

changes were congruent with their core values. She also recognized the negative self-fulfilling aspects of chronically wishing “If only we could...” Mary helped her create a new personal vision that balanced Tera’s habit of imagining how things could be better with appreciation for the realities of organizational life.

Coaching Style Four

Fours usually don’t have goal setting as their first priority. You will establish more rapport when you witness their pain, show your empathy, honor their unique way of seeing things, and focus your questions on how they feel.

Phil O’Reilly, a young graduate student, wanted to find more productive ways to organize his dissertation. He felt he had to overcome what he called his “negative personality traits.” Mary sensed quickly that he might be a Four. Phil began by lamenting how out of it he felt compared to faculty and even the other graduate students. They seemed to conform so easily to all the guidelines. While he could have focused on his opportunity to shed new light on traditional topics, he described instead how dejected he felt from trying to meet department expectations. Like many Fours, he had repeated his sad story for so long, he couldn’t imagine feeling any other way.

If you, as a coach, have a personal situation that parallels a Four’s dilemma, share it. It can be a simple common experience or a story that subtly embeds a possible solution. Mary had suffered through her own dissertation, so she affirmed the difficulties Phil must be enduring. This made his reactions feel more acceptable: “Others have suffered through these things.” She embedded a possible solution, too: “Yes, working with my dissertation committee was dreadful. They wanted a statistical study and I wanted to draw theory from a series of case studies. The only way I survived was to form a dissertation support group.”

Mary told Phil that Fours are often able to see things in a new light, so they are understandably frustrated when others can’t see what they see. This frustration is made worse when they realize their insights would eliminate solving the same old problems over and over. Phil was surprised to hear these positive aspects of his Enneagram style. Mary knew, however, not to share these positive aspects until after she had reflected on his feelings. Fours often feel that no one understands their pain.

Your knowledge of the Four’s patterns will guide you to coach them from being moody and unable to get past their melancholy to being effective in the external world.

The first step, we believe, is to embrace sadness, emptiness, and despair as powerful teachers of life’s most profound lessons.

John E. Nelson and
Andrea Nelson
Editors
Prologue to *Sacred Sorrows*

Pay attention to these four habits of in-the-box Fours:

Considers inner reality more important than external reality

Sorts for what's not there

Sees self as defective

Defends with introjection

Considers Inner Reality More Important Than External Reality

Feelings rank first in a Four's world. This emotional intensity can be contagious. While Fives might try to motivate by giving information, and Ones would tend to appeal to rectitude and propriety, Fours appeal through and to emotions. Feelings are as important as hard data. Even in corporate cubicles, you may find Fours encouraging and rewarding feeling states as much as action. When they have a powerful personal vision, they can engage the passions of the workforce so the project becomes a cause greater than the individual. The appeal is to the soul—to depth, to inner resources seldom accessed. Spontaneous generosity becomes the order of the day. An entire department can become passionately engaged.

Soul is not about intellectual brilliance, though Fours can be extremely bright. Soul is about depth, emotional intensity, personal integrity, and vision. Of course, even these values can have a down side. If a Four's vision is too personal or idiosyncratic, then others can't identify with it and become reluctant to engage. Their withdrawal drags the work down, perhaps even the work of the entire department. Routine work can become difficult in the presence of Fours, because they expect you to do more than just show up. They expect passion. Their managerial style is concerned about depth and commitment more than profit, acceptability, or the system. David Whyte, in *The Heart Aroused*, writes the following:

Adaptability and native creativity on the part of the workforce come through the door only with their passions. Their passions come only with their souls. Their souls love the hidden springs boiling and welling at the center of existence more than they love the company.

Whyte's book, with his impassioned message to corporations, is intended to influence the business world to embrace poetic values.²

In matters of taste and creative design, feelings reign, no doubt, but in other parts of the creative process, feelings can and must be muted. Fours may search out those whose feelings match their own most closely, and not attend enough to the talent and energy needed for the task. In many business settings, Fours report they feel they are actors playing a role. Their external business role is mundane, ordinary, and bland. All the while, their feelings, in sharp contrast, are in riotous turmoil. They split their feelings from their external action. No harm in that, unless they spend too much time searching for support for those feelings. If they are leaders, they may spend time, energy, and attention eliciting and rewarding emotional congruence instead of deploring what they were hired to do.

If a Four's vision is too personal or idiosyncratic, then others can't identify with it and become reluctant to engage.

² An Eight client gave Mary two tickets to join him and his wife at one of Whyte's weekend retreats. She observed with respect that the Eight and other business people openly wept as the poet "aroused" their hearts.