, will, persistence, and endurance—qualities that they develop in themselves and which they look for in others.

Thayer is a stockbroker who has worked intensively on understanding her type Eight personality. She recounts a childhood incident in which she could clearly see the development of this pattern.

“Much of my tenacity and toughness comes from my Dad. He always told me not to ‘let anybody push you around.’ It was not okay to cry. I learned to master my weaker side early on. At the tender age of eight, a huge horse ran away with me. When an adult caught the horse, I resolutely dismounted without a tear. I could tell my father was proud.”

Eights do not want to be controlled or to allow others to have power over them (their Basic Fear), whether the power is psychological, sexual, social, or financial. Much of their behavior is involved with making sure that they retain and increase whatever power they have for as long as possible. An Eight may be a general or a gardener, a small businessman or a mogul, the mother of a family or the superior of a religious community. No matter: being “in charge” and leaving their imprint on their sphere is uniquely characteristic of them.

Eights are the true “rugged individualists” of the Enneagram. More than any other type, they stand alone. They want to be independent, and resist being indebted to anyone. They often refuse to “give in” to social convention, and they can defy fear, shame, and concern about the consequences of their actions. Although they are usually aware of what people think of them, they do not let the opinions of others sway them. They go about their business with a steely determination that can be awe inspiring, even intimidating to others.

Although, to some extent, Eights fear physical harm, far more important is their fear of being disempowered or controlled in some way. Eights are extraordinarily tough and can absorb a great deal of physical punishment without complaint—a double-edged blessing since they often take their health and stamina for granted and overlook the health and well-being of others as well. Yet they are desperately afraid of being hurt emotionally and will use their physical strength to protect their feelings and keep others at a safe emotional distance. Beneath the tough façade is vulnerability, although it has been covered over by layer of emotional armor.

Thus, Eights are often extremely industrious, but at the price of losing emotional contact with many of the people in their lives. Those close to them may become increasingly dissatisfied with this state of affairs, which confounds Eights. (“I don’t understand what my family is complaining about. I bust my hump to provide for them. Why are they disappointed with me?”)

When this happens, Eights feel misunderstood and may distance themselves further. In fact, beneath their imposing exterior, Eights often feel hurt and rejected, although this is something they seldom talk about because they have trouble admitting their vulnerability to themselves, let alone to anyone else. Because they fear that they will be rejected (divorced, humiliated, criticized, fired, or harmed in some way), Eights attempt to defend themselves by rejecting others first. The result is that average Eights become *blocked in their ability to connect with people or to love* since love gives the other power over them, reawakening their Basic Fear.

The more Eights build up their egos in order to protect themselves, the more sensitive they become to any real or imaginary slight to their self-respect, authority, or preeminence. The more they attempt to make themselves impervious to hurt or pain (whether physical or emotional), the more they “shut down” emotionally to become hardened and rock-like.

When Eights are emotionally healthy, however, they have a resourceful, “can-do” attitude as well as a steady inner drive. They take the initiative and make things happen with a great passion for life. They are honorable and authoritative—natural leaders who have a solid, commanding presence. Their groundedness gives them abundant “common sense” as well as the ability to be decisive. Eights are willing to “take the heat,” knowing that any decision cannot please everyone. But as much as possible, they want to look after the interests of the people in their charge without playing favorites. They use their talents and fortitude to construct a better world for everyone in their lives.

Type Eight—Levels of Development

Healthy Levels

Level 1 (At Their Best): Become self-restrained and magnanimous, merciful and forbearing, mastering self through their self-surrender to a higher authority. Courageous, willing to put self in serious jeopardy to achieve their vision and have a lasting influence. May achieve true heroism and historical greatness.

Level 2: Self-assertive, self-confident, and strong: have learned to stand up for what they need and want. A resourceful, "can do" attitude and passionate inner drive.

Level 3: Decisive, authoritative, and commanding: the natural leader others look up to. Take initiative, make things happen: champion people, provider, protective, and honorable, carrying others with their strength.

Average Levels

Level 4: Self-sufficiency, financial independence, and having enough resources are important concerns: become enterprising, pragmatic, "rugged individualists," wheeler-dealers. Risk-taking, hardworking, denying own emotional needs.

Level 5: Begin to dominate their environment, including others: want to feel that others are behind them, supporting their efforts. Swaggering, boastful, forceful, and expansive: the "boss" whose word is law. Proud, egocentric, want to impose their will and vision on everything, not seeing others as equals or treating them with respect.

Level 6: Become highly combative and intimidating to get their way: confrontational, belligerent, creating adversarial relationships. Everything a test of wills, and they will not back down. Use threats and reprisals to get obedience from others, to keep others off balance and insecure. However, unjust treatment makes others fear and resent them, possibly also band together against them.

Unhealthy Levels

Level 7: Defying any attempt to control them, become completely ruthless, dictatorial, "might makes right." The criminal and outlaw, renegade, and con-artist. Hard-hearted, immoral and potentially violent.

Level 8: Develop delusional ideas about their power, invincibility, and ability to prevail: megalomania, feeling omnipotent, invulnerable. Recklessly over-extending self.

Level 9: If they get in danger, they may brutally destroy everything that has not conformed to their will rather than surrender to anyone else. Vengeful, barbaric, murderous. Sociopathic tendencies. Generally corresponds to the Antisocial Personality Disorder.

Addictions

Ignore physical needs and problems: avoid medical visits and check-ups. Indulging in rich foods, alcohol, tobacco while pushing self too hard leads to high stress, strokes,

and heart conditions. Control issues central, although alcoholism and narcotic addictions are possible.

Personal Growth Recommendations for Enneagram Type Eights

- It goes against the grain, but act with self-restraint. You show true power when you forbear from asserting your will with others, even when you could. Your real power lies in your ability to inspire and uplift people. You are at your best when you take charge and help everyone through a crisis. Few will take advantage of you when you are caring, and you will do more to secure the loyalty and devotion of others by showing the greatness of your heart than you ever could by displays of raw power.
- It is difficult for Eights, but learn to yield to others, at least occasionally. Often, little is really at stake, and you can allow others to have their way without fear of sacrificing your power, or your real needs. The desire to dominate everyone all the time is a sign that your ego is beginning to inflate—a danger signal that more serious conflicts with others are inevitable.
- Remember that the world is not against you. Many people in your life care about you and look up to you, but when you are in your fixation, you do not make this easy for them. Let in the affection that is available. Doing this will not make you weak, but will confirm the strength and support in yourself and your life. Also remember that by believing that others are against you and reacting against them, you tend to alienate them and confirm your own fears. Take stock of the people who truly are on your side, and let them know how important they are to you.
- Eights typically want to be self-reliant and depend on no one. But, ironically, they depend on many people. For example, you may think that you are not dependent on your employees because they depend on you for their jobs. You could dismiss them at any time and hire other workers. Everyone is expendable in your little kingdom—except you. But the fact is that you are dependent on others to do their jobs too, especially if your business concerns grow beyond what you can manage alone. But if you alienate everyone associated with you, you will eventually be forced to employ the most obsequious and untrustworthy operatives. When you do, you will have reason to question their loyalty and to fear losing your position. The fact is that

whether in your business world or your domestic life, your self-sufficiency is largely an illusion.

- Eights typically overvalue power. Having power, whether through wealth, position, or simple brute force, allows them to do whatever they want, to feel important, to be feared and obeyed. But those who are attracted to you because of your power do not love you for yourself, nor do you love or respect them. While this may be the Faustian bargain you have made, you will nevertheless have to pay the price that whatever power you accumulated will inevitably be at a cost to you, physically and emotionally.