The Enneagram and the Pandemic Part 2 – Feeling all the Feelings

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In the last post, we started a discussion about how our Enneagram types—through the lens of the three Triads: Gut, Heart, and Head—relate to the pandemic we are going through. Regardless of which Triad you fall in, exploring these groupings helps us see how our default ways of processing information plays out during our current crisis. This can improve both our self-awareness and our ability to understand those around us. In this post, we will look at the Heart Triad (Types 2, 3, 4).



As the name describes, those in the Heart Triad (Enneagram Types 2, 3 and 4) react and process life and decisions through their emotions. Their first reaction is to feel, as they desire significance and seek identity. The Heart Triad is the most image conscious, internally asking the question, “Who Am I?” During the times of crisis like the current pandemic, those in the Heart Triad will see the needs around them and desire to reach out and serve those in their communities. The shadow side or emotional struggle of the Heart Triad is shame, which may manifest itself as people in this Triad seek to feel significant to those around them.

**Type 2 – The Helper**

Type 2s seem to have antennae they use to scan the environment and sense the needs around them. They instinctively understand those needs and seek to increase their sense of significance by being the one to meet those needs. They have great compassion and empathy for others, so they may become overwhelmed by all the emotions the crisis brings to their lives right now.

Especially during this pandemic, 2s are looking for ways to serve and come alongside others. If they are not already in essential roles like healthcare, education, or the service industry, they may be seeking out other ways to serve—like making masks, donating to causes, shopping for those who can’t, or leaving surprises on peoples’ doorsteps. They will make decisions based on how they feel about a situation.

Because they see and feel the needs around them so deeply—and because they feel compelled to meet those needs— an emotional struggle with shame may rise up within them when they can’t meet every need. Their sense of shame comes from feeling they are loved not for who they are, but for what they do. When they are limited in what they can do through quarantine or social distancing, their shame may activate, and emotions may heighten.

As a 2, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you up and meet your needs so you can, in turn, trust the Lord to meet the needs of others. If you are depleted, you can’t serve others the way you desire and are gifted. When you are filled up, you can serve others out of your overflow. If you are in relationship with a Type 2, allow that person to serve you. It brings them life. Then, take time to discover and meet their needs. A Type 2 feels most loved when someone else takes the time to love them specifically in ways that are most meaningful to them.

**Type 3 – The Achiever**

Type 3s actually struggle to tap into their emotions. They move their feelings away from themselves and avoid vulnerability with others. They have an antenna they use to read a room the moment they enter it, seeking to find success through their interactions with others. Unlike the Type 2, they find their value in their ability to achieve. Thus, in each environment, they determine who they need to become in order to be successful. This may lead to wearing masks or shapeshifting.

Threes are very productive individuals who are always setting goals and seeking to be the best in everything they do. They thrive on routine and order. During this pandemic, the ever-changing circumstances and interruptions to their plans create a high level of frustration. As part of the Heart Triad, the shame 3s feel will surface when they are unable to achieve the success they seek or reach the goals they have set. They struggle to see their value apart from their achievements.

Despite the frustrations of changing circumstances, 3s will bring structure and a plan to this time of crisis. They will seek to “win” and be the best at facing the pandemic. They will have clearly thought-out goals geared toward successful living and working in spite of difficult circumstances.

As a 3, ask the Holy Spirit to help you relinquish control. Realize your value is not based on your productivity or success. Press into the emotions you are experiencing, acknowledging them rather than pushing them away. If you are in relationship with a 3, do your part to help create the order and structure they need in their environment. If they are having to adjust to working at home, help them set up a space that feels conducive to their daily work. Provide a safe space for them to be vulnerable and push past the temptation to put on a persona of success.

**Type 4 – The Individualist**

Type 4s will deep dive inwardly with their emotions. Their own emotions, compounded by the emotions of those around them, can feel like a tsunami to a 4. During this pandemic, they may find their emotions all over the place—one minute feeling like things will be fine and the next spiraling into a place of desperation, feeling lonely and misunderstood. Fours have the unique ability to sit with others in their emotions without expecting or needing them to “cheer up.” They are especially equipped to sit with those who are grieving loss. Their ability to do this is extremely valuable during a crisis where the loss of jobs, loved ones, and life as we know it is so prevalent.

Fours have the ability to bring creativity, beauty, and depth to the world in a way that inspires and uplifts. They may be seen creating beautiful artwork, music, poetry, etc., that brings hope during very dark times. As members of the Heart Triad, 4s experience the emotional struggle of shame by feeling they are defective or they do not have anything special to offer the world. In their desire for significance, they compare themselves to others, leading them to envy or feelings of being tragically flawed.

As a 4, ask the Holy Spirit to help you process your emotions through the filter of God’s truth. Rather than withdrawing, share with the world the beauty and creativity you have to offer. If you are in relationship with a 4, don’t minimize their feelings. Allow them the opportunity to soak in their emotions so they can, in turn, offer their natural ability to support others in their emotions.

*Next time, we will explore the Head Triad to better understand how Types 5, 6, and 7 may be responding to the global pandemic. As you strive to lead and serve with understanding, we hope you know the NL Moore & Associates team is praying for you! If you would like more information about how we can help your team navigate this and other times of transition, please do not hesitate to reach out.*