



Enneagram Global Summit™

Integrating the Horizontal Plane of Living with the Vertical Ascent of Consciousness

Helen Palmer

Jessica: Welcome to *The Enneagram Global Summit: Nine Essential Pathways for Transformation*. This exciting session is called "Integrating the Horizontal Plane of Living with the Vertical Ascent of Consciousness." Our faculty is the renowned Helen Palmer. Helen is an Enneagram author with over a million copies in 20-plus foreign languages of her books. She co-founded the Narrative Enneagram School in 1988 with Dr. David Daniels. Their curriculum is focused on integrating two different levels of consciousness, self-awareness for personal and professional excellence and skillful means for next levels of consciousness. Helen, I'm so honored that you're here with us today.

Helen: My pleasure. It's my pleasure to be with you.

Jessica: Helen, can you just first share with all of us why this particular topic has become so important to you in terms of your life work and how it is that you and our beloved Dr. David Daniels came to this understanding of using the Enneagram to create an integration between the horizontal plane of living and the vertical ascent of consciousness?

Helen: Well, they're usually seen as separate from each other, prayer and meditation, which is the methodology that's going to bring you into next levels of consciousness. There are many levels, each articulated in the traditional work, which is very difficult to understand. Vedanta and Zen, and the language is simply so abstract that it needs a kind of a reinterpretation in this generation of seekers. I think it's important to stick to the basics of how we can understand the methodology minus the whole, in the past, very contentious arguments between Christianity and Buddhism, and Buddhism and Vedanta and Hinduism. It's not useful. I think our generation, David Daniels and myself, got confused by that. But our work, David was a practicing psychiatrist, a medical doctor, and he also was a teacher at Stanford University School of Psychiatry in the School of Medicine.

He was unpopular in a certain way in that setting because he was misunderstood a lot. In terms of well, how does meditation, how does prayer, how do other states of consciousness that are very healing, if you get into it, if they're very healing, why not just somehow incorporate this other state of mind? But the Enneagram, it was just new born in America at that time, just being discovered. David was in a certain way quite unpopular at Stanford University because he was relentless in being able to say we are putting people in boxes through the psychoanalytic thrust, the psychoanalytic tradition. It's all hooked on the past and past experience and trauma. All of that is true, but only up to a certain point. What about now? What can we do that is really effective now that would not heal in an instant, but by progress, by doing a practice, by understanding without getting reactive?

Because the clients, when I first started teaching psychology, which is also my field, the psychology was again raking up the past. It was all predicated on your relationships, your early childhood caregivers, as if you were stuck in cement that you had no leverage to be able to be in the present moment which was free of all of that stuff. Now, remember, in the early times of the Enneagram in the late '70s actually is when it began to even be known in esoteric circles in the United States. David got hold of it, and he was challenged by a colleague of his in Stanford who did not agree with this idea of bringing clients into the present moment and re-establishing patterns that are fresh and new. He was not popular at Stanford. But he was challenged by this guy and said, "Well, I've heard of this woman Helen Palmer. This would be something you would understand, David, but I don't understand it. She's a psychic." I was a teacher of psychology and also a practicing intuitive.

But at that time, we had to keep it very much under the radar because we couldn't even speak in psychological training in a college about this idea of metaphysics, which was just taboo. I've traveled a lot in Europe over the years, bringing the Enneagram there, and I found they were much more accepting. Much more accepting of the idea that it isn't just an unconscious and then a plane of daily living based on your unconscious motivations. It wasn't just that. But there were these other aspects of self that were just unused. They were more interested in the European countries that I visited than they were in the United States early on. But little David was relentless, and he kept at it until he took up this challenge and came to an Enneagram class that I was teaching. He brought his whole family, his three kids and his wife. They sat in the back of the auditorium. I was interviewing a panel. I forget what the type was, but I was interviewing five different people, very different-looking people, working class, upper class, racially mixed. It was wonderful. It was the highest time in my life actually was doing those interviews in the early days and selecting from my psychology students at the college that I taught at, those that were the most appropriate-looking people up there to represent the world.

It meant a great deal to me. Of course, they were all of the same type, and that was the message. It's not like type is related to class or race or any of that stuff. Now we know that, of course, but that was a big deal then. That was a big deal. David was challenged, and he came to the Enneagram class and he couldn't believe how pleased he was. He brought the kids up to the front of the stage and we had a little talk. He said, "Look, we've got to do something with this material because it's for ordinary people where they can help themselves." I said, "Well, one of the things I do is to be able to teach prayer and meditation practice." We got together and we had a few sessions with each other. We realized that we were like two halves of the same whole. My intuitive work was entirely noncognitive. By that I mean you're not going to be intuitive, which is a received experience, if you're too busy with the patterns that guide your automatic responses to things.

Maybe if you bring your attention in now, you who are listening, I taught them this very simple practice which because I wasn't that educated in the spiritual traditions, although I was an intuitive which is in every spiritual tradition as a received experience. I just taught them the difference between the pattern of psychological type and the pattern of resistance according to your type and this other place where you were free. If for a moment you can come in, and I don't use a technical language of the spiritual traditions. But if you could bring your attention inward and using what is commonly called the inner observer or the witness. But without even calling it a name, this ability that we have it is disused, to bring your attention in and dropping your attention down through your body, through your throat and your chest. Let it move down into the belly center. There is a place in the belly. It's not left or right. It's right in the middle. It's quite natural to seat your attention, your focus of attention in the belly and breathe.

Now what you have done is the basis of meditation to be able to shift your attention at will, to be able to focus your attention. Because one of the great laws of physics and metaphysics is that energy follows attention. Now, if you can mobilize, come in, drop down, and let's just sit for a minute. Allow your attention to rise and fall on the power of the belly breath. This is where you come when you're deeply relaxed. If a thought comes, you let it go and go back to the breath. If a contraction, an emotion, a reaction arises, whether it's pleasant or unpleasant, just drop down and stay with the breath. Now, these are the categories of your type structure psychologically. If a pattern of thought comes, let it go. If an emotion arises, relax right through. Stay in, dropping down. This is the basis of emptying. This is the basis from which higher states of consciousness arise. But we don't know about that because we're too busy with the thinking mind, with the emotional consciousness. We stay here for a minute. Now, just stay there and listen. David was a pretty famous psychiatrist in his time. I was an intuitive and also an academic psychologist. I taught psychology.

All we did was put our training together, you might say, into developing a school that was small at first, very small, and is now in 28 countries. Come in, drop down, and be carried. That shift of attention of surrender, be carried by the breath is universal in all meditation practices. Let go to the breath. Surrender the problem, which makes no sense to the psychiatrist. No, find out about the roots of the problems. Think about that. Go into the reactivity about it and understand yourself. What? From a fixated, a conditioned point of view? No. When people say you have two selves, when a teacher tells you have two selves, one is the awareness without thoughts, feelings and sensations. If a physical sensation interrupts, go to it, put your attention there. Let it relax as you breathe into that spot in your body. Three centers and they steal all our time and energy. Rarely do we come in and drop down and be carried. Now, the fact that you can do this exercise needs to be underlined. How do you know where your attention is?

Well, it's pretty easy to be able to know if you're in your head thinking or in your body, in your heart center, reacting positive or negative. Or you're paying attention to the breath in the body, in the belly, down, where the reactivity and the thoughts are surrendered. That's a huge stage in the vertical ascent. There is a common agreement in every world religion. No argument. You got to get empty because the present moment is empty. The present moment doesn't have to be covered up by ordinary horizontal plane thinking, feelings, sensations. Relax that through a practice. Then the first question, of course, is "Well, what's the use of this? I want to be like a Swami, or I want to be like a Christian saint, or I want to be a Judaic dignitary that's remembered for years and years all through time." No. It's the breath and the recognition that when you're empty, you can focus on anything by choice. The horizontal plane of daily living doesn't give you a choice because the day is laid out and you go through the day and you fulfill your tasks and you come back home.

But in the belly, in a praying state of mind, empty, we're so unused to it that we think it's useless. On the contrary, David Daniels and I kind of made a deal with each other. I would use my intuition training to be able to open up this space a little bit internally, and he would find a psychological support for that. For example, I'm a Six on the Enneagram. I'd like to just illustrate this business of moving into the intuitive stance in and down and receptive is the same, because it's the receptivity that allows you to move into the next level of consciousness which is intuition. It's not the highest state. There are many levels of consciousness. But intuition is available to most people if they only knew how to adjust into a receptive state of mind. David resolved for this and he started to apply the in and down and breathing receptively. When a thought comes, let it go. When an emotion arises, relax right through it. Stay with the breath until you start to realize, "I am here, but my thoughts and feelings aren't here." He got quite a bit of good feedback from his clients, not all. Some would just say, "This is a waste of time. I need to analyze the problem further."

But time went on and this business of mindfulness came into the picture, which is a great relief, but it was very small at the beginning and now it's huge. The ability to turn your attention where you want it to go instead of where it goes automatically. But mindfulness doesn't really apply this in and down stance to ordinary living. It's beginning to, but it's still very small. Like all great patterns of change, it's small at the beginning. Mindfulness is separate from a Three knowing about how to be driven in work and where their value lies in their image rather than in their human abilities. The drivenness of the Three, the needing to be the leader, the champion, the one that gets the accolades. Now, that's the vice or the contracted and conditioned we call it in psychology, the automatic response system. That's not who a Three is. The Three is also a receptive vehicle that can receive impressions from the greater reality only in the present moment.

The diligent work to be intuitive, which is the next level, the diligent work is to get into the present moment and to be present by staying with the breath, not by anticipating, "Oh, what's going to happen if I go empty sufficiently?" There's no attitude of grasping. You take whatever comes, which at the beginning is going to be not much, except your whole nervous system relaxes and this is huge. The mindfulness practice is huge. Mindfulness as a study, it has levels of development, has vertical ascent, different levels of consciousness, the first of which is that you will become much more sensitive to receive experience. That could be a person that you're having an argument with. You're in your head. You got your response all prepared. You're in your heart. It's closed. "I don't want to be here." Voices rise. What's happening is the serotonin is building in your body and in the other person's body as well, and you can't hear each other. All you want to do is defend. All you want to do is see the weakness in the other person's argument.

It's like the political situation that we're finding in America at the moment. There's very little third force reconciliation. There's very little like, "Okay, let's just take a few minutes here and come in and go down." You realize as the agitation, chemical agitation, and your body begins to subside, you begin to realize, "Wow, this person is really upset." If you stay with yourself and you're kind to yourself, loving kindness to me is the first precept in change, the first precept, the basis actually of the vertical ascent of consciousness. Because if you change first, that's a great thing. If you come in and can relax down and receive in a moment of great distress, whatever it is. For a Three, it's like, "I lost the leading position. Well now I'm nothing." That's how all of us are with our type. You're either on top of it or you're nothing. But if a Three could internally witness, recognize when they're about to go on automatic and instead do the most daring thing in the world, to be unguarded, do nothing but relax and go empty in the belly. That's where the change occurs because within ten breaths or so, the agitation begins to settle down and you begin to like it.

Now, you have to practice this. It's very simple practice. But if you are kind to yourself and relax the agitating, annoying, "They're wrong, I'm wrong, who is wrong here?" the argument, if you relax that sufficiently, you kind of like it because you're not being provoked automatically. Instead, you're standing in the receiving experience and the other person looks totally different. You can see their sadness. You can see their need. You can see their grief. You can see their type acting up. The natural judgment of a One, for example, stay with it. What you can do is practice this simple shift of attention where you focus in and down in a receptive state in the belly. Energy follows attention into you instead of being explosive out there. You're not wasting yourself. You are simply preserving a place of sanity and relaxation in the midst of great difficulty. The other person can do as they like. But what they don't know is that they will begin to match your energetic state inside. They'll kind of calm down too at least a little bit. Then you can get a clear statement. "I don't want to argue with you."

What I want to do is find a point where I can receive what you want and need from me without all of the hassle of the yelling and the threatening. Could we do that?" Now, that is not in most people's minds that they have the capacity to turn attention in and be receptive at a point of difficulty. The same person can come in and down on a daily basis because we have points of difficulty that aren't arguments with other people. They're with ourselves, the recurring thought pattern that drives us crazy. "Why am I doing this?" Most people don't even check out that they're hurting themselves with these recreated grievances and difficulties, their points of suffering according to type. The Three, for example, could recriminate, self-recriminate over and over again about the loss of prestige. The Six, for example, the Six who is anxious, that's my type anxiety. Well, do I really have to think about the times when I lost out in the past or how I'm not up to something? I'm not capable enough? Do I have to be thinking about those things? I just won't try. I'll pull away. There's too much.

The anxiety about self or somebody else. My God, what happens if my friend dies? Do I have to go over this in my mind over and over again? No, just drop your attention away from. You see the difficulty, it's like I'm abandoning my friend, I'm abandoning my future. I mean, the ego goes crazy there. No, it's a simple shift of "I'm doing it again." That is the witness that recognized. The witness is neutral. It's always present. We rarely attend to it. But that's the agenda of change in the Enneagram. You know your type. You know that you're a type of person who worries a lot about small things as distractions from greater things where you're sure you're going to fail. That's the Six scenario. Instead, drop the attention down when those particular self-negations come about. Relax, in, down. Whatever your type, there's a great deal of knowledge now about type. It's no secret. But whenever the distress of your type shows up, drop in and down, stay in the breath. We all come to the same place of peace. This is not resolving the problem right away.

It is relaxing the intensity of the problem, the intensity of our attachment to the type structure itself, which cannot move into next levels of consciousness. It's adapted to the horizontal plane. It's a type, but the witness of the type. Now, that's something. Could the Six, when they are berating themselves for being incapable, anxious, frightened, not go into the past of it's always been this way, and this is what I developed when I was very young and it's the parent's fault. Let's not go there. Now is now. You move your attention in and down and are able to witness more quickly when you go on automatic, when your pattern shows up. The only job is to come back again and again to the belly and the breath. It's the only job. It's very difficult to accomplish at the beginning because the conditioned, the habitual pattern is so strong. But it's manageable for everybody to accomplish this. The Nine, when they start to equivocate the great inner triangle of Three, Six, Nine, they start to wonder about other people's agendas and emerge into them so exquisitely in a way that they forget themselves.

Oh yes, I remember now. Opinion, well, I understand what you need, what you want. I just go along. Opinion of my own, separation, it's the worst for Nine. Come in and go down and drop and breathe. There are obstacles here. These are spiritual obstacles that I might go to sleep. Come in and go down and wow, nap time and kind of fade out in their awareness. The Six might get frightened and does of the unknown and go right back to the old pattern of behavior. The Three might just say, "Well, I lost that deal, but I'm on to the next and feel the juice again of going forward and being a winner." Now, the deal is that when you come in and you go down and you're carried by the breath regardless of what your type thinks as a pattern or feels as a conditioned pattern, no matter what, you can empty and go to the breath. This is where mindfulness and the emptying practices are so beneficial.

But we have not yet in psychology considered the possibility of teaching mindfulness to a client and teaching them also about their specific unique version of their thought pattern. There are billions of us on the planet. We all have different people in our thought pattern, different remembrances in our thought pattern, memory. We have different anticipations, planning. It's all wound up into the head center, thoughts, memories, plans and imagination. The big one is imagination. It's going to happen again. Don't let it happen again. "Back off. Move away from," the Six would say. "Go forward. Challenge it again. Win the last big race," the Three would say. "I can't be left out. If I go in my own," the Nine would say, "if they knew when they went to sleep, I just don't want to change. It's too hard because I'd leave everybody behind that I'm used to, that I'm bonded with. It seems like an all-or-nothing deal. I'm either going along to get along or I'm on my own in the cold."

Now, these are very simple explanations of why mindfulness could be if it were well used so effectively, to be able to intervene in the type structure that you have on the spot when the witness is strong enough to recognize. Going on automatic something I can do. Come in, relax down, let go and let God, which is a good word for the life force. You get your life force back if you relax these highly automatic patterns of psychological type. We feel the life force. We act on it. We lose the life force. We're tired. We go to sleep. That is not who you are. Who you are, is also the witness. Now, what is the witness exactly? Well, it's the vehicle of the vertical ascent. You catch yourself on the spot with a little bit of practice going on automatic. How do you know you're going on automatic? Why don't you just go on automatic like you used to? Just behave in a certain way without ever considering that you could observe your own thoughts, feelings, sensations, the axis of your behavior. Well, why would I want to do that?

Well, when life gets tough and you start to have a certain amount of age, life gets tough even in your late teens. You're not a baby anymore. Something I can do about this. I can bring a little loving kindness into me. Come inside, drop down, using the witness, the observer. Place your attention on the rising and falling of the breath. The witness will inform you when you start to dim out, when you start to push too hard. Just stay with the breath and everything else goes away, and you're in the present moment. The breath is the guide to the present moment. All of that type structure that you've learned about a lot in the Enneagram community, it goes away, and all you are is present in a peaceful state inside. Loving kindness to me is "I'd like a little bit of peace." Now when you get there and you begin to feel your inside and you don't have any outside anymore, but you're in the breath, I want my life force back. Because when you're in that peaceful state, the life force can circulate far more freely, which is why mindfulness is so effective in the healthcare practices.

Be with yourself. There's nothing to fear. You're alone in an empty room. You're doing your practice. You're relaxing into the belly. You get your life force back. It starts to circulate and keep you in good health basically. The contractions against the life force, solar plexus, throat, bodied pain, you shut down the life force, which is healing. That's what David and I put together was the movement from the conditioned type pattern which is well described by many into this next level of getting to a vertical, in other words, a fresh, a new, a new breath, the life force when I need it. Now, intuition is all about the breath and received impressions. It's a study that is very important, but it needs to be independent from the study of type. But what David and I are confident about is that intuition which is received this experience that we might have in a dream at night when you dream. The imagination is the vocabulary actually of intuition if you happen to be a visionary intuitive. It gives you messages. You wake up in the morning and you realize, "I got a message."

Well, that's a trainable ability that you can do when you're not asleep. There is a center of visualization, head center. It's all about imagery and stationary focus concentration on a visualized image. Then there are the heart center types. It's all about empathy. When you're empty and you're a heart type like a Two might be, a Four might be, a Three might be, when you're empty and you put your attention on a single impression, something, somebody, some future, some past, that's the scope of intuition. It's the next level of consciousness, therefore vertical. But if you're a heart type, emotional resonance is huge. You can be with somebody and kind of join what they're feeling, receive it. When you're able to empty yourself through practice, it's like you can resonate to the emotional tone of another. But it's not like a sound tone. It's like you're attuning, attuning to a person, and you recognize what they're feeling inside. It's a great deal of bonding with humanity at large. No matter how much difficulty you have between people, you can attune to them and you realize what they are going through.

There are levels of attunement. The vertical ascent has many levels. Attunement to be like a tuning fork, what they're feeling, the amount of emphasis they put on things. It's not about what they're saying. It's about what they're feeling while they say it. You can be entirely attuned to that and adjust inside of yourself. Then they feel heard. They feel as if somebody is getting them even though they may not know that you're attuned to them at all. The belly center, kind of the sensate capacity of intuition to be able to sense into, let it move through your life force inside. You sense into someone and you know their intentions. It's not about their emotions. It's what they're doing, what their energetics are about, what pleases them and what doesn't please them. All of this is received when you're relatively empty in yourself. It's a beautiful thing to form these bonds with each other at the next level of awareness which comes about when you're relatively free of your own point of view. You can't dump it. You can't dump the structure. But you can relax it and allow these secondary capacities, sensate, resonant, visionary, the subtle centers, the next level. You're getting confidence in that. I think that's enough.

Jessica: Helen, I am feeling profound gratitude for this brilliant teaching that you have just offered us. Which is a concise, beautifully articulated, integrated version of the life work that you have done as an internal work, an inner work in yourself and as an outer work in teaching with you and with David. It is always so touching to me when there is an innovative, collaborative, emergent creativity or wisdom in the world to hear something about the relationships that created that. I know that there are people around the globe right now who knew David and are feeling grateful to be able to revisit a sense of being with him from your very touching story. I also hope that people that didn't know David can understand from what you are saying.

Helen: He gave me courage.

Jessica: He was a giant of a man.

Helen: He gave me courage. I just wouldn't have gone in this direction nearly as forcefully or been as successful as we've been, because without his stature and his risking of his stature, it was just amazing what he went through at Stanford. Of course, I'm not going to go into that. But he risked everything. He retired as an emeritus. Somebody loved him at the end of all of his journey there.

Jessica; Then, Helen, just to reflect back a couple of things that you've said and to bring the attention of it to our listening audience, how revolutionary in a way it is that you and David formed this partnership where you could articulate the open space of intuitive contact with reality and that he would find the psychological structure that supported that. I think that's so important in terms of understanding the Enneagram's place in the lexicon of the consciousness movement. Because essentially, rather than splitting the consciousness movement into areas where either you sort of transcend your conditioned reality and move into these altered states or you get stuck in a kind of narcissism about the inner child work. What you have established here is that there is a way to relax into patterns in the now, in the present moment that are fresh and new and free. But because we have the understanding and the wisdom of the Enneagram, we understand our particular habit of attention that interrupts that contact with the fresh and new. Therefore, we can use that attention to dissolve and bring compassion to that habit. This not only opens us up to a new level of consciousness, but it also prevents us from spiritual bypass.

Helen: Oh, yes.

Jessica: I just really can't thank you enough for articulating that for all of us in such a beautiful way. This is one of the most integrative depthful uses of the Enneagram. Thank you so much, Helen.

Helen: Thank you.

Jessica: It has been an honor as it always is to be with you. We're very grateful that you've taken the time to share with us today.

Helen: Well, I'm pleased to be here. The word "spiritual bypass" is going to come up a lot in the next ten years where you have people that are highly intuitive, and they can't tie their shoes. You have people who are very good at tying their shoes and they're in suffering, and they can't do anything about belonging into the intuitive received experience. Yeah. It's interesting, isn't it?

Jessica: It's so interesting. I'm so glad to be on the journey of discovery with you, Helen.

Helen: Ditto, see you soon.

Jessica: Blessings to all who are listening.

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