

he was now aware that continuing to compete could create a crisis. He knew he needed to build better teamwork with his own team and his peers, so he was more open to change. He trusted Mary and was unusually willing to admit his own relationship failures.

Coaching Style Three

A cynic might suggest as the motto of modern life this simple legend – “Just as good as the real.”

Charles Warner

Develop rapport with Threes by matching their worldview. Make the terms of your agreement clear, set goals, and use your time well with all clients, but especially with Threes. Otherwise, they will not be willing to invest real time and energy. Be concrete and succinct in your observations. Do not wander. Focus your conversation. Ask them, “How will you know that coaching worked? What are your criteria?”

A transformational shift for Threes occurs when they weaken their belief that success is everything and failure is never acceptable. Once you establish trust, you will find opportunities to show them how their competitive striving can rob them of their souls.

Second-order change is never easy. This is especially true for Threes. They will be willing to change some behavior, particularly to fix things quickly. However, unless they have had a critical event in their lives, as Ted did, they are not as likely to be interested in going deeper. In-the-box Threes typically are not introspective, but events that represent failure can prompt them to do some soul-searching. They do have emotions, but tend to suppress them in order to get to work. Consequently, emotional work can be unfamiliar. Getting them to look at their values, for example, may not be as appealing as it is to some other Enneagram styles. You can get there, but it’s a delicate operation.

Mary described collaboration—a departure from Ted’s habitual competitive approach—as a way to succeed and move ahead in the organization. This new understanding reframed his usual notion of success and put Ted in a helpful double bind. If Ted continued to compete with his teammates, he would fail. If he helped others perform better, he would succeed. In this good-willed subterfuge, Mary matched Ted’s worldview while she introduced a process that would break him free from it.

The next four sections explore how you can coach Threes to grow from trying to succeed at any price to becoming communal and inner-directed.

Derives Feelings From an Image

Inwardly living the roles they play, Threes tend to derive their self-worth from how well they think they play their roles. They can become image-conscious, valuing how they look over how they really feel. They often evaluate themselves on how perfectly they can match their roles and mistakenly believe others will do the same. They can base their personal worth on outside approval for their *performance*. The word performance describes a Three's striving. It means to do something well and to do something for an audience.

Threes have a subterranean confusion between image and reality. They tend to believe, "I am who I appear to be." This preoccupation with appearance can make them depend heavily on recognition. Threes will work extremely hard for certificates, awards, ribbons, medals, or tokens of some kind. Ted's striving for recognition prompted Greg's observation, "It seems important to Ted to know where he stands with me," and Mark's suggestion, "He'd do better to let his work speak for itself and not always have to show how important it is." In-the-box Threes may reward appearance almost as much as reality, and punish anyone who doesn't make them look good. The slower or less productive people reporting to Ted, who might make him look bad, felt punished when he gave them less time and attention.

Threes may use their roles to claim more glory than is rightfully theirs, using "I" when "we" would be fairer and more accurate. Ted was criticized for taking credit for his team's work. In business this temptation to take undeserved credit is especially acute when Threes report to those above them. One style Three boss would not release a department report if an individual's name was listed as author. If no one was named specifically, she could take all the credit. This is the opposite of good management practice, which is to credit people publicly and criticize their mistakes privately. Out-of-the-box Threes, of course, shrewdly mete out recognition as a motivational tool. When inwardly secure, they will share the spotlight as Ted eventually did. As they learn to share credit, they strengthen teamwork.

Coach Threes to enjoy the people in their lives, at home and at work. Their feelings can be so bound up with their roles and image that they ignore relationships outside of them. They can get so task-oriented that they run over, forget, or abuse others. They may not do these things on purpose, but our Enneagram style can be our compulsion, that which we do without conscious intent. As a transformational coach, the first step is always to help your clients become neutral observers of their own patterns.

Pay attention to these four habits of in-the-box Threes

Derives feelings from an image

Fulfills expectations of system

Thinks of self in mechanistic terms

Polarizes between success and failure