

# I'm No. 1!

Ancient personality system helps me find my type

**S**uch a perfect day. No sangria in the park, but a sunny nap in the Park Blocks was good enough for me.

I was in high spirits after seeing an entertaining movie and eating a tasty Indian buffet, but mostly because I was eager to interview gay spiritual guru Dale Rhodes about a subject near and dear to my heart: me.

I'd been in an introspective mode ever since crashing one of the workshops he facilitates with Cathy Hitchcock. They are experts on the Enneagram, an ancient personality system that teaches fascinating lessons about the human condition.

Dale kicked off the workshop by asking the 20 or so participants for their internal and external reactions to this seemingly simple statement: "Hi, I'm Dan. I'm the new supervisor. I have something I need you to do for me."

When he went around the room, I assumed everyone's answer would resemble mine: "Hi, Dan. I'm Jim. Welcome aboard! What can I do for you?"

Uh, no. The answers ranged from the sycophantic ("I would love to sit down with you to discuss strategies...") to the hostile ("I didn't like his approach," one woman revealed) to the competitive ("I could replace this guy," one man thought to himself). As the facilitators later noted, for all we know, Dan just needed directions to the lavatory.

The exercise demonstrates that we all don't see the world the same way. In fact, we each have a distinct "lens" that affects every interaction with others; "corrective vision" comes in the form of the Enneagram, which basically shows us how to identify this "flaw" or, quite literally, "sin."

"In the old sense of the word, 'sin' just means missing the mark," Dale explains. "It's what happens when you shoot and you let go of the arrow."

The system is divided into nine personalities, and most people will relate to aspects of several types. The trick is to find the one that represents your essence—not who you'd like to be, but who you are. Here is a brief overview of the nine types, each of which has a habitual focus and accompanying "sin" to overcome:

**1. The Perfectionist.** Sees oranges falling from a tree and wonders why they couldn't have landed in a more orderly fashion. Focus: error. Challenge: transforming wrath into serenity.

**2. The Giver.** "Don't worry about me," Mom sighs. "How can I be of help to you?" Focus: others' needs. Challenge: transforming pride into humility.

**3. The Performer.** Busy, busy, busy. These Tony Robbins wannabes are motivated by a desire to be the best, often at the expense of their own feelings. Focus: doing. Challenge: transforming deceit into truth.

**4. The Romantic.** Tragic figures who are convinced they were born into the wrong family. Focus: what's missing. Challenge: transforming envy into equanimity.

**5. The Observer.** Detached, quiet and analytical, these turtles retreat into their shells in search of privacy and self-sufficiency. Think Jeremy Irons. Focus: intrusions. Challenge: transforming greed into generosity.

**6. The Loyal Skeptic.** Hypervigilant for catastrophes, these Woody Allen types either dodge danger or challenge it head-on by siding with underdog causes. Focus: hazards. Challenge: transforming fear into faith.

**7. The Epicure.** Hungry to experience new things and to connect concepts, the Sevens tend to be positive yet scatterbrained. Focus: options. Challenge: transforming gluttony into moderation.



**Jim's Closet**  
by Jim Radosta

**8. The Protector.** Activist types who can't stand to see weak and innocent people treated unfairly. Focus: injustice. Challenge: transforming lust into tenderness.

**9. The Mediator.** No more drama. Can't we all just get along? Focus: others. Challenge: transforming sloth into action.

Still not sure who you are? Online tests can help narrow the scope slightly, but Dale's workshops allow human contact with other members of your "tribe."

"You and the person next to you have a legitimate worldview... that is at times helpful but also can have blinders," he says. "We have to know a lot about that lens in order to see beyond it."

So, after giving us time to study all nine personalities, Dale and Cathy invited each type

to step forward for a series of panel discussions. But when the Ones went to the head of the class, I stayed seated because I refused to identify as a Perfectionist, thinking this would somehow be an admission of...imperfection?

Instead, I fancied myself an Epicure, a type that reflects where I'm at today, but not my lifelong battle with my inner critic.

The interview with Dale came several days after the workshop, and by this time I had come to terms with my perfectionism. I shared this epiphany with him, which led to a deeper discussion about my type.

"Your habit of mind would be to repress anger...to notice error," Dale told me. (Considering I've been a copy editor since 1987, I'd say this is a pretty reasonable assessment.)

Perfectionists are "living out the superego," Dale added, warning of unhealthy reactions to urges, whether chocolate or sex. (Hmm, this sounds familiar. Two years ago I was obese and celibate.)

Like most queers, I suspect I'm drawn to the Enneagram because a stint in the closet gives us lots of time for self-reflection. Dale's next weekend workshop is tailored toward gay men.

"Gays and lesbians, because of their experience of being outsiders, have this golden opportunity to be healers and people who integrate and mediate in society," he says, "and I want to be a part of teaching gays and lesbians more tools to do that." **JR**

Dale Rhodes facilitates **JUST WHAT TYPE OF MAN ARE YOU?** from 6:30 to 9 p.m. April 29 and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. April 30 at the Northwest Neighborhood Cultural Center, 1819 N.W. Everett St. Cost is \$110-\$130 from 503-295-4481 or [www.glbtcounseling.com](http://www.glbtcounseling.com).

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Dale Rhodes

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