

Core Fears (9+4)

I see people sometimes using the “core fears” as their primary way of self-typing. “I relate to the core fear of 4,” for example. They have learned that enneagram is about “motivation rather than behaviour” and this is not wrong. However, the core fears, passions, and fixations are not necessarily conscious processes. They are automatic. I always say that if type were that simple, then the enneagram wouldn’t be that useful or interesting. Most people don’t actively relate to the core fear the way they know what their favourite colour is. In general, the core fears are not something that we are fully conscious of feeling in the sense that we feel the cause and effect of the thing which causes fear + the resulting fear. The fear is like an automatic built-in system that we feel is just a normal way of being. 4’s do not walk around thinking, “Golly, I’m just so afraid of being different. How will I be unique today?” 9’s don’t think, “I’m so scared of loss and separation. I need to make sure I’m connected to everyone.” The word “fear” implies that there’s some conscious effort to reverse the effects of fear and this is not really the case. 9’s aren’t consciously afraid of being separated. They are just unconsciously always in a place where they naturally become everyone/everything. The gut centre focus is on ego boundaries and 9’s have a fluid one. This can often cause 9’s to consciously revolt against this natural process and crystallize some kind of separate identity. In a way, 9’s can end up being the most stubborn about exactly “who they are” as they try to keep their feet firmly on the ground in terms of their own ego boundary. So when a 9 reads that the core fear is “fear of loss/separation” they might think, “Hell, I’m the opposite.” 9’s often equate being different/unique with ego boundaries. I often catch 9’s mistyped as 4’s using specific language that points to type 9. For example they might say that they are just trying to be themselves as if the world is forcing them to be otherwise. This implies that there’s a natural propensity to lose themselves in others that’s essentially unconscious and they are fighting against that impulse and desperately want the validation that they are in fact a specific separate personality. It is in our nature as social beings to want our own unique identity. They might also say that they hold everything in but they feel so tumultuous on the inside. Part of that 9 fear of loss means that if you go up against others, if you’re too separate, it’s a threat to your sense of being. Holding all your pain inside you is a way of withstanding, enduring, taking everything inside yourself and becoming a vessel. Again this directly points to that unconscious fear. Being tumultuous around others puts you at risk of separating yourself from them. You’re creating disharmony, upsetting people, making waves. This is something that

9’s avoid unless they are specifically going against that impulse. Again 9’s will often deliberately get bigger when they are pushed to fight against the unconscious impulse to hold everything in. If you are a 9 with a 4 fix, your image identity will already be “I’m not like others,” + our natural social impulse to be unique, and that is at war with the impulses of core 9.

4’s on the other hand in the image triad are automatically built to be at that level of individualism and separation at all times. It’s not about being unique or special since those words have some positive connotation. It’s NOT like “I’m so unique and cool, and so are you!” It’s more about individuating naturally, not being a good sport. 9’s might think, “What’s the point of externalizing how different I feel? Why bother? No one will get me anyway.” That is very much the opposite of what being an Image type means. The Image types are always unconsciously trying to show us photographs of who they are in a sense. They are selling us something. 4’s want to sell to us how they’re too precious to be with us plebeians. They are unable to just “be” themselves due to their chronic over processing of their own image, so they fashion themselves into works of art and sell us that Image. That being said, we all use all three centres. However, I’ve outlined some key differences here in terms of which is the core centre.

So many 9’s have used Naranjo’s SP 4 description to justify that they are “4’s but not like other 4’s” or “4’s that aren’t dramatic on the outside.” If you’re not doing 4 on the outside, then how can that be a type in the Image centre? The countertype idea is flawed and the Self-Preservation instinct cannot completely change the basic type structure or centre. Naranjo was brilliant but his work is not the enneagram bible. Since most of the “major teachers” have based their work on his, everyone feels like it’s impossible to refine his mistakes. When teachers like me show up with new information, everyone wants to see my special enneagram badge and know if I had tea on a mountain with Naranjo because that’s where all the magic enneagram info comes from. The enneagram is not something that can be “scientifically validated,” despite the 6ish impulse of some teachers to insist upon this. However, it can be refined using contemporary research on instincts and human psychology that intellectuals like Naranjo just didn’t have at the time.

-Joseph Simone

<https://www.enneagrammer.com/-blog/core-fears-94>
1/20/20