

See your Child from a New Perspective
A Book Review by Ginny Cusack

If you are a parent, or were a child, don't miss reading the latest book by Elizabeth Wagele. *The Enneagram of Parenting, The Nine Types of Children and How to Raise Them*, by Elizabeth Wagele captures the essentials of the personality types as they relate to children. You'll see your children and yourself, gain many new insights and have some good laughs. Wagele, a Five, understands the Enneagram, applies it to children, and makes it simple and to the point. My Eight colleague remarked, "I like her books. It is quick and to the point." The style and format of the book is similar to Wagele's previous books, *The Enneagram Made Easy* and *Are you My Type, Am I Yours?: Relationships Made Easy Through the Enneagram*, which she co-authored with Rene Baron.

The introductory chapter, "Children and the Enneagram," orientates the reader to see children as unique and different. Wagele says that "the Enneagram helps parents see children more in alignment with how the children experience themselves." Wagele devotes a chapter to each of the nine types of children. The purpose is to show parents that all children are not the same, a phenomena that all parents realize when they have more than one child. The descriptions of each Type, as children express themselves, help parents see differences in a concrete and systematic way.

Each of the nine chapters begins with a Personality Quiz in which the parent is asked the question, "Does your child.....?" followed by eight questions. If most of the answers are yes, then your child may be that particular Type. I took the Personality Quiz for the Four and the Eight which are the Types of my two children. For my Four daughter, the answers to, "Does you child want to be special, have a closet full of clothes, enjoy the arts or collect beautiful treasures, look at things in a creative or special way, seem depressed or melancholy at times?" were a definite "yes". It was a "yes" also for my Eight son who I recall "a great deal of energy and strength, showed anger and

dissatisfaction freely, made his presence known, gave teachers and baby sitters a hard time."

In the pages following, Wagele, a professional cartoonist, uses her talent, humor, and understanding of the Enneagram to describe characteristics of each Type using cartoons. The drawings accompanied by characteristics are right on target. If you have a sense of humor about yourself and your child, you will have some fun. In one cartoon there is an Eight child saying, "You'll stay in the corner until I want my dinner!" while her parents, sucking their thumbs, are standing sheepishly together in the corner. The caption reads, "Sometimes they seize control of their parents." So true for many parents who have an Eight child.

Another cartoon is the sSeven cat who is thinking "I deserve it" as he looks at ten cans of cat food. "Idealistic, love what the world has to offer and feel good about themselves" a characteristic caption over the pictureThe description of the Three child as important to look good is followed by a picture of two moms each pushing a child in a stroller. One child says to the other child, "Do you like traveling in a piece of junk?"

The cartoons that will get the most laughs and are the most pithy and to the point are the The Enneagrams of Blankies, Embryo, Adolescence, and Nosebleeds. It is fun to read how each type relates to their blankies, a nosebleed, in their mother's womb, and adolescence. Behind it, however, is the truth of it. A clear picture of how the differences in children ring loud and true. Here we can see most clearly that children are different. In the Enneagram of Embryos, the Nine is thinking, "Can't I just stay in here? It's so nice and warm." Whereas the six is asking, "What if they don't like babies? What if my mattress is too hard? What if I don't like their food?" In the Enneagram of Blankies the Five is sitting under the Blankie, while the Two is saying, "What you need is a blankie." If you have or had children going through adolescence, be sure to read the Enneagram of Adolescence. What's fun is sitting around with a group of adults who know the Enneagram well and can laugh at themselves and with their adult children.

In the second half of each chapter is a section entitled "Approaching Ten Common Problems With a Child in a Particular Style." The problems include

getting to school on time
study habits
manners
getting along with others
sleeping and eating habits
standing up for him or herself
decision making
get-up and go
responsibility
emotional maturity

Wagele outlines potential problems and parenting suggestions for each Type. Here are a few examples. Under "Study Habits" the author suggests to parents of the Six child to "ease the stress and anxiety of all children by teaching them to do their homework right after school and to start reports the day the assignment is given." In "Getting Along with Others" a parent's response to the rage exhibited by the Six child should be to "remain calm, and let your child's anger wind down by itself instead of overreacting or fighting against it." For "Decision Making" parents can help a Two child who is "often out of touch with their desires" by "playing a game to help where all the members of the family present and defend their opinions about a chosen subject." Under the area of "Responsibility" parents may become too dependent on their One child's goodness and helpfulness. One-ish children need to be "encouraged to be playful and silly and do things they really enjoy" rather than parents pressuring them "to get results that make parents feel they are doing a good job of parenting."

Some Types of children may have problems in areas where other Types may not. The section on the "Ten Common Problems" is good for parents who like to compare their children with others within or outside the family. For example, the problem of "Emotional Maturity" can be more of an obvious problem for the Eight-ish child than for the Nine child. Wagele writes that "Eight-ish children are often immature when it comes

to controlling their anger. They can go nuts if they accidentally get bumped, for instance, or if something doesn't work right. They need firm, structured and patient parents who can teach them how to get their minds on something else when they're angry." Nine children are thought of as "really sweet." Quite a contrast to the Eight. On the other hand when it comes to responsibility, Nine children "sometimes procrastinate, get side tracked." The Eight is "usually good at taking care of a younger child or pet or protecting a loved one."

Effective parenting does not only involve knowing the child's Type. The other half of the picture is the parent knowing his/her Type and how that impacts the parent-child relationship. Wagele gives brief stories and descriptions of each Type as it relates to a parenting style. A strength and a weakness is included in the paragraph devoted to each Type. Wagele captures the core of each Type and how that Type plays out the parenting role. A few examples are the One, Five, and Seven. One parents, who can be firm and structured which allows the young child to feel secure, may need to be more flexible as the children get older. Fives may find it difficult to be present to their children, so "perhaps they'd feel comfortable setting aside a chunk of time each day for being truly present with their child." Playful Sevens who have serious, worrisome, or aggressive children may have to "make big adjustments."

At the end of the book, Wagele presents "Twenty Additional Problem Areas." She attempts to address problems beyond the ten problems covered in the previous chapters on the Types, Wagele scans very serious and difficult subjects such as bed wetting, communication, drugs, discipline, divorce, sex in one to six paragraphs. She begins the chapter with "now that you've been introduced to the nine styles of children and learned something about adult Enneagram Types, see how you can apply this knowledge to your family." If you are looking for answers or suggestions on these subjects, it's not necessarily the place. These twenty problems are multi-faceted and would take more than a couple of paragraphs to explain. However, what Wagele writes

is good and well presented. For example, the problem of communication is the longest section and it is six paragraphs. Wagele suggests family meetings when appropriate to the age. The parent who wants information and assistance on discipline will be disappointed as he/she tries to find some answers in five paragraphs. It's an attempt, but maybe too much to try to do in one book. There is a Recommended Reading at the end of the book that leads the reader to more sources for both the Enneagram and Parenting.

As a parent educator and Enneagram instructor I have great respect for combining two disciplines, parenting and the Enneagram and its difficulty as I struggle to develop a Enneagram of parenting. Parenting is relational. It necessarily involves at least two people, a parent and a child or two parents and a child. Therefore, who the parent is will often determine a child's response or problems. Problems may originate because of parent is a certain Type. For example, a Nine parent with an Eight child may be problematic since the Types are in the wrong roles. The Nine may want to keep peace and not confront the Eight child with limits and structure. So while reading Wagele's suggestions of how to deal with the Ten Common Problems, factor in what your Type is and come to grips whether you, in your Type, can do what is needed. Although Wagele does give you a paragraph to read on your Type, it will take much more than that as you are rearing your child from birth through college.

Wagele's suggestions for the "Ten Problems" and the "Twenty Problems" are parenting "to do's" which depends on two more things in addition to the parent's Type: the age of the child and one's knowledge about effective parenting skills. In one section she suggests that parents should "never send the child to bed without dinner." This is questionable. There may be times during a particular age and with certain Types that going to bed without dinner may not be detrimental; but for another age, it may be exactly what is needed. So too with study habits. What is appropriate to enforce for an elementary age child may be impossible to enforce with an adolescent. In my experience as an educator who works with many parents, I find that parents often do not have a clear

idea of what the child needs at different ages. Educators and parents lump children in one category. Bed wetting problems and solutions for a toddler or preschooler is different than bed wetting problems and solutions for an eleven year old. There are many factors. Biting is not OK for any child to do; however, biting for a toddler is developmentally normal whereas biting for a five year old is out of the norm. The solutions to the problems are varied. As I stated before, maybe it is too much to try to do in one book.

I would change the book title to *The Enneagram of Children* . Regardless of the title, I enjoyed the book and recommend it not only to understand your children, but to understand yourself as a child.. I have read Wagele's other two books and found them to be pithy and to the point, and most of all enjoyable. As an Enneagram instructor, I have used the cartoons from the *Enneagram Made Easy* a number of times in my workshops for the participants to "get the point" and have some fun. There are many ways to learn about the Enneagram. Wagele does a marvelous job in capturing the essence and making it humorous. I know that I will use *Enneagram of Parenting* many times in my parenting and Enneagram classes.