

Living the Enneagram, You Are More Than Your Number



Episode 50: Living the Enneagram, You Are More Than Your Number with Erin Baute

Gregory Anne: Hey everybody. Welcome back to another episode of the rebellious wellness over 50 podcast, where you get to hear from amazing guest experts on all kinds of topics. And today we're talking about something we've not yet covered, which is a specific personality assessment. Erin Baute is my guest today.

Is that an assessment, your expertise? Would you call the Enneagram an assessment?

Erin Baute: I typically call it a behavioral model and it's rooted in personality, yes, but it goes a little deeper.

Gregory Anne: Okay. Many people listening will have had to take a test from their corporate days. Lots of corporate refugees in my audience, maybe Disc, Myers Briggs.

There are so many of these days and Enneagram. Some people may be familiar with some not. So explain first of all, and you can tell us how you got here, but first explain what we're talking about.

Erin Baute: Yeah. So the Enneagram as a behavioral model of personality it is meant to help us understand the why underneath our behavior.

So if we were to look at a Myers-Briggs or a Disc assessment or a color profile or StrengthsFinder, right? All these sort of algorithmic ways in which I category behavior are just products of what I've learned to do in the world. And then the algorithm gives me like the spit out of this is what I look like based on all of these sort of typical behaviors.

And what it doesn't help us understand is that we're these complex dynamic unique individuals who are capable of learning new behaviors to adapt in different environments. Right. So that's why. My disc assessment changes here to here, or I'm different at home than I am at work it's because I learned to be adaptable.

It doesn't tell any of us why I develop those strategies in the first place. And it's the why that helps us resource ourselves in really unique ways. And that's why me as a behaviorist fell in love with the Enneagram, because it gave me this really rich language to name the patterns that might be true that might live underneath what you see as the outcome for me in life as a way to create grace and understanding, and empathy and kindness and compassion for myself, but then also for other people, right.

Ultimately the Enneagram is meant to be both spiritual and psychological, cause it's meant to help us understand the what, but also be tender with the why so that we can just make more room for people to be who they are.

Gregory Anne: Oh, wouldn't that be a nice mantra for the world to take on right now? Let everybody be who they are.

So tell people, what does a behaviourist do? You studied many things and you're working on a PhD. Behavioral sciences.

Erin Baute: Yeah, I, I study, I geek out, I get excited by making behavior change. So I studied public health in graduate school. I'm getting my PhD in organizational

psychology now, and I'm really interested in figuring out how we influence behavior that has a communal impact

that makes a difference. Right. But it's all, what public health is, is social marketing. how do we influence behaviors of a community in a way that has a positive impact? And that plays true in business environment, team environment, all of these really rich places where our communal behaviors matter to a greater good.

And we can find corporate culture that those communal behaviors can actually be harmful, or we can find around social justice and equity and inclusion that those communal behaviors can have a positive impact. And so I'm really interested in the science and the motivation behind that, so that we can influence the small, accessible, habitual things that we do as a way to facilitate a broader impact.

Gregory Anne: It sounds to me like mindfulness on one tiny little level, but micro and macro, right? What am I doing to me? How am I loving me or protecting me or not? And then the next person next to me and then our greater community. Interesting.

Erin Baute: Yeah, yes

Gregory Anne: So when you say spiritual, it has a component that is definitely not just a box that we're putting people in.

Erin Baute: You got it.

Gregory Anne: Yeah. And, and is it, I know that you're, your vibe, your thing is freedom and free expression and being wild, finding your wild, I think, is something that you talk about and all the things that you're talking about now, don't sound like there's any room for wild. So how can an assessment that tells me about who I am, help me find my wild?

Erin Baute: So I think that's the clear distinctions that the assessment is not meant to tell us who I am. It's showing me why I choose the patterns of behavior I choose. Right. Why did I learn to limit myself? Why did my life and whatever I faced say, Hey, Gregory, if you make yourself small in this way, if you limit yourself in this way, you're safer, you belong more, you cope better.

You make your parents happy. You do whatever it is. Right? We manage the trauma that we experienced. So actually naming our Enneagram type is naming the most limited version of ourselves. That is the box. Right? And so when we get to know the whole model, we hold it as a map. I am actually all of these things.

I just learned through life through system, through habits, through expectation, through trauma, to be the smallest. And so you won't hear me say I am a type seven. That's not my identity. I fixate at type seven. The most limited version of me looks like a type seven, but when I'm grounded, when I'm in my body, when I am connected to the way I feel about myself or the world, I actually look a lot, like all of it.

I actually look like the whole thing. So I think the Enneagram is really a representation of the full expression of the human experience and finding our type is helping me understand where I'm starving so that I can break free from that and use more of these tools that we're creating. For me in the first place we see kiddos and the construct of personality doesn't form in us until like early adolescents, like seven to 11 years old is when we start to see this, how the experience around personality.

So if you see kids that are littler than that, you see this full expressive human, and then we start telling them don't cry. Don't do these things, you know, whatever. And I shift.

Gregory Anne: That's so interesting. And I know you have two children, and I was thinking about how much you have like a little lab in your house.

Watching this human development and how it influences from outside, including you and your husband affect or effect that little personality to be. Cause yours are little right?

Erin Baute: Yeah, they're five and seven. And then you add this other complicated layer over top of it. My seven-year-old is on the autism spectrum.

And so then you lay neurodivergence over, which is just one factor identity. Right? We've got oppression. We've got socioeconomic status. We've got culture. We've got race. We've got gender, neurodivergence ability and disability, all of these things play into the expression of my personality. And so she is this beautiful reminder every day of just how unique we all are and just how impactful it is to be taught and led through our differences.

Not through our similarity. So I often say that she's my greatest teacher, you know? Yeah. I'm finishing my PhD, but I learned more being her parents than I ever have anywhere else.

Gregory Anne: I'll bet. I'll bet. That's so true. I know people listening, myself included, my girlfriends from high school when we'd get together we still talk about the quizzes that Glamour magazine and Cosmo, we would wait for the end of

the year personality quiz, what type are you? And I know everybody loves quizzes. They're big in the marketing world for getting leads on your website.

And I'm thinking we're fascinated, but what you're saying is this huge other world of scientifically pulled together assessments.

And especially in the corporate world, they want to put you in a box where you're going to be a good manager or a good follower, good, whatever. But at this point in the world, where there is so much divisiveness and so much uncertainty. It seems to me that your work and your expression of using this could have a global impact.

Erin Baute: I think personally, and I think this is why I fell in love with it, is that when we can, all of that work is valuable because it helps us understand what , and to understand what, allows us to maybe create jobs or opportunities for people that might fit them more naturally. But until we actually care about why

we don't learn to live in the friction with other people because caring about why means that I know how my why. So that I can then hold what might be true for your why? And for me, this is the cornerstone of emotional intelligence, right?

Emotional intelligence is rooted on how aware am I of myself, and then how aware am I of what might be true for you and how do I live in the friction between those two things and how I recover and repair that relationship in order for us to move forward. If I live over here at the end and just the box checking of what I do, I don't have to get into all of this messy stuff of naming my own things and what might be true for me and holding space for you.

We can do what we do best as humans. And so ultimately what we have done is de-humanized one another to be productive. And I think that the Enneagram can be a really powerful tool around re humanization, around learning to love all of myself so that I have the capacity to love all of you.

Even if that means we sit on opposite sides of value systems, right? We're still a human

Gregory Anne: With various moment to moment changing feelings, interpretations, filters, all of those good things. You have a list of books that a person can get from your website that introduces people to Enneagram and other things.

And one of the books on there was a book that I am absolutely in love with it. I listened to, and then subsequently read, not too long ago is What Happened To You? And I just have to tell the audience about this book and it's going to make me

cry, but it's a book about changing the conversation from what's wrong with you? To what happened to you? Which is what you're speaking about right now, the ability for me to understand me and why my thing is, or I am the way I am, but then looking across the table or across a playground or a war zone and seeing somebody else and say, What happened to you?

It is such a game changer in anything. The book is about trauma, it was written by Oprah what, what is, he's a psychiatrist, but he's a neurobiologist.

Erin Baute: Yeah. His name is Dr. Bruce Perry and I come to him honestly, through the way of trauma informed parenting. Learning to parent my sweet I'm going to get emotional, my sweet girl, um, and realize that his teachings mattered to CFOs and CEOs too.

Right. Like, so, yeah.

Gregory Anne: Yeah. It's anybody who has had any kind of trauma. If you feel like you've had a traumatic experience, but you want to play it down, you don't want to be mean to your parents by saying, oh, they didn't do this right.

Or that. And then some people will say, well, I didn't have trauma compared to the guy who his mother cut his finger off. There are levels of trauma and it could be as simple as one thing that somebody said. That changed the trajectory of who you felt you could become.

And if you feel that all I'm saying is reach out and maybe the Enneagram is a good place to start. It's not threatening. You don't have to have somebody sitting across the table asking you questions. But you do have to be willing to be answering those questions honestly. I know they're hard to answer.

The gray, do I answer yes or no, or likely, or highly unlikely, but, I think just letting yourself be open to the questions and flow with it is a way to get the best answers. Would you agree?

Erin Baute: Yeah. And I love what you say about, you know, the sort of perspectives around trauma, because often times we're introduced to traumatic experiences at points in our life.

When our brain hasn't developed at a cognitive level to process what it is, right? So personality and the coping strategy we developed, which we sort of burst into things like the Enneagram are a result of how I manage the real or perceived trauma that I was faced with and what level of cognition I was developmentally and what I understood as important in my part of life.

Right. Kiddos under the age of two, really only cognitively understand the world through the lens of their resources. Maslov's hierarchy of needs, the bottom tier of the pyramid. Am I safe? Am I nourished? Am I nurtured? So when a sibling is born or my parent, one of my parents starts traveling for work or, we move or a babysitter changes.

Those are all perceived traumatic experiences, but they changed the level of access for that kiddo in their basic elements of survival. And so those aren't quote unquote, inherently traumatic experiences. That little kiddo doesn't know the difference in their neurobiology that wow all of a sudden the person that should care of me is no longer here, whether that's because I got a new babysitter or that's because someone passed away.

Right? Yeah. And the severity of the trauma, and this is the beautiful work that, that Dr. Bruce Perry helps us understand is the severity of the trauma determines how heavily it lives in my nervous system and how much work I have to do regulating right before I can get out of the survival responses that happen in my body naturally.

So a lot of times. People will work with me get to know their Enneagram type and be like, but you know, my parents are great. And it's like, and it doesn't mean that you weren't put in front of challenges that you weren't ready for. And that's ultimately what trauma is, is that I was put in front of something I wasn't ready for.

And my nervous system got overwhelmed.

Gregory Anne: And there's a lot of that overwhelmed nervous system going around in the world. Think about the world day to day, the news, I think we underestimate the triggers. They also talk about what can trigger a feeling of that traumatic doesn't have to be anything like the original trauma, but, you know, we've heard stories about people with PTSD who maybe had been in the war, or they were a cop and they were on a beat that was a lot of gunfire.

They could, you know, a toaster could fall off a counter and they'll get triggered and scared. And who knows what? And again, it doesn't have to be that level of PTSD for somebody to have a trigger. Maybe people experience a mood change and they don't know why, but maybe lightning flashed or a song came on the radio and they get really sad and they don't know why.

I think these things are really worth exploring if we want to live free. Nevermind the world around us inside free from the inside.

Erin Baute: Yeah, I agree with that. I want to tell you a story because it relates back to the Enneagram work and why I loved the Enneagram in the first place, because it centers

a whole human. It centers how I process the world, cognitively, how I process the world emotionally and how I process the world in my body. And that's the foundation of Bruce Perry's work too. We see it in emotional intelligence. We see it in somatic work. We see it in trauma work. We see it in the Enneagram.

It's everywhere. And I am a huge believer that it takes all three of those functions in healing for us to process through traumatic things. So my husband is a medic. He works for the government and he often gets sent down to the Southern border to provide medical care and support when there are influx of immigrants coming into the country and it is traumatic, it is inherently traumatic to be trying to create

An environment where wellness is not central at all. And so he holds the pressure of trying to caretake in a system and a structure that isn't rooted in caretaking. And he came home from his last deployment pretty bent out of shape, holding all of that emotional trauma and

our youngest needed some blood work. And so we had to go take him in and he screamed because he's four and he didn't want the needle and all the things and that toaster, the screaming was a trigger for my husband. He got completely inundated because it felt too close to unresolved screaming trauma in these sweet babies that he couldn't take care of

all of them. He's been in therapy has been doing EMDR. He takes really good care of his heart, so he can show up full hearted in the work that he does. And so he already found the value in one of those centers, heart center. But if we don't also deal with the mindfulness, the consciousness work, the presence work, and the somatic work, the nervous system, then I'm only sort of scratching the surface of what healing looks like.

In that moment I was like, Ooh, I know what to do. We could work on some of the consciousness and presence work, but then he also needed to be with a practitioner who understood the nervous system and the body so that he can work to move through the trauma that he was holding instead of just maybe chipping away at it more slowly in talk therapy.

So all of them. And that's why I fell in love with the Enneagram is because it allowed us to hold the whole person and all of our needs. Instead of the pressure, we might feel that I should be able to just like, think my way out of stuff.

Gregory Anne: Oh, we've been doing that for a long time as humans, and I'm reminded of the phrase, it takes a village.

As people who are, whatever age, but after the midpoint, sometimes we need more than just once a year, seven minutes. We're going to live another 40 or 50 years. And your point is really important that maybe it's not just an MD, it's a practitioner who understands.

Maybe talk therapy is the right thing for this moment, but it is probably only one of the things especially, and I see this a lot when women have symptoms men too. But my audience is women have symptoms that are blamed on aging. That really could just be an underlying unresolved way of coping.

Something was covered up, go to school, don't cry. I have a girlfriend who said "my mother said, if you start crying, I'll give you something to cry about, now we get off the bed and go to school. You have to be willing to ask for help in these ways. And I've had lots of experts

who make available different kinds of work with people. So my point is to the listeners, whatever resonates with you in the moment and people deny their resonance, their intuition all the time. But I think I want to do an Enneagram test or I think I want to do some body work, Reiki healing.

Oh, well, but no, we talk ourselves out of these things. It's our spirit talking to you.

Erin Baute: Yes. And because there's so much out there and because we can sort of get bogged down in this person says, this is the right way. That's where freedom for me feels so important. That's where the wild feels so important is that we've got to reclaim that intuition, that knowing that says, I get to try whatever of this I'm drawn to.

And I get to set it down if it doesn't work. I often tell women think about you and me entering a dressing room at a department store. And we're trying on jeans, which God forbid we ever have to wear again. Right. But we have to be willing to put them on a button them and walk and sit and move to be able to recognize, oh, it pinches me right here. And then I take them off and I put on a new pair of jeans.

And I think our wellness and our self-care and our healing has to look like that because we are these unique, diverse beings, that have so many things that make up our identity. So many things that flow into our personality, that it's hard to say all people need this.

When instead we empower people to relearn, to listen to themselves and utilize a variety of tools. Is this helping my head, my heart or my body? And do I have enough of those options in the dressing room for me to try on until I find one that works for me right now? And then I will ultimately outgrow it and that's beautiful.

And I set it down and I move to the next thing . No coach, no therapist, no trainer, no guide. No one has it all figured out for all versions of us. And so I think the taking it off and putting it down is just as important. A part of the process.

Gregory Anne: Yeah, and I love the Jean metaphor, trying on jeans.

And like you said, I haven't been in a dressing room in a really long time. Not looking forward to it again. I always say that there is no one way to be healthy. The only thing we have in common, every single human has this one thing in common. We have choice and we have to be willing to take that responsibility.

And like you said, try something on. If it doesn't work, even if your best friend recommended it put it down. You have the choice to go find it. And I was just rewriting an article for my people and I can't remember which experts said it on an interview. She said, don't stop until you feel better. Find the person or people

who are going to listen to what you're saying. Not just assume and, and not just treat. Okay. Maybe you have a kidney infection. Your kidneys definitely needs some attention, but what brought your body to the place that it could hold the infection?

Explain what? So let me just go to your website and I want to take an Enneagram test. What is it going to, how do people, what happens?

Erin Baute: So, this is where I get a little fuddy duddy because the online enneagram tests are garbage. And I say that with love because I am a scientist and it is really hard to create an algorithm that captures

how unique our experiences are. So the very best Enneagram tests on the market, the only one that is empirically tested, the only one that has any science behind it has a validity and reliability rate of 46%, meaning 46% of people who take it, get the right results. So that is kind of goes back to what you're saying before this work falls on us.

It falls on us. So you can take a test. Just trust it halfway. You can do this by self exploration. I think the biggest thing I'm wary of is when people look at other people and say you're a such and such type. Because how can I know your unique expression more clearly than you do. All I can see is your behavior.

I have no idea what created the behavior. I don't know what lives in your nervous system. I don't know what lives in your subconscious, I don't know any of those things. I have a free typing guide that walks you through a more emotional and cognitive approach to understanding what might be true for me in relation to my Enneagram type.

And we first start with, how do I cope? How, what, what is sort of the pattern of my process of problem solving and coping? And then how might that lay into a behavioral pattern that might fit into this like limited box of type? So I walk people through some resources. The tests that I think is the best is linked in

there. A book that I really love is linked in there. Websites that I think do a good job, trying to be expansive are linked in there as a place to start. If, you're like me, the type of person that wants to hit fast forward, I do in-person typing interviews. I was trained by a master Enneagram teacher.

She's been studying and working with the tool since 1970. She's a clinical psychologist. She's a brilliant woman. And she developed this set of questionnaires that I have been using for 12 years. I've probably done about 1500 of the typing interview. And it has become my specialty. Malcolm Gladwell talks about that 10,000 hours kinds of thing, I've hit that and then some. And what I've learned through the process is how to check my own bias as I moved through it, to make sure I'm not clouding what I think with what they think. And then I've seen enough variety and how the behaviors present themselves.

When you see the way 300 type threes present, you start to be able to see some patterns. So this is why I decided to do my PhD . I wanted to create some validity around this tool because I see such success around it. So if that's something you're interested in

we can do that work together, but by no means, is it a "have to". There's enough resources out there to discover by self and it's okay to take a test. Just don't trust it all the way.

Gregory Anne: Tell people what your website is.

Erin Baute: I'm at living the enneagram.com and you can follow me on Instagram or on Facebook.

I load those places with resources. I think about them kind of like my gym, where we can work out these fixated patterns so we can start to learn to let them go.

Gregory Anne: That's great. Well, this has been a bigger conversation than I expected and a really beautiful one. And I thank you so much for being willing to go in all the different directions we did.

Erin, It was lovely talking to you. Thank you.

Erin Baute: You're most welcome

Gregory Anne: People, we'll be back next week as always. And in the meantime, I want you to remember aging happens, but it doesn't have to ruin your life. Be well till next time.