



LEARNING
ALL ABOUT
INSTINCTS

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**ENNEAGRAM
+ MARRIAGE**

What Are Instincts?

We all have instinctual drives that are part of our human experience, and which are felt as bodily, primary forces. These instincts are separate from our personality and ego and are behind many of our unconscious life survival strategies. As such, instincts powerfully direct our fundamental way of being sometimes even outside of our awareness.

Although we don't want to lose the main focus of our personality work (which is basically all about not letting our personality or ego get in the way of God's good plan for our lives), we also need to make sure we pay attention to those ancient instincts of ours that get so deeply embedded in our relationship behaviors.

As we pay attention to how our own and our spouse's instincts play out in our relationships, it is vital that we remember that each person leads a bit differently with the instincts, according to our experiences and our genetics.

Some of us lead first or mainly with the self-preservation instinct (Sp), some with the social instinct (So), and others lead with sexual (or intimate/one-to-one, Sx), which you'll see explained further below. All of us lead with an ordered combination of the three, and the order varies from person to person.

Why Do We Differ?

Since there's an unconscious reason for this sequencing in our lives (some call it stacking instead of sequencing), the most likely hypothesis is that at some time this particular sequencing of your instincts has helped to keep you and/or your family safest, or at least it felt so to you as a child or at a particular time in life.

These patterns don't usually shift all that much once we're adults without intentional work. This is because they are often locked into us by the time we grow up or marry. Occasionally the instincts shift in a season, such if there is illness or disruption of attachment until the person stabilizes. Then the instincts go back to the predictable sequence, but hopefully with more balance each time and with inner work.

What is the Goal?

The ultimate goal of your instinctual work is threefold; to learn to intermix all three instinctual systems (Sx, Sp, and So) for a balanced and healthy life, to make sure you don't let your dominant type take over (it tends to run the show majorly when left unchecked!) and to let your third and repressed instinct (sometimes called the "blind spot" or the one you're totally "meh" about) run the show more frequently. In fact, this repressed instinct may even be where you truly shine best in the world for God and in your relationship with your spouse or partner. Here are a few examples of the instincts at work in your life and relationship.

Sp - "I tend to pay heavy attention to basic survival needs of food and/or shelter for myself and my people because I realize how important basic survival is. I may overemphasize some of the areas and not others but the bottom line is I like to make sure I feel good in my body and I do this by saving resources, both materially and energetically. I usually put my own "oxygen mask on" and self-care needs ahead and am skilled at anticipating those needs for the future." When this is repressed, some of these needs are forgotten altogether such as showering, saving money, basic clothes or furniture, or eating healthfully. Whether SP needs are over or underemphasized, the goal is a rebalance as we all need healthy amounts of self-care, planning, and rest.

So - "I tend to pay major attention to the social groups in my life and how I fit into those groups, as I realize how important that give-and-take in society is to survival whether it be religious, political, environmental, hobby, career, or otherwise. I like to make sure I stay away from unsafe groups and I like to align myself with both familiar groups as well as groups that resonate with my standards and values, sometimes perhaps to the demise of my individual time or one to one relationships." When this is repressed, some of these needs are forgotten or neglected, such as paying attention to what's happening socially, not voting, being antisocial, and entirely or mainly ignoring your wider family or community group responsibility and world concerns. Whether SO needs are over or underemphasized, the goal is rebalance as we need to pay attention to how we can come together to help the world as a community.

Sx - "I tend to place my greatest attention on my one-to-one relationships in friendship and in marriage and family. I desire connection and realize how important this nurture is to ensure my personal and family survival. I also like to make sure I'm attractive and powerful in my relationships so I am not taken advantage of with any

form of abuse. Sometimes I may do this to the demise of my time to myself or my involvement in community care.” When this is repressed, some of these needs are abandoned, such as the desire to have close bonds, to marry, to enjoy intimacy, sexual or otherwise, or to work through conflict at all. Whether SX needs are over or under emphasized, the goal is rebalance as we need to pay attention to the quality of our relationships since avoidant behaviors breed further anxiety and depression in humans who were made for close, nurturing bonds.

What is Your Relationship Goal with Instincts?

In your marriage, the ultimate goal is to find your instinctual balance with your partner so that together your sequences are smooth and well-balanced. With two people in the mix, it takes even *more* effort, so it can be trickier. The good news is, your spouse usually doesn't have the exact same sequence as you.

Often then, marriage is a safe place to discover and to try out other variations of finding safety in the world and expands our ability to help others uniquely (this is where we find our Enneagram Glow!).

We may also in time find safety and trauma healing together due to the collaborative work on learning to find healthy balance. This has the greatest likelihood of occurrence when we patiently offer our wisdom and grace to one another as we grow.

Another important tip I want to offer you in your marriage and instinct work is this: *Don't tease a spouse who is sequenced differently than you.* If you don't think one of these instincts is important, so much to the point that you're making fun of them about it, it usually indicates you have work to do in this area. Do your homework versus trying to push your spouse into theirs. They *will* see your beautiful balance and they *will* want to get healthier. Whether and when they choose to do the work is up to them (remember, there are seasons we pull each other along to some degree with life's ebb and flow). Set your boundaries accordingly so you don't expect them to be everything to you but offer the tools to them for growth as well.

Your Response

Here are some questions to get you started on the journey of finding individual and relationship health in your instincts!

In your life, which one of these instincts seems to be the first in your sequence?

What comes next for you?

And which one is last?

How about your spouse: First?

Secondary?

Last?

Did anyone in your family of origin (or even older generations) lead with your first instinct as well? Who and in what ways did you see it? Did you see the pattern in the society they lived in? (Slavery, bullying, starvation, abuse?)

Why do you think this person or these people led with this instinct? Did their parents also do this? Was there a disrupted attachment for them when this perhaps became a crutch?

Do you have any early memories of how your instinctual sequencing got its start in your life?

In your marriage, how has your dominant instinct been a help to you in times of stress? How has it helped your marriage to thrive in your opinion?

How has your dominant instinct perhaps been overdone in your life and relationships?

Which one of the instincts is your repressed instinct?

How does it show up in your relationship and life negatively when you overuse this dominant instinct and underuse the repressed?

Has your spouse ever complained about you ignoring this area of repressed instinct? Do you agree with them?

How has underemphasizing this shadow/repressed/blind spot area hurt you?

If your spouse is willing to chat with you about it, try to come up with several ways the two of you can take small, tangible steps in becoming a bit more bold in each of your repressed instincts, or at least yours if they aren't ready to join you yet in being vulnerable about theirs.

Come up with an initial list of one thing you can do each week to grow and to balance your instincts.

Here are a few more questions to help you think through your instinctual patterns as you learn to shift them:

What is one hope you have for yourself and the next generation (or the world) socially (So)?

What is your commitment to making this happen, even if it's a baby step? Try to find ways you and your spouse can do at least some of this together if you're married. (Ex in society: "I hope world slavery ends and that more people come to God for help versus addiction." and "I want to be part of helping that." or Ex in relationship: "I hope we can get to know safe people in our community we can learn to trust as good friends even if they're a bit different.")

What is one hope you have for yourself and the next generation (or the world) in the area of one-to-one intimate (Sx) instincts?

What is your commitment to making this happen, even if it's a baby step? Try to find ways you and your spouse can do at least some of this together if you're married. (Ex in society: "I hope sex trafficking ends and I want to be part of healing that." or Ex in relationship: "I hope we can grow more in how well we know each other's hearts safely and have more date nights. I also plan to initiate more sexual time together.")

What is one hope you have for yourself and the next generation (or the world) in terms of personal self care and basic survival needs (Sp)? (Try to find ways you and your spouse can do at least some of this together if you're married.)

What is your commitment to making this happen, even if it's a baby step? Try to find ways you and your spouse can do at least some of this together if you're married. (Ex in society: "I hope the church can build a well for this community and I want to help fund or with labor." or Ex in relationship: "I hope we can grow more in how well we take care of our savings account and/or emergency fund.")

One Final Tip (and it's SO important):

As you consider working through your instincial issues, don't forget to work on your basic Enneagram type passions (and fixations/negative thought constructs) first or your instinctual work may sabotage itself.

For instance, a sexually dominant person who is also an Enneagram 4 struggles with the passion of envy. For an SX 4, this often comes out as anger and depression. This person may find a struggle in reducing anger and being less dominant in one-on-one

relationships if they don't first work coming closer to the virtue of 4, equanimity, where everyone is intentionally acknowledged as equal and they are not ranked above or below. This requires the 4 accepting that God made them *and* everyone else well.

Another example is that a socially repressed 9 who is dealing with sloth as the passion may present in a manner that is putting others in the group to sleep. Since they aren't using their power to really step in with their voice and bodies, no one listens. Before they will feel successful in working through and shifting instinctual patterns then, they need to take tangible steps to work on their basic Type 9 passion of becoming awake themselves or "woke" :).

We also do well to spend brave time in releasing painful emotions to God, as we simultaneously allow God to minister to us.

It's always best to do your Enneagram work with a great team and support staff so make sure you find a counselor or coach who is trustworthy to help support you as you do inner work.

Don't remember your type's passion? I have a podcast episode on the passions but here's a quick reminder. Fixations are also part of the work and will be discussed soon.

The passions for each type are:

Type 1 anger

Type 2 pride

Type 3 self-deceit

Type 4 envy

Type 5 avarice

Type 6 fear

Type 7 gluttony

Type 8 lust

Type 9 sloth

The virtues you're working toward instead are:

Type 1 serenity

Type 2 humility

Type 3 veracity/truth

Type 4 equanimity/equal ranking of all

Type 5 nonattachment/trust that there is enough life flow

Type 6 courage

Type 7 sobriety

Type 8 innocence

Type 9 action

Encouragement for the Journey

As you do your work, remember this: Work takes time and change usually happens when we finally find out our other ways of doing things just don't work. Give yourself grace and be patient with your spouse too, anything worth doing takes time, process, and surrender! :)

Love Living Intentionally With You,

Christa

PS: For more freebies, pairing guides, and podcasts, head back to www.EnneagramandMarriage.com