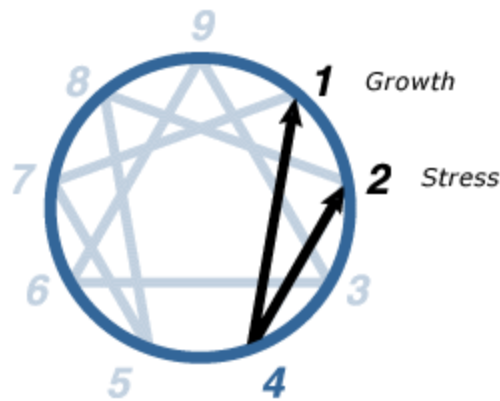


Enneagram Type 4 - Individualist

The Sensitive, Introspective Type:

Expressive, Dramatic, Self-Absorbed, and Temperamental



Type Four in Brief

Fours are self-aware, sensitive, and reserved. They are emotionally honest, creative, and personal, but can also be moody and self-conscious. Withholding themselves from others due to feeling vulnerable and defective, they can also feel disdainful and exempt from ordinary ways of living. They typically have problems with melancholy, self-indulgence, and self-pity. *At their Best:* inspired and highly creative, they are able to renew themselves and transform their experiences.

- **Basic Fear:** That they have no identity or personal significance
- **Basic Desire:** To find themselves and their significance (to create an identity)
- **Enneagram Four with a Three-Wing:** "The Aristocrat"
- **Enneagram Four with a Five-Wing:** "The Bohemian"

Key Motivations: Want to express themselves and their individuality, to create and surround themselves with beauty, to maintain certain moods and feelings, to withdraw to

protect their self-image, to take care of emotional needs before attending to anything else, to attract a "rescuer."

The Meaning of the Arrows (in brief)

When moving in their Direction of Disintegration (stress), aloof Fours suddenly become over-involved and clinging at Two. However, when moving in their Direction of Integration (growth), envious, emotionally turbulent Fours become more objective and principled, like healthy Ones. [Learn more about the arrows.](#)

Examples: Rumi, Frédéric Chopin, Pyotr I. Tchaikovsky, Gustav Mahler, Jackie Kennedy Onassis, Edgar Allen Poe, Yukio Mishima, Virginia Woolf, Anne Frank, Karen Blixen / Isak Dinesen, Anaïs Nin, Tennessee Williams, J.D. Salinger, Anne Rice, Frida Kahlo, Diane Arbus, Martha Graham, Rudolf Nureyev, Cindy Sherman, Hank Williams, Billie Holiday, Judy Garland, Maria Callas, Miles Davis, Keith Jarrett, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Leonard Cohen, Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens), Ferron, Cher, Stevie Nicks, Annie Lennox, Prince, Sarah McLachlan, Alanis Morissette, Feist, Florence (+ the Machine) Welch, Amy Winehouse, Ingmar Bergman, Lars von Trier, Marlon Brando, Jeremy Irons, Angelina Jolie, Winona Ryder, Kate Winslet, Nicolas Cage, Johnny Depp, Tattoo Artist Kat Von D., Magician Criss Angel, Streetcar Named Desire's "Blanche duBois"

Type Four Overview

We have named this type *The Individualist* because Fours maintain their identity by seeing themselves as fundamentally different from others. Fours feel that they are unlike other human beings, and consequently, that no one can understand them or love them adequately. They often see themselves as uniquely talented, possessing special, one-of-a-kind gifts, but also as uniquely disadvantaged or flawed. More than any other type, Fours are acutely aware of and focused on their personal differences and deficiencies.

Healthy Fours are honest with themselves: they own all of their feelings and can look at their motives, contradictions, and emotional conflicts without denying or whitewashing them. They may not necessarily like what they discover, but they do not try to rationalize their states, nor do they try to hide them from themselves or others. They are not afraid to see themselves "warts and all." Healthy Fours are willing to reveal highly personal and potentially shameful things about themselves because they are determined to

understand the truth of their experience—so that they can discover who they are and come to terms with their emotional history. This ability also enables Fours to endure suffering with a quiet strength. Their familiarity with their own darker nature makes it easier for them to process painful experiences that might overwhelm other types.

Nevertheless, Fours often report that they feel they are missing something in themselves, although they may have difficulty identifying exactly what that “something” is. Is it will power? Social ease? Self-confidence? Emotional tranquility?—all of which they see in others, seemingly in abundance. Given time and sufficient perspective, Fours generally recognize that they are unsure about *aspects of their self-image*—their personality or ego-structure itself. They feel that they lack a clear and stable identity, particularly a social persona that they feel comfortable with.

While it is true that Fours often feel different from others, they do not really want to be alone. They may feel socially awkward or self-conscious, but they deeply wish to connect with people who understand them and their feelings. The “romantics” of the Enneagram, they long for someone to come into their lives and appreciate the secret self that they have privately nurtured and hidden from the world. If, over time, such validation remains out of reach, Fours begin to build their identity around *how unlike everyone else they are*. The outsider therefore comforts herself by becoming an insistent individualist: everything must be done on her own, in her own way, on her own terms. Fours’ mantra becomes “I am myself. Nobody understands me. I am different and special,” while they secretly wish they could enjoy the easiness and confidence that others seem to enjoy.

Fours typically have problems with a negative self-image and chronically low self-esteem. They attempt to compensate for this by cultivating a *Fantasy Self*—an idealized self-image which is built up primarily in their imaginations. A Four we know shared with us that he spent most of his spare time listening to classical music while fantasizing about being a great concert pianist—à la Vladimir Horowitz. Unfortunately, his commitment to practicing fell far short of his fantasized self-image, and he was often embarrassed when people asked him to play for them. His actual abilities, while not poor, became sources of shame.

In the course of their lives, Fours may try several different identities on for size, basing them on styles, preferences, or qualities they find attractive in others. But underneath the surface, they still feel uncertain about who they really are. The problem is that they base their identity largely on their feelings. When Fours look inward they see a

kaleidoscopic, ever-shifting pattern of emotional reactions. Indeed, Fours accurately perceive a truth about human nature—that it is dynamic and ever changing. But because they want to create a stable, reliable identity from their emotions, they attempt to cultivate only certain feelings while rejecting others. Some feelings are seen as “me,” while others are “not me.” By attempting to hold on to specific moods and express others, Fours believe that they are being true to themselves.

One of the biggest challenges Fours face is learning to let go of feelings from the past; they tend to nurse wounds and hold onto negative feelings about those who have hurt them. Indeed, Fours can become so attached to longing and disappointment that they are unable to recognize the many treasures in their lives.

Leigh is a working mother who has struggled with these difficult feelings for many years.

“I collapse when I am out in the world. I have had a trail of relationship disasters. I have hated my sister’s goodness—and hated goodness in general. I went years without joy in my life, just pretending to smile because real smiles would not come to me. I have had a constant longing for whatever I cannot have. My longings can never become fulfilled because I now realize that I am attached to ‘the longing’ and not to any specific end result.”

There is a Sufi story that relates to this about an old dog that had been badly abused and was near starvation. One day, the dog found a bone, carried it to a safe spot, and started gnawing away. The dog was so hungry that it chewed on the bone for a long time and got every last bit of nourishment that it could out of it. After some time, a kind old man noticed the dog and its pathetic scrap and began quietly setting food out for it. But the poor hound was so attached to its bone that it refused to let go of it and soon starved to death.

Fours are in the same predicament. As long as they believe that there is something fundamentally wrong with them, they cannot allow themselves to experience or enjoy their many good qualities. To acknowledge their good qualities would be to lose their sense of identity (as a suffering victim) and to be without a relatively consistent personal identity (their Basic Fear). Fours grow by learning to see that much of their story is not

true—or at least it is not true any more. The old feelings begin to fall away once they stop telling themselves their old tale: it is irrelevant to who they are right now.

Type Four—Levels of Development

Healthy Levels

Level 1 (At Their Best): Profoundly creative, expressing the personal and the universal, possibly in a work of art. Inspired, self-renewing and regenerating: able to transform all their experiences into something valuable: self-creative.

Level 2: Self-aware, introspective, on the "search for self," aware of feelings and inner impulses. Sensitive and intuitive both to self and others: gentle, tactful, compassionate.

Level 3: Highly personal, individualistic, "true to self." Self-revealing, emotionally honest, humane. Ironic view of self and life: can be serious and funny, vulnerable and emotionally strong.

Average Levels

Level 4: Take an artistic, romantic orientation to life, creating a beautiful, aesthetic environment to cultivate and prolong personal feelings. Heighten reality through fantasy, passionate feelings, and the imagination.

Level 5: To stay in touch with feelings, they interiorize everything, taking everything personally, but become self-absorbed and introverted, moody and hypersensitive, shy and self-conscious, unable to be spontaneous or to "get out of themselves." Stay withdrawn to protect their self-image and to buy time to sort out feelings.

Level 6: Gradually think that they are different from others, and feel that they are exempt from living as everyone else does. They become melancholy dreamers, disdainful, decadent, and sensual, living in a fantasy world. Self-pity and envy of others leads to self-indulgence, and to becoming increasingly impractical, unproductive, effete, and precious.

Unhealthy Levels

Level 7: When dreams fail, become self-inhibiting and angry at self, depressed and alienated from self and others, blocked and emotionally paralyzed. Ashamed of self, fatigued and unable to function.

Level 8: Tormented by delusional self-contempt, self-reproaches, self-hatred, and morbid thoughts: everything is a source of torment. Blaming others, they drive away

anyone who tries to help them.

Level 9: Despairing, feel hopeless and become self-destructive, possibly abusing alcohol or drugs to escape. In the extreme: emotional breakdown or suicide is likely. Generally corresponds to the Avoidant, Depressive, and Narcissistic personality disorders.

Addictions

Over-indulgence in rich foods, sweets, alcohol to alter mood, to socialize, and for emotional consolation. Lack of physical activity. Bulimia. Depression. Tobacco, prescription drugs, or heroin for social anxiety. Cosmetic surgery to erase rejected features.

Personal Growth Recommendations for Enneagram Type Fours

- Do not pay so much attention to your feelings; they are not a true source of support for you, as you probably already know. Remember this advice: "From our present perspective, we can also see that one of the most important mistakes Fours make is to equate themselves with their feelings. The fallacy is that to understand themselves they must understand their feelings, particularly their negative ones, before acting. Fours do not see that the self is not the same as its feelings or that the presence of negative feelings does not preclude the presence of good in themselves" (*Personality Types*, p. 172). Always remember that your feelings are telling you something about yourself as you are at this particular moment, not necessarily more than that.
- Avoid putting off things until you are "in the right mood." Commit yourself to productive, meaningful work that will contribute to your good and that of others, no matter how small the contribution may be. Working consistently in the real world will create a context in which you can discover yourself and your talents. (Actually, you are happiest when you are working—that is, activating your potentials and realizing yourself. You will not "find yourself" in a vacuum or while waiting for inspiration to strike, so connect—and stay connected—with the real world.
- Self-esteem and self-confidence will develop only from having positive experiences, whether or not you believe that you are ready to have them. Therefore, put yourself

in the way of good. You may never feel that you are ready to take on a challenge of some sort, that you always need more time. (Fours typically never feel that they are sufficiently "together," but they must nevertheless have the courage to stop putting off their lives.) Even if you start small, commit yourself to doing something that will bring out the best in you.

- A wholesome self-discipline takes many forms, from sleeping regular hours to working regularly to exercising regularly, and has a cumulative, strengthening effect. Since it comes from yourself, a healthy self-discipline is not contrary to your freedom or individuality. On the other hand, sensuality, excessive sexual experiences, alcohol, drugs, sleep, or fantasizing have a debilitating effect on you, as you already know. Therefore, practice healthy self-discipline and stay with it.
- Avoid lengthy conversations in your imagination, particularly if they are negative, resentful, or even excessively romantic. These conversations are essentially unreal and at best only rehearsals for action—although, as you know, you almost never say or do what you imagine you will. Instead of spending time imagining your life and relationships, begin to live them.