

The Enneagram: A Tool for Self-Reflection, Critical Appraisal and Introducing Spirituality in
the Classroom

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Introducing The Enneagram: A Tool for Self-Reflection and Critical Appraisal

The Enneagram: a Teaching Tool for Spirituality in Social Work Education

ABSTRACT

The Enneagram is a multi-purpose tool that at its most basic level is considered a personality type identifier. However the Enneagram offers more than labeling and categorizing. It opens a critical debate about similarities and diversity amongst people and provides language for describing a wide range of human tendencies. It also helps students critically consider whether “the types” reflect their experience with different individuals. The Enneagram has a strong connection to issues related to spirituality and provides a vehicle for the introduction of spiritual values. Social workers often have strong anti-labelling reactions. The Enneagram should be considered, not for its categorizations, but as a tool to develop critical thinking, language enrichment, self-other reflection, and a rich descriptor of human behaviour. This paper, based on the workshop given at the Canadian Society of Spirituality and Social Work (May, 2006), outlines the theories and concepts of the basic Enneagram, including wings, and triads based on Riso and Hudsons’s (2000, 1999) work, and the use of the Enneagram to introduce spiritual values in social work education.

This paper, developed from the workshop given at the Canadian Society for Spirituality and Social Work, should be considered a very basic introduction of some of the concepts related to use of the Enneagram: it might be thought of Enneagram 101 and is primarily based on Riso and Hudson's (2000, 1999) work. This workshop is not intended to promote the works of Riso and Hudson, but rather their work has been used because it offers a clear formulation of the concepts of the Enneagram in both simple and advancing complexity. This paper and the workshop are *NOT* intended to be training for use of the Enneagram in clinical work. The workshop and this paper merely introduce, at a very basic and surface level, the idea of The Enneagram as a tool in which social work students learn language around different personality characteristics, facilitate engagement in self/other-reflection and can begin a critical appraisal of human behaviours. It also offers a non-threatening way to introduce spiritual values in a social work human behaviour and social environment class. The pictorial nature of the Enneagram appeals to "visual learners" and in particular students familiar with the Medicine Wheel model. The author strongly encourages those who wish to use the Enneagram for clinical usage to enroll in training workshops which can be found through a "Google search".

Social work students need to develop skills in self/other reflection, assessment, critical appraisal, evaluation of their spiritual location, and they need to gain a richness in the language of describing human behaviour in the social environment. The need to enrich the language for critical self-reflection is particularly evident in social work access programmes where English second language speakers predominate and where learners often consider themselves "visual learners" as with the many students in the classes in which I introduced the Enneagram who are

Northern Cree speakers, and Métis Whether we accept the basic premises of Enneagrams—that is that there are nine distinct personality types regardless of culture, gender or social class, and that we are born with a certain personality type--or not, the Enneagram has much to offer social work as a tool for self-reflection, self/other awareness and critical thinking about human behaviour. An understanding of the Enneagram, its pictorial mapping of relationships amongst nine personality types, and descriptive language related to each personality type provides an organization and place to start thinking about behaviour, feelings, and thinking. This is a pragmatic means of starting students on their own critical self-reflection and their reflections about their similarities and differences in relation to other individuals. We would hope that the reader and the student use this tool for critical reflection of the tool and its perceptions of personalities. The Enneagram provides a format that allows students to critically analyze, debate, and discuss the suggested personality configurations. We would suggest that this discussion rather than blind acceptance of the Enneagram is the true gift of the Enneagram and may provide valuable student learning and skill development in awareness of, and discussion of, human behaviour.

CLASSROOM USE OF THE ENNEAGRAM

It is not the intent of this paper to suggest that social work students be trained in the use of the Enneagram for clinical assessments. It is the contention of this author that such training requires taking Enneagram training workshops and supervision, a statement that is given in each class in which the concepts and theory surrounding the Enneagram are introduced by this writer. The Enneagram is introduced to students in my Human Behaviour and Social Environment course as a tool to increase self-awareness, self-reflection, language enrichment, and critical

thinking about human behaviour. Students are told that the model is does not reflect a particular cultural bias and has been used in a variety of Spanish-speaking cultures, in Arabic, and is popular in the Far East particularly in Japan (Riso and Hudson, 2000, 1999). It's diverse cultural application is possible because it uses universal symbols rather than symbols closely associated with particular cultures and/or religious groups.

The basic Enneagram model is described to students as a circle with an inner triangle intersected by a hexad. It is designed to gain understanding of oneself so that one can “know who we are and we are here” (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p. 1), using that argument that self-knowledge is the key to all spiritual paths (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p. 10). “The heart of the Enneagram is the universal insight that human beings are spiritual presences incarnated in the material world and yet mysteriously embodying the same life and Spirit as the Creator” (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p. 9).

HISTORY OF THE ENNEAGRAM

The Enneagram is both very old and very new. A short history of the Enneagram helps students understand the development of the tool. The word Enneagram comes from the Greek ennea = nine and grammos = figure or a nine-pointed figure (pronounced ANY-gram, (Riso-Hudson, 1999, p. 9). Riso and Hudson (1999) in their historical account note that while the symbol of the Enneagram dates back about 2,500 years, and the beginnings of the personality types can be traced to the fourth century AD, the two have only merged in the last two decades. They suggest that the attribution of the system to the early Sufi's is not correct. George Ivanovich Gurdjieff presented the symbol to the modern world. He began teaching the

Enneagram as a combination of psychology, spirituality and cosmology prior to World War I in Moscow and St. Petersburg (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p. 20). He did not teach personality types. Oscar Ichazo connected the symbol and personality types in the 1950's. He drew some of his learning from the Kabbalistic philosophy to expand his understanding the Enneagram (Riso and Hudson, (1999), Claudio Naranjo studied with Ichazo and in the 1970's began linking the Enneagram with psychiatric categories and taught the Enneagram to private groups. These teachings became popular in the San Francisco Bay area and in Jesuit retreat houses across North America. Riso continued the development of the Enneagram with his discovery of Levels of Development in 1977 and published *Personality Types* (1987) and *Understanding the Enneagram* (1990) . Hudson began working with Riso in 1991 and developed the Enneagram questionnaire which evolved into the Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI). They have continued to develop “deeper structures of the types as well as many of the system’s implications for personal growth” (Riso-Hudson, 1999, p. 25). The Enneagram has received little attention in the social work literature (EBCSOHost search, July 18, 2006). This writer first heard of the its use in hospital chaplaincy work in Winnipeg, MB in 2001.

THE ENNEAGRAM SYMBOL

It is suggested that students learn to draw The Enneagram which is made up of a circle, a triangle and a hexad. The instructor may wish to offer the following discussion related to the shapes used in the Enneagram. Riso and Hudson state that “the circle is a universal mandala, used in almost every culture. The circle refers to unity, wholeness, and oneness and symbolizes the idea that *God is One*, the distinguishing feature of the major Western religions, Judaism,

Christianity, and Islam (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p. 20). The triangle which is placed within the circle conveys the idea of the Trinity, found in Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p. 21). The Hexad which is placed over the triangle represents the “law of Seven” which suggests that change and transformation is constant

everything is changing, recycling and evolving or devolving—although
in lawful and predictable ways according to their own nature and
the forces that are acting on them. The days of the week, the Periodic Table,
and the Western musical octave are all based on the Law of Seven” (Riso and Hudson,
1999, p. 21).

The directions for drawing the Enneagram are as follows: Draw a circle and place an equilateral triangle of a size just slightly smaller than the circle within the circle, numbering the top of the triangle (1), the right base (3) and the left base (6). Place numbers (1) and (2) at equal distances above triangle point (3) and (4) and (5) after triangle point (3) and before triangle point (6), then place numbers (7) and (8) above triangle point six and before triangle point (9). Join points 1 to 4, 4 to 2, 2 to 8, 8 to 5, 5 to 7 and 7 to point 1 (See Figure 1). When these points are joined, an irregular hexagon is also formed (Vollmar, 1996).

Figure 1: The Enneagram

THE THEORY OF THE ENNEAGRAM

The theory of the Enneagram proposes that amongst all people there are nine personality types, that we all have a dominant personality type, which has established itself by the time we

are ages four or five, that we have characteristics of all personality types, and in particular some of the characteristics of the “wings” –that is the numbers on each side of our dominant personality number (Riso and Hudson, 2000, 1999). It is important for students to understand that:

1. Descriptions are universal and apply equally to males and females.
2. Not everything in your type will apply to you all the time.
3. Numbers are used because they are neutral unlike letters or labels.
4. The numeric ranking is not important.
5. No type is better or worse than any other all have unique capacities and different limitations.
6. The ideal is to become your best self not another type. (Riso and Hudson, 2000, 1999).

It is necessary to have students (or the reader) complete an Enneagram questionnaire. For basic class work, a short form may be used, as long as the students understand that this may not be an accurate assessment and could lead to misidentification. For accuracy, it is necessary to take the longer forms, read the detailed descriptions, answer the type-specific questionnaires, and perhaps even discuss your answers with someone who knows you well and can express their opinion about some of your answers.

There are several on-line sources, in both short and longer forms or Riso and Hudson provide questionnaires in their books (2001, 1999). The Riso and Hudson RHETI Enneagram Test Version 2.5 has established reliability and validity (Abdulla, 2003; Newgent, 2001) in English and Arabic (www.enneagraminstitutu.com/validated.asp). For an in depth discussion of each personality type and specific type questionnaires, the reader is referred to Riso and Hudson (1999, pp. 95-340, and Riso and Hudson, 2000). Riso and Hudson (2000, 1999) suggest that

personality types are an inborn orientation, that these are determined by all childhood factors including genetics, social background, emotional experiences, environment and spirituality and that we do not change personality types, rather we change and develop within our basic personality type.

THE PERSONALITY TYPES

Students should receive short descriptions of the nine personality types. Students need to identify their types, and have an understanding of the Instinctive Triads, the Wings, and the Instinctual Variants. Further information about “red-flags”, wake-up calls, and levels of development, while critical to an advanced understanding for spiritual, personal and clinical usage of the Enneagram and more advanced work, is not needed for self/other reflection and critical discussion in the basic introduction of the Enneagram.

Type One: The Reformer.

A perfectionist, driven to do the “right” thing. Often critical of self as well as others, with a strongly developed sense of responsibility. Prone to repressed anger.

Type Two: The Helper.

A helper, needing to be needed. Will go the extra mile to please others at the cost of taking care of self. Gives and is proud of it, but strings are often attached

Type Three: The Achiever.

An achiever, efficient, goal-driven and focussed on being a “winner”. Concern with appearances—style over substance—can crowd out friends, family and self-awareness.

Type Four: The Individualist.

An individualist, craving self-expression and emotional depth. Sensitive to beauty and meaning, but prone to melancholy, feelings of inadequacy and envy.

Type Five: The Investigator.

An observer, perceptive and capable of synthesizing information in new ways. Protective of privacy and personal resources, and prone to emotional detachment.

Type Six: The Loyalist or Troubleshooter.

A team-player or a rebel-vigilant for threats from the environment. Loyal and engaging, but full of contradictions which create self-doubt and indecisiveness.

Type Seven: The Enthusiast.

An enthusiast with a perpetual surplus of plans and ideas, eager for experiences and/or material goods. Habitual optimism may cover a fear of boredom and pain.

Type Eight: The Challenger.

A leader, driven to control self and environment, capable of both domination and protectiveness. Vulnerabilities and a tender heart are hidden beneath a tough exterior.

Type Nine: The Peacemaker.

A peacemaker, good at seeing all points of view and easily distracted from personal needs and priorities. Avoids direct confrontation but can be passive and immovable. ([the Enneagram monthly site: http://ideodynamic.com/enneagram-monthly/EM-qui.htm](http://ideodynamic.com/enneagram-monthly/EM-qui.htm), accessed July 18, 2006).

These descriptions but are compatible with those of Riso and Hudson (2000, 1999).

THE TRIADS OR CENTRES

In addition to the basic personality types, the personality types are then grouped together in a three formations of three points. These triads or centres are related to the

“three main components of human intelligence: the *intelligence of the body*, or the instincts, traditionally located in the belly. *The intelligence of the heart*, is associated with emotion and feelings. And *the intelligence of the head* encompasses the cognitive functions.” (Riso and Hudson, 2000, p. 247).

The triads suggest that each person has a preferred way of responding to stress and tensions (Riso and Hudson, 2000, p. 248).. The Enneagram is a three by three arrangement, the three personality types in each triad that have common assets and liabilities; the Instinctive Triad is composed of Types 8, 9, and 1; The Feeling Triad groups Types 2, 3, and 4; and The Thinking Triad Types links 5, 6, and 7.

The Instinctive Triad: For types 8, 9, and 1, the dominant emotion is anger & rage. Eights act out their anger and instinctual energies in a physical way. Nines deny their anger and instinctual energies by idealizing their relationships and world. Ones attempt to control or repress their anger and instinctual energies (Riso and Hudson, 2000, 1999, pp. 51-65).

The Feeling Triad: For types 2, 3, and 4, the dominant emotion is shame. Twos compensate for feelings of shame by trying to get others to like them to convince themselves that they are good and loving. Threes deny shame and try to become what they think a valuable, successful person is like. They are driven by their pursuit of success. Fours avoid their underlying shame by focussing on their unique and special talents, their individuality and

creativity, they may have a rich, romantic fantasy life, and most likely to succumb to feelings of inadequacy (Riso and Hudson, 2000, 1999, pp. 51-65).

The Thinking Triad : For types 5, 6, and seven the dominant emotion is Anxiety or dread. Fives have anxiety about the outer world and their capacity to cope, they cope with their fear by withdrawing, and becoming secretive, isolated loners, in their own inner world. Sixes are the most anxious and out of touch with inner knowing, they don't trust their own minds, and look for something to make them feel sure themselves. Sevens have anxiety about their inner world, like to avoid pain, loss, and deprivation as much as possible so they keep occupied with exciting possibilities or options to distract themselves from their fears. They try to realize their options and stay on the go (Riso and Hudson, 2000, 1999, pp. 51-65).

THE WINGS

Each personality type has two wings in the Riso and Hudson system although not all Enneagram proponents agree that there are wings (Riso and Hudson, 2000, p. 25). Wings help us individualize the nine general types thus narrowing the issues on our spiritual path work. The wings are the types on either side of your number. Riso and Hudson offer the following descriptors of the "wing" effects on personality types. The 9 (*The Peacemaker*) with a 1 wing becomes *The Dreamer*; the 9 (*The Peacemaker*) with an 8 wing becomes *The Referee*; the 1 (*The Reformer*) with a 9 wing becomes *The Idealist*; the 1 (*Reformer*) with a 2 wing becomes *The Advocate*; the 2 (*The Helper*) with a 1 wing becomes *The Servant*; the 2 (*The Helper*) with a 3 wing becomes *The Host/hostess*; the 3 (*The Achiever*) with a 2 wing becomes *The Charmer*; the 3 (*The Achiever*) with a 4 wing becomes *The Professional*; the 4 (*The Individualist*) with a 3 wing becomes *The Aristocrat*; the 4 (*The Individualist*) with a 5 wing becomes *The Bohemian*;

the 5 (*The Investigator*) with a 4 wing becomes *The Iconoclast*; the 5 (*The Investigator*) with a 6 wing becomes *The Problem Solver*; the 6 (*The Loyalist*) with a 5 wing becomes *The Defender*; the 6 (*The Loyalist*) with a 7 wing becomes *The Buddy*; the 7 (*The Enthusiast*) with a 6 wing becomes *The Entertainer*; the 7 (*The Enthusiast*) with an 8 wing becomes *The Realist*; the 8 (*The Challenger*) with a 7 wing becomes *The Independent*; and the 8 (*The Challenger*) with a 9 wing becomes *The Bear* (Riso and Hudson, 2000, 1999; Riso and Hudson (1999, p. 69-94). It is also possible to have characteristics from both wings. Space does not permit a complete description here, however, it can be seen that by considering the attributes of the Wings, a greater variety of human behaviour can be described.

THE INSTINCTUAL VARIANTS

Riso and Hudson (2000, 1999) also suggest that we are all born with three basic instincts that regardless of our type of childhood, one of which has been more distorted in childhood and is the area in which most issues will occur. These also impact on our Personality Type. The Instincts are (1) The Self-Preservation Instinct: “those preoccupied with getting and maintaining physical safety and comfort” (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p. 71) (2) The Social Instinct “those preoccupied with being accepted and necessary in their world” (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p. 72; and (3) The Sexual Instinct “those with recurring problems in the areas of intimate relationships” Riso and Hudson, (1999, p. 74). This then yields the further combinations for each number for example, a 9 with a 1 wing and a self-preservation Instinct, a 9 with a 1 wing and a social instinct; and a 9 with a 1 wing and a Sexual Instinct. “A person can therefore be described as a combination of a basic type, a wing, and a dominant Instinctual variant—for

example a Self-Preservation 1 with a 2 wing or a Sexual 8 with a 9 wing.” (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p. 75).

LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT, THE WAKE-UP CALLS, RED FLAGS, AND INTEGRATION AND DISINTEGRATION

Riso and Hudson (1999) have added the levels of development. This refers to the degree of identification with our personality structures adding a vertical dimension to a horizontal system (Riso and Hudson, 2000, 1999). Each type has three main ranges with three levels within each range from high to low: Healthy 1; Healthy 2; Healthy 3; Average 1; Average 2; Average 3 and Unhealthy 1; Unhealthy 2; Unhealthy 3 These describe a function of awareness not of mood.

Riso and Hudson (1999, p.80) also identify what they refer to as wake-up calls when we are beginning to move out of a healthy range of development for each type. Furthermore, Riso and Hudson note that distinct “red flags” or fears can be identified that the types develop as they begin to slide into the unhealthy range of their personality type . In addition, the Enneagram has directional connections amongst the personality types that show movement with toward integration (moving as follows 1-7-5-8-2-4-1-9-3-6-9) or disintegration (moving as follows 1-4-2-8-5-7-1-9-6-3-9) so a relaxed 1 will move toward a 7 type, but under stress will move toward a 4 (Riso and Hudson, 2000, p..27). The information on Levels, Wake-Up calls, Red Flags, Integration and Disintegration is briefly mentioned here as it provides an idea of some of the more complex workings of the Enneagram, however it is more that would be required for a basic understanding of the Enneagram for use to introduce language, self-reflection, critical appraisal and the introduction of spirituality. (Refer to Riso and Hudson, 2000, 1999).

TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMATION

The last part of the workshop and this paper examine the use of the Enneagram with spirituality and transformation. Riso and Hudson describe transformation as what “happens when our ordinary perspective shifts and we attain a new understanding of who we really are” (1999, p. 182). They (1999) use the Enneagram related to transformative processes not directly related to the personality types. (1999, p. 362). Following the workshop that this paper is based on, I had the opportunity to read Derezotes (2006, p. 30) “A Possible Spiritual Values Practice Hierarchy”. As Riso and Hudson (2003, 2000, 1999) and Vollmar (1996) demonstrate using the Enneagram as a process, not relating to the personality types, I suggest that Derezotes (2006) spiritual values could be applied as a process to the nine-points of the Enneagram. This is however, my application to the Enneagram not Derezotes but all the materials quoted are Derezotes (2006, p. 30).

Point 1 = Service, or taking responsibility to foster the Highest good of all people, life and ecosystems..

Point 2 = Consciousness, or developing each person’s prepersonal, personal, and transpersonal development. .

Point 3 = Love, or Holding intent for the Highest Good in self, others and ecosystem.

Point 4 = Imagination, or Imagining the Highest Good for one’s self and the divine self

Point 5 = Integrity orr Approaching every moment with all parts of one’s self and the divine self

Point 6 = Connectedness or Living in interrelationship with self, divine self and Cosmos

Point 7 = Ectastic Aliveness, or Developing capacity to experience joy and suffering from observing self

Point 8 = Meaning Making, or Developing capacity to find spiritual significance in all of life experience

Point 9 = Sacred Mystery or Approaching life and its mysteries with awe, gratitude, and respect (Derezotes, 2006, p. 30).

These points can also be used to compare professional values and spiritual values and how spiritual values can be introduced and sustained in social work practice.

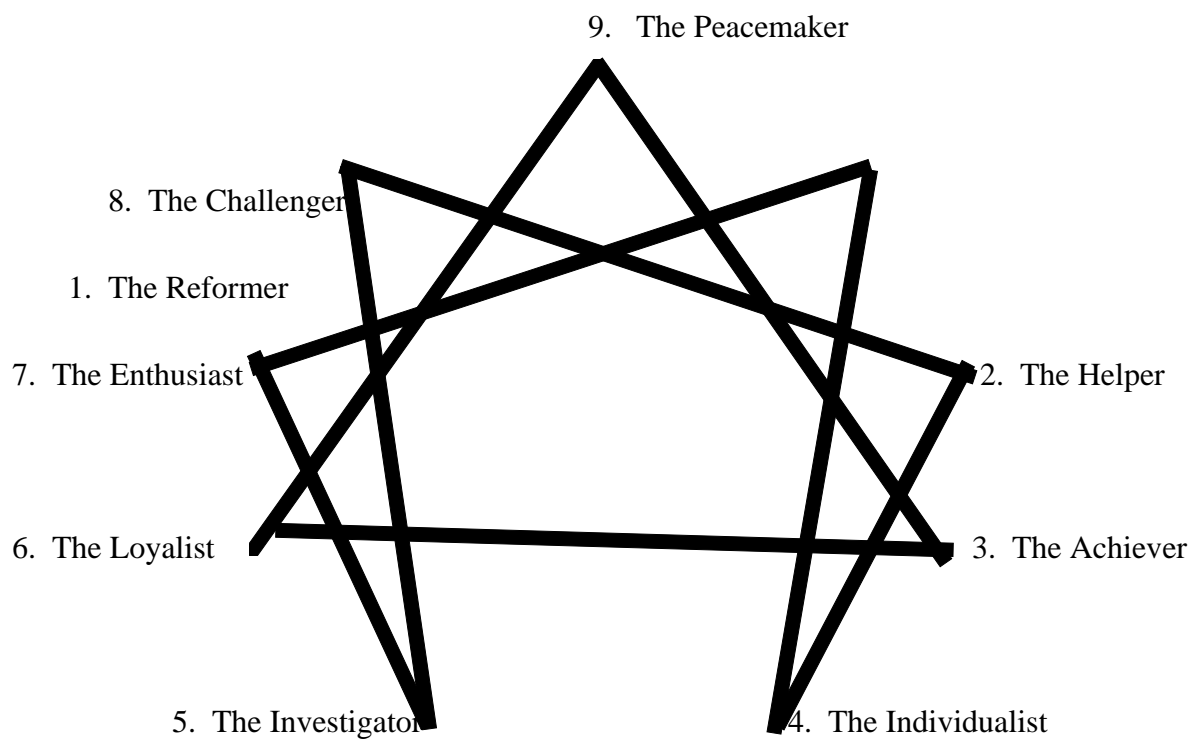
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this workshop and paper has been to provide a preliminary and most basic introduction to the language, basic concepts, and uses of the Enneagram drawn primarily from the work of Riso and Hudson (2000, 1999) and Vollmar (1996). “ The core truth that the Enneagram conveys is that we are much more than our personalities” (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p. 27).

The Enneagram offers students a language base for self/other reflection, spiritual awareness, and a configuration of personality types to which they can apply critical thinking and analysis skills in relation to their own observations of human behaviour. We suggest that students be encouraged to critique the “types” presented in the Enneagram as they reflect upon themselves and others. It also offers a process tool for solving everyday problems. The Enneagram offers a tool for clinical assessment but only after training has been received for this type of usage. The Enneagram has been extensively applied to psychiatric diagnoses and offers a

rich complexity of work in this area. Vollmar (1996) uses the Enneagram to chart the processes of everyday living for example divorce (p. 28). For those interested in further work with the Enneagram, there are a considerable number of on-line sites and dissertation abstracts. For those interested other uses the The Enneagram, it has also be related to the inner circle in Labyrinth walking (Geoffrion and Nagel, 2001), to Kabbala Tree, and to the chakras (Vollmar, 1996).

The Enneagram offers a way to introduce some of the values and concepts of spiritually oriented social work practice. In understanding our personality, we gain insight of our “Essence” (Riso and Hudson, 1999, p.27). For social work educators, the Enneagram offers a tool that can be presented in a simple form but has many layers of complexity to encourage critical thinking about self and others and spiritual awareness. This workshop has provided some of the basic concepts of the Enneagram as drawn largely from the works of Riso and Hudson (2000, 1999) and to a lesser extent Vollmar (1996). The purpose has been to suggest that the Enneagram is a tool that can be useful in social work education to challenge our thinking about ourselves and others, develop an understanding of ourselves and our spirituality, and reflect upon the similarities and differences of human behaviour in our social environment.

Figure 1: The Enneagram

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