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## **The Enneagram and Relationships**

**Guest: Dr Robert Holden**

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**[00:00:09] Alex Howard**

Welcome, everyone to this interview where I'm super happy to be talking with Robert Holden.

Firstly, Robert, welcome. I'm really excited to talk to you today.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Thank you and thank you for inviting me to be part of this event and for us to have a chance to explore our mutual love of the Enneagram.

**Alex Howard**

We've had a little bit of fun just scoping this out over the last couple of days. It was interesting. This is one of my later interviews recording as part of the conference, and I'm always looking at the overall picture of different pieces that we're covering. And it became clear to me as Robert and I were emailing backwards and forwards, that this idea that we all have different lenses, different frames of how we see ourselves in the world. And that could be a really important dynamic in relationship.

And it was a piece that we haven't covered so far as part of this event. So, Robert's been very gracious in letting me kind of steer us down this dialogue around the Enneagram, which is a very powerful and helpful map for understanding. Just to give people a bit of Robert's background : Robert Holden, PhD's innovative work on psychology and spirituality has been featured on "The Oprah Winfrey Show", "Good Morning America", a PBS show called "Shift Happens", and in two major BBC documentaries called "The Happiness Formula" and "How to Be Happy" that have been shown to over 30 million people worldwide.

Robert is also the author of many books. Just to mention a few, they include; *Happiness Now, Shift Happens, Authentic Success, Be Happy, Loveability*. There's a whole long list here. People can find out more obviously at the usual book retailers. Robert, just before we come into, you're going to walk us around a little bit of a journey through the different types of the Enneagram. But just, for those that haven't heard of the Enneagram before, that perhaps are new to this area, just very briefly, what is the Enneagram?

## **[00:02:10] Dr Robert Holden**

Even the name has a bit of mystery to it, doesn't it? So the Enneagram is a Greek name, meaning the model of nine. And we are talking about a school of thinking, if you like, that goes back perhaps two and a half thousand years, maybe, a paperless trail for the most part. So there's a lot of mystery there.

But we know that the desert fathers and desert mothers, for instance, of the third century were very much looking at the Enneagram and using the Enneagram to really better understand our relationship with ourselves, better understand our relationship with the world, better understand our relationship with each other, and even our relationship with God as well.

And I think there was essentially an understanding that there are these filters, if you like, that every ego has. And that actually these filters, if we're not aware of them properly, they can make love and make relationships much more difficult, perhaps, than they need to be.

So essentially, the short story is there was this rather enigmatic philosopher called Gurdjieff who bought the Enneagram over to the West eventually with the help of a man called Mr. Ouspensky. And this was around the 1920s. And from there, the Enneagram, I think, has really started to come up from under the radar. I think it was flying below the radar for a very long time.

Now there are three broad ways I think you can work with the Enneagram. One is the Enneagram of personality. And you have to imagine, with the Enneagram symbol, you've got nine dots on a circle. And in a way, these nine dots represent nine personality types. So imagine nine people holding hands essentially.

And these types are very interesting to get to know about. I think the most important thing to say with the Enneagram of personality is that we are not, there are nine personality types, but what we're doing is we're not typing you as a person. In fact, every person is completely untypable, because fundamentally, there's too much mystery to us. There's too much mystery to the soul, to the heart, to the mind and to who we may truly be, in essence.

So we're not typing you as a person. But what we are doing is we're typing the operating system of your personality. Now, this operating system of your personality has lots of habits in there. There's an auto pilot in there.

There are filters in there which include a basic fear that we run in our nervous system, a passion, a source of suffering over the heart, a fixation, which is like a bias in the way we think. And just this alone, if we're not careful, causes some difficulty in relationships unless we're able to manage our operating system, if you like.

Now, another way of looking at the Enneagram is to see that these nine dots on the circle aren't just types. They are points. And if you like, they are meditation seats. And these meditation seats become wonderful opportunities to explore themes like, for example, relationships, or you can take any theme.

Actually. In fact, you and I have looked at happiness in the Enneagram in the past, and you can explore happiness in nine different ways using the Enneagram. I worked with a brand called Dove, "Dove and the Real Beauty Campaign," and we looked at nine meditations on beauty, for example. So there's so many things we can do.

In the last year or two, I've worked on several projects where we've been looking at healing racism working with the Enneagram, healing prejudice and bias using the Enneagram.

**[00:06:33]**

We could look at parenting in the Enneagram, God in the Enneagram, leadership in the Enneagram. So this is a wonderful way to work with the Enneagram, where each of these points on the Enneagram become super interesting for all of us.

One last way to look at the Enneagram is to see the Enneagram as offering us nine paths of growth. And in these nine paths of growth, we have an opportunity to really cultivate a healthy relationship with our ego, but also perhaps more of a conscious relationship with those more soulful aspects of us. A relationship where, for example, we cultivate a better relationship with our body, a better relationship with our heart, a better relationship with our mind, and with our thinking.

So fundamentally, you've got a wonderful nuanced system here, 2500 years of observation and an opportunity to work with the Enneagram, with a personality, with meditation and with growth.

### **Alex Howard**

And one of the things that you said to me yesterday when we were talking about this interview, which I thought was really interesting, was that people may be familiar with the idea of love languages, that we have different ways of feeling loved.

And you made the point that with the Enneagram, in a sense, it's a map to also understand when we're in relationship what may help our partner feel loved, because as the point you made is that, we can know in our mind that we're loved and there can be lots of love there, but that doesn't always equate to feeling loved.

### **Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah. Absolutely. So a few years back now, I really spent a lot of time looking at our relationship to love in particular. And I worked on a project called "Loveability", and I wrote a book called *Loveability*. And in that book, I was really saying yes, I think that really the issue isn't whether we love each other or not. Actually, I think deep down, we all love each other. Actually, this is a big thing to say, but I actually think this is true, that at our core, we all love and respect each other.

Once the fears step in and the wounds step in and everything else, that's when it becomes more difficult. But essentially, what I feel, Alex, is that in relationships, the issue isn't whether we love each other or not. It's whether we feel loved by each other. And this is when I think the Enneagram can put some light on things, and we can sort of understand, if you like, the love language of each type, and get to know each other better. And thereby, hopefully, learn how to express our love in such a way that the people we love actually feel loved, and they don't have to guess that they're loved by us.

They don't have to be psychic in order to know that we love them. And our love can be practical, heartfelt, mindful. And in this way, people genuinely feel more loved by us.

**[00:09:44] Alex Howard**

That's beautiful. To bring this to life a little bit, we're going to have a bit of a walk around these nine points. So I like the phrase you use, nine seats, in a sense, of the Enneagram. So let's start with the type one.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah, absolutely. Why not? So type ones are normally called the perfectionist or the reformer. But if we were just to sit down on the meditation seat here at one, I think a useful symbol to look at would be the symbol of the mirror : the idea that relationships in some ways always mirror something for us.

And, you know, the Enneagram does have its roots in ancient Greek thought. And Socrates gave us the Golden Rule, which is this idea that we treat others fairly, with dignity and with respect. And this is something that very healthy type one people on the Enneagram do naturally.

And the Golden Rule, of course, is to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. And in a sense, you know, the Golden Rule is very interesting because it's a good bit of advice, but it's a bit more than that, because, actually, this is precisely what we do anyway. The way we treat ourselves is how we end up treating others. So we actually can't avoid the Golden Rule ultimately.

And for example, if we are prone to self criticism and to judging ourselves a lot, frankly, the people we love will not be saved from that judgment today. And actually, even though we promise we won't judge anybody else, we'll only give ourselves a hard time, it doesn't work like that. If you judge yourself, you will end up judging everybody else, too.

**Alex Howard**

And it's particularly those that we love the most, which we hold the harshest judgment for, right?

**Dr Robert Holden**

Exactly. Absolutely. And so, you know, those of us who have grown up with very, very judgmental parents, for example, will have felt the effect of this. Now, this is nuanced because, for example, as a type one parent, I might be judging my children in an effort to raise them up to be good. But I have to be mindful of the effect of my judgments. And I have to know, is all of this judging actually getting translated as love? And is it as effective as I want it to be? Or is there a more enlightened way to go about things?

But I think, like Alex, in the Enneagram community, there's this sense of at one, we talk a lot about, beware of the gaze of disappointment that type ones can have. Because type ones at the healthiest level judge brilliantly, but at the unhealthy levels we judge, let's say, unskillfully. And then this gaze of disappointment that we can do at one where people will feel as if we never live up to your standards. No matter what we do, we never live up to your standards.

That can be crushing, you know, and that's when the work has to take place at one, and we have to remember that what I'm doing to myself I am doing to others. So maybe it would be interesting to see what it would be like if I judged myself less and thereby I showed up in my relationships in a genuinely more loving way.

**[00:13:43]**

And here's the great thing, love can always do more for you than judging yourself can do for you or judging another can do for you. So in other words, love is pretty good at raising people. Love is pretty good at bringing out the goodness in people, the best in people. So actually, love is probably the better way to go than constantly judging yourself and judging others in an effort to raise them up.

**Alex Howard**

I think it's also worth saying that judgment often has, there is no right answer to not be judged. Just to give a little example, I remember many years ago, I was really trying to work on my own inner critic and judgment. And it was sort of early evening and I still had work to do. And my inner critic was judging me for the fact that I wasn't going to the gym because I had this commitment, I was going to go and to exercise. So I started to get ready to go to the gym, and then it started judging me for not finishing my work. And I was like, whichever way I go, I'm getting judged.

And sometimes we think that the way out of judgment is to do it right. But actually, if the lens is judgment, we're going to be judged.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah. Beautiful. Absolutely. Already, hopefully, if you haven't experienced the Enneagram before, hopefully you can begin to feel that there's some nuances in here, and it can be very helpful.

I would say, for example, when I've coached people who are type ones in relationships, one of the things we look at is the difference between being a good partner and a loving partner, a good parent and a loving parent. Sometimes the pressure to be good is so great that we actually sabotage our best efforts. Whereas to think about truly, how could I be a truly loving parent? I think this takes us further, and it's a better option ultimately.

**Alex Howard**

That's beautiful. That's beautiful. So should we come to type two?

**Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah. So we walk along the Enneagram and here we are at type two. And the meditation at two, I think a good one would be to consider the gift that exists in each and every relationship. If somebody is in your life, it's because you have a gift for them and they have a gift for you. And I think one of the most wonderful things to do often in relationships is to pause for a little while, and take some time to think about the gift that each person has given you in your life.

What would you say is the gift, for example, that your mother has really given you for your life? The gift that your partner has given you in your life, even right now? What is the gift that your children have for you? And just begin to get a feeling for genuinely receiving that gift that I think, it does exist in each and every relationship.

**[00:16:49]**

Now, the interesting thing at two, most people with an Enneagram type two personality will tell you that they often show up in relationships as the giver. So they are very happy to give the gift. Their blind spot often is around receiving a gift from their friend, their partner, their parents, their children.

And so I think it's fair to say we all understand that relationships are about giving and receiving. But at two, we've really got to make sure that we really are paying attention not just to the gift I'm going to give, but the gift I'm going to receive. And a good question to ask yourselves, I think, is how can I be more receptive in this relationship?

How can I drop my role as the giver and genuinely receive some sort of a gift? Now I would say that often relationships are... The counterbalance to giving and receiving gifts is drama. If we are not giving and receiving gifts, we are fundamentally psychically out of integrity with each other. And normally what we now do to pass the time is basically work on some drama between each other.

So we create a drama rather than living out the true purpose of our relationship. When we recognize there is a gift in this relationship, no matter how difficult or challenging it is, if we can acknowledge that gift, the gift I've come to give, the gift I've come to receive, then I think we make progress with the drama as well. And there doesn't need to be so much drama. So if you can think of a person in your life right now where there is a drama, the question you could be asking is, what is the gift that I have for this relationship? And also what is the gift they have that I haven't received yet?

**Alex Howard**

And also I think if one's tendency is that I give love and that's the way that I experienced love, then I guess it's sometimes also recognizing that for the other person in that partnership, that they're not getting the ability to give to that person that's always giving, that lack of reciprocity is a kind of block to that flow of love. Right?

**Dr Robert Holden**

That's a great point, Alex. It's in a sense what happens. And this can be the blind spot too, is that if you're the giver, in a way, it makes everybody else around you redundant. They don't have a chance to give too. And when you think about it like you're the giver because you love to give and actually through your giving, you get to grow. It's a great experience. And in a sense, you're denying that with everybody else if they can't be the giver occasionally too. So yeah, we're just looking for a better balance here.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. Great. I have to control my desire to dig deep into each of these.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Me too!

**[00:19:57] Alex Howard**

Coming to point three.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Alright. So point three is... I'd like to explore the inner work and the inner work of relationships. And it's this idea, I think that really every relationship... For a relationship to really grow, prosper and thrive, we each have to do our inner work, and we can't really wait for the other person to do the inner work first. We have to be willing to step up, I think, and to do that.

Now, my Enneagram type is three, and Enneagram type threes are known for being busy, often quite a long "to do" list. And when you pay attention to that "to do" list, you sort of notice that sometimes your key relationships aren't on the "to do" list, including your relationship with yourself. Actually, three is this idea that there's a lot of work to do. There's a lot of things to get done. Once I've got everything done, then I can pay attention to my relationships. Then I can pay attention to myself even. So, when I started to learn about the Enneagram, like this was super helpful because it really showed me where I was out of balance around my doing and my being and my relating.

And certainly as a young man, I was really, I think, almost too busy for my own life, quite frankly, Alex, you know. The schedule was just packed the whole time. Now when I became a father, my daughter Beau, was born when I was, I think, 42. When my wife was pregnant, one of the things that I did was I created a little journal to think about how I could be a really good dad. And I really thought about what's the inner work that I need to do if I'm going to become a really good dad? What are the things that would maybe stop me being a good dad?

My busyness, working too hard, being away from the family too often. All of that, I really faced that, Alex, and thought, look, let's see if I can work with the Enneagram to help me not have to make those mistakes, and really, really think about what it takes to be a cool dad. So that's an example where you're working with the Enneagram to identify the inner work that will help you show up in your relationships in such a way that you are more loving, but also that you make it easier for people to love you.

So we can often complain about how others aren't loving us. But you know, a good question to ask ourselves every now and then is a question like, how do I make it difficult for people to love me? Yeah, because we do. You know, we do. We have our filters and we are unconscious at times, and we aren't as mindful as we could be. So that's a good way to work with the Enneagram as well.

**Alex Howard**

And if I could just add in as a fellow type three, that was one of my sort of lessons and insights in a sort of not dissimilar way, was that, before I met my wife, I had all these images and ideas of the person that I believed I needed to be, to be lovable, to be successful, and to be all these things. And a lot of my relationships were built upon me trying to be that person. And whatever the image was, I had for the other person.

When I met my wife, she was the first person I'd been in a relationship with that just wasn't particularly interested in me being that person. If anything, it was almost distasteful the more I'd go into that character, because her connection to me was who I was when I wasn't trying to be that

person. And somehow that constant doing this and that self image can actually be a wall to intimacy and love. But the belief is I won't be loved unless I am being that way.

**[00:24:22] Dr Robert Holden**

Great. Yeah. Such a great point. So for example, at one, we tell ourselves I have to be perfect, and then I can be loved. At two, I'm the helper. I don't need any help. And if I don't need any help, that makes it easier to be loved. And then at three, yeah, we're going, well I've got to put my best foot forward the whole time in order to be loved. And here are three examples of myths in relationship. When love shows up and someone really loves you, they don't love you because you're perfect.

They probably think you're a bit goofy and they love that about you. And two, they love you and they want to help you too, as well. And then for us, yeah, three, you realize, oh, my God. I was working so hard on my best impression, and it hasn't worked, thankfully. Because they like the self that I really am, not the impression I'm trying to make. That's radical, isn't it? That's life saving stuff, I think, yeah. Very cool.

**Alex Howard**

I think so too. So then let's move to four.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Okay. So four, sometimes called the individualist. So I think fours are renowned for wanting to go deep with things. So let's go deep for a moment here and let's consider the possibility that relationships are really a spiritual path. And that relationships aren't just for romance. And that romance isn't the end of the story; it's the start of something. When two people are engaged in genuinely loving each other, it isn't, the love isn't meant to stop there. The purpose of relationships are ultimately that we learn to love each other so that we can both love the world. And that's where we're really heading with relationships.

It's a romantic journey that becomes spiritual. And so if we accept that the purpose of relationships really is to live rather and to grow and to evolve, I think that in itself actually gives us the capacity to handle the difficult times in relationships better. Because there's this sense of okay, relationships are meant to be fun, they're meant to be full of joy, but the fact is, we're also going to use relationships to heal and to grow.

Now, anybody who's had a past knows what it is to experience a wound. So that means whoever we meet in our life shows up not just with their light and their love, but also their wounds. And I would say, healthy type fours are just renowned for being magnificent at supporting people with their wounds, with their dark nights of the soul. Healthy type fours are just the most magnificent friends because they will sit with you in the darkness, and they are not deterred by this. So the great meditation at four, really, is to really think about the wound that I'm willing to heal so as to show up more fully in my relationships.

Another way of saying it Alex might be to say, what is the - here's a big one - what is the tragic story I carry in relationships that I need to let go of if I'm going to enjoy more healthy relationships, now and in the future? So the story I'm telling, the narrative I've got, and what is that wound that I'm really willing to heal for the sake of this relationship? But also for the sake of the love, that is



the real thing in this relationship. So yeah, this becomes the great work at four, I think. Being willing to do our own healing as a gift to us, to myself, but also as a gift to everybody else, as well.

**[00:28:45] Alex Howard**

I think there's also something, it just comes to mind as you're speaking as well, a very dear friend of mine, who's a four, and what I realized with him is that when he's in his kind of fire and he's in his wounds, he doesn't need to be agreed with. He just needs to be witnessed and seen. And there's something about that in relationship, just holding someone where they are without trying to fix it or necessarily find agreement. But just allowing someone to be seen in their pain or in whatever it is they're experiencing.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah. My wife Holly, has an Enneagram type four. You know, I watch when the children can come home from school, and, you know, so here's a great example of an Enneagram tip. So you could, I won't name any other type right now, but you could, if your children came home from school, you could say something like, did you have a good day? And depending on the Enneagram type, it's like, well, I don't want to tell you about my good day. I want to tell you about everything that went wrong in my day today, and then I'll tell you about something good that happened.

Now, this little nuance right here is brilliant to understand in relationships. Not everybody wants to start with the good news. Some people want to start with the one thing that really pissed them off today or the thing that's making them anxious and they just need to get it out of their head. So then they can tell you about the good news. And the fours are brilliant at this, because the fours will just say, how was your day, and then they can hold, like you were saying, they can just witness the day.

And somehow I watched the children and they just felt so heard and held by this spacious heart at four. And it's a beautiful gift to behold, for sure. And I've taken notes, I've gone right, okay, you want to be a good dad, be more like Holly.

**Alex Howard**

That's very sweet.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah, for sure.

**Alex Howard**

Okay. So then coming to the five.

**Dr Robert Holden**

I think at five, we could maybe address the idea that in every relationship there is a curriculum, there is some learning and some teaching. And that every relationship has a lesson for us, some great life lesson. Now, if we start with the family, I mean, I think it's fair to say that for most of us, there are enough lessons in our family to last a whole lifetime. Just our upbringing, there's so much

to learn there, in terms of how to love and how not to, but also just everything to do with relationships.

### **[00:31:39]**

The fact that some of us are introverted, the fact that some of us are extroverted, the fact that we do have these differences where some of us are very social and some of us are very shy. We have to work with that and understand that.

But what I would say is one of the things that I try to do, especially when I'm struggling in a relationship, is I really do sort of think of myself sitting at point five on the Enneagram, and the fives are sometimes called the investigators or the observers. And one of the things I'll do, if I'm really struggling in a relationship, I'll make it a prayer. And I'll just ask, help me to see this relationship differently. Help me to see the thing that I'm missing right now. Because I know I don't see everything all the time. I accept that. I'm over the idea that I see it right every time. I know I don't. So help me to see this differently. Help me to see the thing I'm missing. And is there a lesson here I really could be learning about the way I show up, that I think is helpful, but it isn't helpful. Or the way I sometimes will, you know, like, for example, as a three, threes, sevens and eights in the Enneagram are known for their pace, like this, you know. And some of the others on the Enneagram, who, like, just to slow everything down for a bit, you know. So maybe the way I walk in the room, you know, is a bit too quick and a bit too fast and let's get on with it sort of energy, as opposed to just, you know, a little bit more being, for example, rather than doing, getting, going, wanting, having, chatting... You know, just that, just knowing that, that's really, really cool, that's a good lesson to learn. The Enneagram helps us be aware of that sort of thing.

But yeah, just simply, what do I need to see here? And what is the lesson I need to learn? Alex, how does that sound to you?

### **Alex Howard**

I like that. And I think there's something also that's really important in what you're saying, that sometimes in the spiritual, self-development world, I think it was it Carl Jung whose quote it was, Fritz Perls I think said it, "Lose your mind and come to your senses." And this idea that the feeling and emotional body is always wiser than one's ability to see things cognitively.

And I think one of the great gifts that I noticed with a very, very dear friend of mine who's a five, is that his clarity and his perceptions sometimes is enormously helpful to untangle the messes and the ways that things get. And sometimes one can feel and process much more cleanly emotionally because there's now this clarity of what's actually going on.

### **Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah, that's terrific. And as you're speaking, I'm thinking of a friend who has a type five personality. And one of the great strengths at five is this willingness to learn. And we can talk for hours and hours about the stuff of life. And learning how to be in relationship is a really big deal. You know, it might seem like an obvious thing to say, that we need to find a way to learn how to be in relationships. But I think culturally, I don't think there's that much encouragement for learning how to be in relationships. There's a lot of emphasis on finding a relationship, but actually learning to be in a relationship. I think that's partly why I was inspired by what you're doing here with this whole

event. It's a chance for us to learn how to be in relationship. And that's one of the great qualities of five, for sure.

**[00:35:25] Alex Howard**

Yeah. I love that. Let's come to the sixth.

**Dr Robert Holden**

So the sixes are, they're called the loyalist, which is an interesting name. And by the way, the names normally give you an idea about the person, the personality's outlook, and also the sort of social role they're going to show up in. So the loyalists are the ones that, they're looking for something real, some solid ground in relationships, something to commit to, and something to build as well. This idea that we build relationships, they don't just come ready made, you've got to build them. And so, interestingly, I think at six, the big meditation, the really big one, I think, is if we think about relationships in more of a global sense, the big relationship is the relationship with life.

And the question really is, do we live in a friendly universe? Is this a friendly universe? Is life, is my relationship with life, is it adversarial, is it a test? Is it me against the world? Or actually, does the world have my best interests at heart here? And this is something each and everyone has to work out. But what if it's true that we do live in a friendly universe? How could we show up in the world as a true friend for people?

And I think any of us who have friends who have a six personality, we felt this really solid sense of friendship that the sixes bring, and they really do. They are your right hand person. They are your faithful friend. They are the ones who will stick by you through all of the great troubles. And they do it because I think they know that, ultimately, that life is meant to be friendly. The universe is meant to be friendly, and that we are meant to befriend each other, actually.

On another level, and this was something that I explored again in my book, *Loveability*, is the idea that love is intelligent. And that if you really want to love someone, there's probably no better prayer than to ask love to show you how to love someone. So, for example, I could say, well, and I do this, this is part of my morning meditation, is how can I love Holly today?

No, I'm not asking me for the answer. I'm asking love for the answer. And saying, to love, love, you're intelligent. You know how to do this love thing. You know how difficult I find it. But you're love, so you show me here. Show me how to love Holly today, and I'll be your student.

Similarly, how can I love Beau, my daughter, today? You know, how can I love my son Christopher today? That we're now becoming a student of love. You know. We're asking love to be the teacher, and we're asking love to show us how to do it.

Now, I think, you know, I know that's sort of a pretty radical thought, but I really do believe love knows how to love. I do think love is intelligent. I've worked with people all around the world in all sorts of interesting projects, and I find that the most loving people are the most intelligent people in the room. And it's because they're inspired by love. And this love is not just an idea. It's not just an emotion. It's not just a feeling. I happen to think actually, love is our true mind, ultimately.

When we really strip it back, when we manage to navigate the fears, the doubts, the worries, the pessimism and the skepticism and everything else, if we really get down to it, I think love is our real

mind. And that's the sort of thing you pick up at six on the Enneagram, five, six and seven, is the mind of love. And so, a good meditation would be, if you were journaling, for instance, would be just to think of somebody in your life and just think, how can I love this person more at present? And then, you know, just journal it and see what, just listen to love. Listen to the voice for love inside you and see what love wants you to know.

**[00:40:09] Alex Howard**

It's beautiful. There's a bunch of rabbit holes I want to go down right now, but I'm mindful of time. So let's move on to type seven.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Alright. Sevens are called the enthusiasts. And they tend to be full of adventure. They're great fun. If you're lucky enough to have some great type seven friends in your life, you know how much fun they are, and it's a complete joy, for sure. As a meditation at seven... Well, actually, my most recent book is called, *Finding Love Everywhere*, and it features 67 and a half wisdom poems to help you be the love you're looking for; that's the subtitle of the work. At Seven, one of the great journeys of growth is this shift from seeking to finding.

And I think, most of us can relate to this, that we spend a lot of our life seeking. We start out that way, for sure. We pursue happiness. We search for the meaning of our lives. We're looking to find our purpose. We chase success. We all have a Holy grail that we're looking for. And not at least, we're looking for love. And the search is very, very important because, of course, it gets us started. But at some point, I think we understand that searching can be a form of blindness.

And with all of this searching, actually, what we're not doing is, we're not showing up as the thing that we're looking for. So we are pursuing happiness. But we haven't really worked out what happiness is. We're chasing meaning and purpose. But again, we haven't really thought about it yet. And simply, we're looking for love. But in a way, our life is on hold because whilst we're looking for love, it's like the law of attraction, people say, Well, I was looking for love, so why haven't I found love?

Well, the reason is because the law of attraction is very precise. If you're looking for love, you'll meet people who are looking for love, and neither of you will see the love, because you're both busy looking for it. You know, if you shift from looking for the love to being the most loving person you can be, you will attract love. If you want to attract love in your life, be the most loving person you can be. And you will attract love, without a doubt. That's the great work. That's the meditation at Seven.

**Alex Howard**

And I guess that's often the challenge at Seven that I observe, is that there's all this enthusiasm, energy that becomes very sort of dynamic. But in a sense, as you say, it's pulling one away from actually what's there in the moment.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah, absolutely. And we become so identified with the search. It's almost safer than finding the love. So we both love our guitars and so much of, like, rock and roll music is about looking for the

love. You know, some of my favorite bands there's basically, I've identified three songs. The first song is, I'm lonely and I'm looking for love. The second one is, oh, my God, you're amazing, I need to sleep with you. And then the third song is, I've got to go now. And that is basically the sort of the three rock and roll songs that so many bands stick to. And I have to confess, some of the great bands that I love...

**[00:44:01] Alex Howard**

The same four chords...

**Dr Robert Holden**

And with the same chords. That's right. And so at some point there's this sense, wait a minute, wait a minute. I think I've got to add something in here, which is this willingness to be the loving person that I hope to find. I need to be that. And again, when people are healthy at seven, this is what you get. You know, they show up with the love rather than looking for the love. And that, I think, is the difference.

I'd say one more thing at seven as well is that most of the people I know at seven are really into their spiritual growth. Their enthusiasm for spiritual growth is fantastic. And I would say therefore, as well, another great meditation in your relationships is to think about how each relationship is challenging you to grow. And just to think about that, that there's a growth opportunity in every relationship. And that growth can come from a pain point. But, you know, also, I think we are meant to enjoy our lives and people at seven know this probably better than everybody else.

You know, we are meant to enjoy our lives. So let's see if we can find a way to enjoy each other, too. And I think there's some great gift here at seven, which is to remember this, that we are meant to enjoy each other's company ultimately. And it's a pretty big deal that we even get to meet each other and get to know each other and be in each other's lives. So let's not get so unconscious with the work of the day and everything else that we forget to enjoy each other whilst we're here.

That's one of the great gifts. I think at seven is literally, enjoying each other's company today.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. That's so important, isn't it? So then let's come to type eight.

**Dr Robert Holden**

So eights are called the challenger, and they're always up for a challenge. It's what makes them great fun to be around, for sure. They're also up for living life to the full. As friends, it's camaraderie. You know, they're proper good friends. It's a great feeling to have a type eight person in your life, again, who's healthy, aware, conscious, awake. Yeah. Amazing.

Normally at eight, we tend to show up in the role of the strong one, the one who's strong. And we do this with good intention, of course.

But, you know, whatever the role is that we show up in, if we hold the role too tightly, it becomes really a block to love, and it blocks healthy relating. And so sometimes what we have to do as well is really think about the roles we tend to show up in in relationships, trying to be the perfect

person, trying to be the helper, trying to be impressive all the time at three, at four, always being deep and into healing and all of that, and we could just go around the Enneagram the whole way.

**[00:47:35]**

But it's just identifying these roles and saying, what if I wore them a little less tightly? And what if I wasn't always the strong one? You know, what if I could relax a little and let myself be supportive and held and looked after as well? So, this is, eights are called the challenger. So I always think, well, at eight, I'm going to give you a challenge to think about too. You don't just get to issue the challenges. We're going to give you a challenge back. And actually my experience is that healthy eights love that.

So one of the challenges at eight could be to consider, a) what is the role I normally show up as in relationships? The rock, the defender, the protector, the leader, the boss. What if I relaxed all of that a little bit today, and actually just showed up as a person instead of as a role. And what would it be like if I wasn't always the giver and always trying to be good, and always trying to be perfect, and always taking responsibility, and always feeling like I'm the one that has to heal this? You know, what if I relax that role just a bit to see if it allowed for something else to happen in the relationship, allowed the relationship to breathe a little bit.

And another challenge, whilst we're at it, might be, what is the defense you have in relationships that is getting very close to its sell by date, and that you're getting ready to really let that defense go. Every defense mechanism is useful for a while. They play a part in our growth and our development, for sure. And they're useful for a bit. But after a while, they get close to their sell by date. And, indeed, some of them are past their sell-by date by quite a way. So let's find that defensiveness that we could just honestly acknowledge and identify is there. Everybody shows up a bit defended. And what would it be like if I was less defensive and more open in my relationships?

**Alex Howard**

That's such a great frame to put on the eights, because I think, often eights can get a bad rap when it comes to relationships because of the strength, and they're not always being emotionally reachable. I love the way that you framed that. That is really great. Yeah.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Great. Yeah.

**Alex Howard**

So then coming finally, but also very importantly, to the type nine.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah. Right up at the top of the circle, we've gone all the way around. Well, I'm going to start with what's called the Holy Idea of nine. Every type has what's called a Holy Idea. The Holy Idea, it's a big deal this, but it is the idea that it's a point of inspiration, I think is the simplest way to say it, that's available to all of us.

**[00:50:42]**

And the point of inspiration at nine, it's called Holy Love. And it is this idea, really, that the whole reason we're all on the planet is to be a loving presence to each other. And that actually our great work is to love the world.

We get to love the world by being a writer, a dancer, a singer, a gardener, a teacher. Actually, anything will do, you know, a surgeon and a kindergarten teacher and everything, you know. The point is that whatever it is you do, you're doing it ultimately to love the world.

And, you know, I think, especially when you think about what we've been through in this last couple of years, where I think most of our relationships have been really tested, because of the uncertainty, because of the fear, and everything else that's gone on with this pandemic, and other things, too. To remember, really, that in spite of our differences, the thing we share in common is that we really are here to love the world. And that it is the great goal of life to love and be loved.

This is the thing that really healthy type nines know to be true and really work with. The great temptation that many of us experience in relationships, quite honestly, is to withdraw, because we've all been hurt in relationships. And there's different ways of withdrawing. You can withdraw emotionally, but you can also withdraw mentally, by showing up skeptical and cynical and insisting you don't even need relationships anymore. We can, of course, withdraw physically as well; we just don't get in touch with people anymore.

The temptation is to see that once again, a bit of withdrawing is probably necessary, every now and then. But ultimately, the thing that really makes relationships work is your presence. You know, for a relationship to really, really work, you have to be present. And the greatest gift I think we can give anybody, astonishingly, amazingly, beautifully, is our presence. To be present to one another, there's nothing better. There's nothing more loving than that. There's nothing more wonderful than being truly, truly present to each other. And so a great meditation, I think at nine, firstly, would be, and this would be a good one for your journaling each day, would be, who needs my presence today? And just pay attention and notice.

And the chances are you'll get a picture of someone in your mind. Or you'll just get the feeling in your heart that tells you, it's this person. And it might not be rational. You might not be able to justify it intellectually, but there's this sense, and you get it in your body, I'm going to give that person a call today. Or I'm going to just drop them a text. And you know what? If you trust that, it'll serve you well and it will serve us well too. Who needs my presence today? It's a really great, great meditation.

And also, we can then specifically think of individual relationships, and think about, well, how can I be present to that person today? Now, how can I be present to that person today? Maybe it's listening with a whole other quality. Maybe it's sharing something that I need to share with them, that I haven't always shared with them. I always tell them about how things are good in my life, but maybe I need to be even more honest than that and share with them, be a little vulnerable with them, and tell them something that's really on my mind, and that I am struggling with. To let them in a bit more so that they can be present to me too. This is a good place to end on, I think, because, you know, at the end of the day, I think relationships are already a training in being present to each other. And in being present to each other, we get this chance to love each other, and also to love the world. And that's why we're here.

**[00:55:07] Alex Howard**

It also strikes me, Robert, as you're talking, and I notice in my relationship with my wife that sometimes, with all of the busyness and noise of life. We have three kids and two dogs, and all the stuff that goes on, that one can get in their reactivity, their story, their defensiveness. And somehow, when it all slows down, and there's just that time of just being present, so much of the other stuff just becomes unimportant. The thing that we can be most irritated by ten minutes earlier when there's actual connection and presence, suddenly just shifts somehow.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah. Beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. And I think our friends at type nine, the healthy ones, know that so well, don't they? If I think of my friends, they often almost seem to have more time for my life than I do for my own life. And they have this great capacity just to bring in that still point and just say, hey, this is it. This is our moment. Let's do this.

**Alex Howard**

Yeah. Beautiful. Robert. It's been a real treat. It's been like a buffet with all these wonderful meals to kind of taste each of the types. So the people that want to find out more about you and your work with the Enneagram, and also in many other areas that you're doing work, what's the best way for people to do that, and say a bit about what they can find?

**Dr Robert Holden**

Yeah. Thank you very much. I mean, I think probably the best thing is first, the website, [robertholden.com](http://robertholden.com). But also, I have a free newsletter that has new content every Tuesday, and that is a free newsletter. I think that's a great place to learn about some of these ideas. My newsletter articles are always a two minute read, because of the pace of life, but I'm always trying to offer some sort of a spiritual practice, some sort of an insight that might be helpful and useful. And I'm often drawing on the Enneagram there.

That's also where you can find out about some of the courses that I'm running as well. I've just finished a ten-part course on the Enneagram with Caroline Myss, for example. We did "Spiritual Growth and the Enneagram" together. So I think between the newsletter and the website, that probably covers it.

**Alex Howard**

Wonderful. Robert, thank you so much. I've greatly enjoyed this conversation, and I've had to restrain myself multiple times. It's always a good sign of how much I've appreciated your time. So, thank you.

**Dr Robert Holden**

Thank you, Alex.