



253: The Enneagram and Decision-Making with Suzanne Stabile

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 253. This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation, or if you just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and is sometimes delightful but also distracting hum of entertainment, you're in the right place for discerning your next right thing. Today I'm glad to welcome our favorite Enneagram teacher. It's author Suzanne Stabile, who is a highly sought after speaker and teacher known for her personal vulnerability and creative approach to Enneagram instruction. After 25 years of studying the Enneagram, learning from people's stories, cultivating relationships, and learning, under Father Richard Rohr, she has become a bestselling author and world class teacher of the Enneagram.

Her most recent Enneagram book is called *The Journey Toward Wholeness, Enneagram Wisdom for Stress, Balance, and Transformation*. And if you ask me, it's her best one yet. I'm especially drawn to resources that help us to not just know something in our heads, but actually find ways to transform our lives. And this book in particular fits that description. As a bonus for listening, Suzanne's publisher, IV Press, is offering a promo code for 30% off *The Journey Toward Wholeness*. It's going to expire December 5th, 2022. So go ahead and visit ivpress.com and simply use NRT for Next Right Thing, NRT at checkout, you'll get 30% off today. Now on today's episode, listen in.

Emily P. Freeman:
Suzanne, welcome to The Next Right Thing.

Suzanne Stabile:
Thank you Emily. I love your work and I too try to do life doing the next right thing. So what a privilege it is to be at home in this space with you.

Emily:
Well, I hope you feel welcome and I want to say as we get started, briefly a word to the listener because we're going to make an assumption here together, the two of us, about our listeners that this is not their first exposure to the Enneagram. So listener, I'll say this to you now, welcome to the room with Suzanne Stabile and I, we will not assume that you are an expert, but that you at least have some basic knowledge about what the Enneagram is. Perhaps you might even know what number you most closely identify with. And if you don't, that's okay, but I don't want to spend a whole lot of time set in the stage for those basic definitions because I want to move into how the Enneagram can inform our decision making.

But having said that, so I did all of that disclaimer, but I want to say, while I assume our listeners have had some exposure to the Enneagram, I cannot assume that exposure has been positive, informative, or accurate. So for the sake of laying the foundation here, Suzanne, I'm curious if you would be willing to share briefly with us what you use as a working definition of the Enneagram and maybe what's a common misconception about it that just drives you crazy?

Suzanne:

Okay, I've been teaching now for 28 years, I guess, and I still don't have an elevator speech. Everybody wants one. And once I start to try to give it, I realize how inadequate it is. So knowing that this will be inadequate, let me just say that the Enneagram is an ancient wisdom tool that is found all over the globe and in every faith belief. And essentially it's about the reality that there are nine ways of seeing and we each when taught well can find where we fit in this system of understanding that we see in one of these nine ways. And understanding early on in Enneagram work that we are living under an illusion that we're pretty much all the same because we're not. So once we identified difference, then we intuitively and almost immediately have more compassion for people who have created situations where instead of compassion, we felt impatience.

I think the thing that's the most difficult for me right now in relationship to the Enneagram is trendy Enneagram, and that's my name for it. And I don't want to be disrespectful and yet trendy Enneagram actually is not respectful of the deep wisdom and potential of Enneagram wisdom that's been handed down for centuries, orally until the 1970s. On the other hand, my audience has probably dropped 20 years in age because of trendy Enneagram. And it opens the door for people who are interested and who really want to know what this is. It opens the door then for folks like me to be able to spend a whole day teaching what the Enneagram actually is. And I love that the difference in the Enneagram and what people assume the Enneagram to belong in the group of personality typing like Myers-Briggs and Brinkmann and all of them, DISC, all of them.

The Enneagram is very different because it shows you what you get wrong and identifies that for you, but it shows you how to do something about it at the same time. And so rather than walking away with a color or letters or a leadership type, you walk away with an understanding that the best part of you is also the worst part of you. And that Enneagram work has everything to do with balance and with awareness.

Emily:

Well, I love that there are some things in life that still can't be reduced till to an elevator speech.

Suzanne:

Yeah.

Emily:

But I will say that was a pretty good one.

Suzanne:

Thank you.

Emily P. Freeman:
That was a pretty good one.

Suzanne Stabile:
Thank you.

Emily P. Freeman:
I also want to submit that we should call it the [inaudible 00:06:44] Trendeagram.

Suzanne Stabile:
There we go.

Emily P. Freeman:
That feels like it fits.

Suzanne Stabile:
I'm going with that right now, I'm writing it down.

Emily P. Freeman:
Because I think, having a name for something just helps it stick, so. And I'd say I probably learned about the Enneagram maybe a few years before the Trendeagram showed up on the scene. But to your point, the gift of that was it became part of a common conversation that a lot of people my circles were having. And I think it helped to accelerate my own understanding of the wisdom of the Enneagram. And so I'm really grateful for that. But like you, I have a hushed reverence for what I've learned from this tool. And I have found myself and some friends of mine in circles in my real life, in my community, a lot of us have backed far away from the Enneagram because it has been a transformational tool in our lives. But when we see it possibly in some ways just kind of thrown around, just like anything that's sacred when it becomes common or every day or even in some ways...

I don't want to say that it's become disrespected, but maybe in some ways just by the casual nature of the way we ask people's numbers and all that, maybe it can lose some of its weight. I don't think it will do that over the arc of history, but maybe just in our common moment right now. And so I think that's why, one reason why I'm really grateful for your time here today Suzanne, and for having you on because it's a conversation that I've wanted to have for a while, is how the Enneagram can inform us as we make decisions. But one thing I wanted to point out, something that you have said about three things that determine how we relate with the world around us just in general. And thinking about, I'll narrow it down to decision making, but just in general, you talk about the Enneagram being how we see and then you talk about two other aspects, social contacts in our faith. Can you maybe tease out those three pieces of who we are and how we see the world?

Suzanne Stabile:
Sure. I don't think you did this intentionally, but I'm very grateful for the question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about my three books and the order that I wrote them in. So *The Road Back to You* is the first book and it is a pretty good primer for folks who want to know what Enneagram number they

are. And the reason I say pretty good is because I think the Enneagram is better taught orally. And it was taught orally for so long, and there's a reason for that. And the reason is that your Enneagram number is determined by your motivation for behavior and not by your behavior. So what's happening now, people in my circle, Russ Hudson and Richard Rohr, people who have been teaching for a long time and we knew this was going to come, we always said, "When will it become cocktail talk, our water cooler talk?"

And then we saw it come and we have all been shored up by the fact that we know that the new thing will be the new trend, but we will still be talking about the depth and the mystical nature and the wisdom of the Enneagram. So I knew, because I talked for a long time before I started writing that as soon as I said, "This is how you figure out your way of seeing." Then it was going to be, "Okay, well what about the people I love, What about the relationships I'm in? What about my boss? What about the social context of the Enneagram?" So *The Path Between Us* was written to essentially argue with the golden rule because I really don't think people respond well if they're not my Enneagram type to my effort to treat them like I want to be treated. Rather, there are nine ways that people would prefer to be treated and there is a responsibility that goes with understanding, really understanding the nine different ways of seeing.

And that is, then I have a responsibility of treating other people the way they want to be treated and of trying to walk around behind them and see the world the way they see it. And then my third book was my effort to say, "Great, but if this doesn't, in some way, enhance your relationship with the Holy One and create a greater awareness for your own spiritual journey, then how could we ever really call it spiritual wisdom?" And I, in *The Journey Toward Wholeness*, began the work of knowing who you are and knowing who you believe God to be then offers you the opportunity to build a relationship there. But what is the work on your side of the fence to do in order to meet God and God's ever presence and always showing up to meet you? And I don't think you can do that unless you know yourself.

And people that I've talked to and heard... I'm 72, I've heard a lot of stories and people get to a point where they say, and this is a real good lean into the good work that you do. "Okay, now what? Now that I've done this work and I want to be who I'm created to be and I want to add peace and goodness to the world, what's required of me and how do I do that?" And I think good discernment comes from knowing who you are and knowing who God is and knowing in that relationship that you are called, you're here for a purpose to do something bigger than your little world.

Emily P. Freeman:

It's a spiritually transformative conversation. And like you say, if it doesn't get to that, we're stopping too short of what the transformation that really is available to us. And this is a wonderful tool, a catalyst for the conversation today and for your most recent book, *The Journey Toward Wholeness* that you just mentioned was your awareness of and your curiosity around what you called the accelerating pace of change and the impact that it was having on all of us collectively and individually. And I want to make a note, you made that observation before the pandemic, it was 2019, which is fascinating to me. Could you say more about the impact of that realization specifically on you as a teacher of the Enneagram?

Suzanne Stabile:

I'm not sure exactly where it started for me except that my husband's a pastor that, and we are in Dallas, Fort Worth area, we're in Dallas. And we have four children, they all went away to school and they all came back and they all came back with spouses and now we have nine grandchildren. So I'm living regularly in three generations and I'm aware that my best opportunity with my grandchildren is to stay connected to them as human beings and not try to connect to their social context because it changes so quickly, they have to lead me in that reality, from the four year old to the 16 year old. And I work with a younger staff, our oldest son works with us, and the woman who manages my calendar and contracts and all that, they're both aggressive numbers on the Enneagram and they think faster than I do and they're a

generation ahead of me when it comes to what I need to be leaning into in order to offer what is mine to offer to as wide a range of audiences possible.

And so I knew then that I couldn't keep up with change. And then I read a book by Thomas Friedman and the title of the book is *Thank You for Being Late*, and it's a big book and a big commitment and it's worth it for every page. And he essentially said, "We will never catch up again. We'll never catch up again with technology. We'll never catch up again." So then what I knew from literally years of looking at liminality or liminal space. When I started talking about liminality recently last five years, again, I thought, "I wonder how long we've been talking about this." I went back through my journals and the first time Father Richard Rohr talked to Joe and me about liminal space was 19 years ago, so it's kind of been hanging out on the fringes. And I was aware that if I'm never going to catch up again, then I'm going to be in liminality for the rest of my life.

I'm going to be not where I was and not where I'm going. And the threshold can be extraordinarily uncomfortable in particular, I think if you aren't aligned with an understanding that there is someone and always, always someone and always something bigger than you are. And so I opened a new book talking about liminality because I knew I couldn't keep up anymore and that's liminal space and I know how uncomfortable it is. But I also had been taught by Father Rohr that liminal space is the most teachable space and perhaps the only teachable space. So then the question becomes, "Okay, well then what am I learning?" And the number one lesson is that I already knew intellectually that control is an illusion, but then I was able to wear the reality that control is an illusion and that I have to learn to be present to the present moment because everything around me is going to keep changing.

And I had no idea when I sold the book to InterVarsity Press that months later we would all be living in liminal space. And so then I was faced with the question of, "Okay, well then what does the Enneagram have to offer us? And if this is the most teachable space, then what, if anything, am I learning? And how can I, from the shutdown of everything get into the audience that is mine? The idea that we're supposed to know this is the most teachable space and we're supposed to ask, what am I supposed to be learning?"

Emily P. Freeman:

This crossroad, Suzanne, of the language of this liminal space crosses so perfectly, or maybe it's the same road, of the way I think about discernment and decision making. Because when I first began this work of wanting to dive into how, why, when, where we make our decisions, it really wasn't from a decision making stance, it was from a spiritual formation stance. Because I recognized the times when I am most open to suggestion, to God, to advice, to all the things and to transformation is when I have something that's unresolved. And a lot of times the way that shows up practically is an unmade decision. And unmade decisions hold so much power because they will not leave you alone and they tap you on the shoulder and they demand your attention until you look at it in the face.

But the process that's so fascinating for me, and where I think these two concepts so beautifully sing well together, is that, that's the moment of formation. That if we never had unmade decisions or this tension or this liminal space, we would have no reason to turn that there would just be... Where would our dependence be? Where would the growth be? And I kind of hate it because it's like you said, deeply uncomfortable. But it is in those spaces where, I'm learning, it's less about... I mean, spoiler alert, it's less about the decisions we're making. It's about the person who I am and who I am becoming and how I'm connecting with God in those spaces. And it's the worst. It can be kind of the worst because we kind of want to arrive to, "Well, I've decided and now all is well." But it just never quite gets there.

Suzanne Stabile:

Right. And I am convinced that the value of the Enneagram in the reality of that question is that a tiny bit of Enneagram history is this, in the 1940s and '50s, the Enneagram was revived by a man whose name is George Gurdjieff, and he's a man who started a school for people who wanted to grow spiritually and learn spiritual practices in Europe and people went to school there. And the Enneagram was a little piece of a bigger way of understanding a spiritual journey, which it always should be, by the way. I think the Enneagram's fantastic and it's one spiritual wisdom tool. And honestly, if you use it all by itself, you really limit the value that it has. It needs to be with a contemplative practice and with a spiritual director and with a prayer life and all the things for it to be what it can be.

And then at the same time, there was a man in England whose name is Maurice Nicoll, and he wrote a big paper that people picked up on that said, There are only three centers of intelligence and they are thinking, feeling, and doing. And if you put his work on top of the Enneagram, then you find out that literally in groups of three that are connecting around the Enneagram, twos, threes and fours are feeling dominant. And five, sixes and sevens are thinking dominant and eights, nines and ones are doing dominant at the same time. Karen Horney who was German American, was doing some good work and she started sharing her work and she said that people either moved toward other people away from other people or against other people. And if you lay that work on top of Maurice Nicoll's work on top of the Enneagram, then what you get is one of each of the three in each three centers of intelligence, triads, thinking, feeling or doing.

And so what that then set the table for from people like Riso and Hudson and Richard Rohr and good, good, good Enneagram folks who had been doing work for a while when I came on the scene, Hurley and Dobson then added their work. And what we ended up with is an opportunity to recognize that we are imbalanced in thinking, feeling and doing, each of us. One is dominant, one supports the dominant, but one is repressed. And it is my contention that you can't do the work with the one that's repressed unless you can manage the one that's dominant and that what we need in order to make really good decisions and to participate in good discernment practice is a balance in thinking, feeling and doing. And so the work then is to bring up your repressed center.

So let me just say for people who are this far along for three sevens and eights, feelings are repressed. For fours, fives and nines, doing is repressed. And for ones, twos and sixes, thinking is repressed. And so my spiritual director and my therapist and my husband all know that when I'm struggling to discern something, the question to ask me over and over and over is, what are you thinking? Because that's what I intuitively leave out when I'm on the journey toward trying to discern the next right thing for me. Joe and I started our ministry Life In the Trinity Ministries 37 years ago. We're celebrating our 37th anniversary on December the 24th in the ministry. And over the years with all the places we've taught and all the people we've taught, the overarching question is, "How do I learn good discernment?" That's the question. Good people trying to do the right thing are palms up saying, "How do I know what that is?" And I would propose that you can't know unless you employ thinking and feeling and doing.

Emily P. Freeman:

So you as an Enneagram two, your center of intelligence is feeling and your repressed center is thinking.

Suzanne Stabile:

Yes.

Emily P. Freeman:

And you along with... What were the other numbers that are your cohorts in that?

Suzanne Stabile:

Ones because they have an inner critic that talks to them all day long, starting when they're little bitty. And the critic never gives you an atta-girl and is always harsh. And ones are in an internal dialogue all the time with the critic, not constantly but consistently. And they believe that's thinking. And twos would say, "I think all the time." That is what they say to me. And I say, "I know. Me too." And 85% of the time it's about relationships and there are a lot of other things that need to be thought about. And sixes are in what is also the fear triad. Their Enneagram passion is fear and they don't trust themselves. They don't trust their own thinking.

So rather than do the work that's offered through Enneagram wisdom to learn to stop doubting themselves, they tend to use thinking for gathering thinking, I'm not going to say wisdom from people who have a big pulpit and a good charism. And they then fall into the trap of, "Well, how do I know which one of these people who are experts is correct?" And so they use an awful lot of their thinking for worst case scenario planning. And unfortunately that's a real waste of what they could be using thinking for because most of what they plan for doesn't happen.

Emily P. Freeman:

It's fascinating to think about this because when I think about my own stance, which we'll get to, but it's the very thing you say. I would venture to say every Enneagram one who I know in real life would say exactly what you said, which is, "I'm thinking all the time." And it sounds like you would say that too. And my mom is an Enneagram six, she's thinking all the time. So what would you offer as an alternative definition of thinking that's movement towards health and balance for these numbers? What does it look like to bring these repress centers forward?

Suzanne Stabile:

Well, we would begin by talking about the fact that there's productive thinking and non-productive thinking. And these three numbers employ non-productive thinking. But the reason for that is because feeling and doing one dominant and one supporting in each of those numbers uses up all of your energy. So when I walk into a room as a two, I read the environment with feelings and as a two I feel other people's feelings. And my response to that because of my motivation, part of it as a two, which is to be wanted and to be helpful, my response is to do, not to think.

So you have to learn to manage feelings and understanding the trap of doing supporting feelings before you can bring up thinking, but you have to bring up thinking to do that work. So in my case, which we could use as a template, I came up with three questions that I just have to ask myself all the time. And that is, as I move toward this other person, what if anything, do I expect to get in return? And usually what I'm looking for is affirmation. I settle for appreciation, it's just a connection. I'm going to help you find out which cereal is best for you because you are 90 and you look confused and I can reach the cereal that you're looking at. So I pick up on feelings, then I do something to address those feelings. But the questions that I haven't asked the other two are, after why am I moving toward this person? What, if anything, do I expect to get in return and does the other person want my help? And then I can figure out, "Oh wait, wait, this isn't mine to do."

"I have the feelings and I have the heart to help you, but it's not mine to do. And if I do this, I will not be doing what is mine to do." And to be vulnerable, which I am most of the time anyway, but a little deeper level of vulnerable. I realized with a husband who was a pastor and four children that I trusted their love from me, which meant I sometimes put them last instead of first. And I was out doing things for people, things that weren't mine to do, rather than paying better and closer attention to doing what was mine to do. And the question I asked then is, "What is it, if I don't do it, nobody else can or will?" And that appropriately reconnected me to what my priorities are. But in order to live those priorities, even now

that the kids are grown and all the stuff, I still have to ask the question, what is mine to do? And that's my guiding question that I ask all day every day. And I have for years and years and years.

Emily P. Freeman:

It's such an excellent question for all of us to ask. I'm curious for you as someone who identifies as an Enneagram two, because I can hear a listener right now saying, "But how do you know what's yours to do? How do I discern what's mine to do?" Because it's such a great question, but are there any words you can share with someone who's like, "I don't even know how to say and how to know what's mine to do because this is so muddy." Yeah.

Suzanne Stabile:

Well, this is a risky sentence for me to say because some people are going to think, "Ah, I don't want to hear anymore. Okay, I'm done with that." But one of the things that I... And I think Joe and I came up with this kind of together one night after a long day of teaching discernment. I think the minute you ask the question, "How is this going to affect me?" Good discernment is over. If you want to know what is yours to do in the larger context of your life, then for you to ask how it's going to affect you and then make up a story that you then live into, then you have a high percentage of the time missed what was yours to do because you thought you knew what the story was and you thought you knew what your role in the story was.

And that gets us, Emily, right back to your work, which is all you can do is the next right thing. You can't get from point A to point F, you can get from point A to point B. I'm sure you're a reader, I don't know if you read novels, but I sometimes take a break from all the work that I do and I just read fun stuff. And I prefer memoirs, but sometimes as a spiritual discipline, I don't allow myself memoirs. And I tried reading E.L. Doctorow and if anybody's read him, congratulations, people who love his work really love it. I found it very complex and hard. But I learned from him. He says... And this probably isn't a perfect quote, but it's very close, he says that writing is like being on a journey on a long, dark road and you can only see as far as the headlights, but you can make the whole journey that way.

And I've just given him credit every time. But I've taken that. And the spiritual journey is the same way, it's like being on a journey on a long dark road and you can only see as far as the headlights, but you can make the whole journey that way. And you can only do the next right thing, but you can make the whole journey that way. And because I think God is all grace and all merciful and all forgiving and all benevolent, I believe that if the next right thing wasn't the right thing, that's okay. You figured out that part. So now you just back up and do a different next right thing.

And I think we have to give up the idea that we're the story or that we're the center of the story and just know that we're in the story. And what is mine to do may not ever be known by anybody except me. And sometimes it might be that I'm a big player. You can't, if you're a withdrawing Enneagram number, always assume that you're going to not be seen. You can't, if you're an aggressive number, always assume that you're going to be the leader in the story. And you can't, if you're a dependent number, always believe that you're going to have a big part in making things go well in helping people feel loved in the story, because it doesn't always work that way. And the other thing I would say is I think in doing all this work with the Enneagram over the years and the way I think now because of that is my heart lies to me a lot and my head lies to me, but my body never does.

And so I think people who have given in to the dread and the reward of a meaningful, contemplative practice find themselves intuitively knowing which direction to take. And I believe that when you come to a fork in the road, you just wait. And the Enneagram helps you wait and it helps you discern and it helps you think and it helps you manage, and it helps you do all the stuff. But you have to do work to get to that

using Enneagram wisdom. And I don't believe you can get to the place that we're trying to describe for people using only the Enneagram as your most necessary tool for the journey. Really, it's just one. And I'm as concerned about people who over talk and push the Enneagram as I am about trendy Enneagram.

Emily P. Freeman:

I'm glad you said that about how we have a God who's big enough to let us know if we are moving in a direction that maybe isn't suiting us and that we can change course and do the next thing. I often try to de-emphasize the word right and just focus on the word next. Maybe if I were to do it all over, I would take out the word right and just call it do the next thing. But I didn't come up with a phrase to begin with, so I'm just borrowing the phrase from those who have come before me. And I do think it's a helpful phrase, but I think we can fixate on that word, right. And so it's helpful to hear you talk through the ways in which this is a journey. One of our friend, mutual friend Jamie B. Golden, One of my favorite things I've heard her say about The Next Right Thing is she talks about the verse in Psalm that says that the word is a lamp unto my feet, not my football field.

It's a Jamie B Goldenized way of saying what you said before, that you can take the whole journey that way. We've talked about the dependent stance of ones, twos and sixes, how they repress or repressed in the thinking center. They still think, but they do so non productively.

Suzanne Stabile:

Well, and I've written three books, I can think.

Emily P. Freeman:

Right, you can think really well.

Suzanne Stabile:

I really can. I don't think about the right things and I don't historically trust thinking as much as I do feeling and doing because I made my way in the world with that for a long time.

Emily P. Freeman:

I'm curious, can you tell a difference or what is it like for you when you recognize you are thinking about the right things? Is there a nuance? Is there a sign that you have come to pay attention to know the difference?

Suzanne Stabile:

Yes, there is. And the sign is that I don't get into something and wish I wasn't there.

Emily P. Freeman:

Mm-hmm.

Suzanne Stabile:

I don't have a commitment to honor that I wish I hadn't made. And I am not as weary. When I think, well, I don't misuse as much energy.

Emily P. Freeman:

Mm-hmm. So it's like the absence of something for you.

Suzanne Stabile:

Yeah. Yeah, and I don't know if you've ever heard me say this, but I feel strongly that everybody needs a spiritual director and everybody needs a therapist. And I don't think you have to go to therapy forever, but I think you got to check in every once in a while.

Emily P. Freeman:

Yes.

Suzanne Stabile:

And I'm add another layer of Enneagram wisdom. I don't know, it's brief but I hope it doesn't cause any confusion. And that is that ones, twos and sixes, which is the dependent stance, their orientation to time is the present moment. Fours, fives and nines orientation to time is the past. And threes, sevens and eights orientation to time is the future. And that's a problem because you are tethered to that orientation, which means you also have to work on the other two. And I really like the work of David White, his book *Consolations* is on our little home altar where we pray every morning. And one day I was just tired of all the challenges. There's just so many, I was tired. And I thought, "I'm going to pick a word in here that I know I can just read and think, "Oh Suzanne, you're doing a great job with that and put it away." And I was flipping through the book and the word at the top of the page was maturity. And I thought, "Got it. I got this."

And I started reading. And he says very early in this one page description of maturity, that maturity is the ability to hold the past and the present and the future together, all at the same time. And I closed the book. And so if you pick up the pattern here, the pattern is that thinking, feeling or doing is dominant and you got to find balance in that. Thinking, feeling or doing is repressed, you got to find balance in that. There's a support center in there and you have to use that eights, nines and ones to manage your anger, twos, threes and fours to manage your shame and five, sixes and sevens to manage your fear. And then you move on over to stances and you have to bring up your repress center. And so through all of the history of the Enneagram and all of the ways that there is work for you to do, we could throw in subtypes for people who know what those are. And you have to have equal in subtypes too. Then what you end up with is the big question is balance.

And so the way I know that I'm living well with this wisdom and that I'm discerning well is if things are balanced. And if my life is out of balance and I'm gone too much or I'm missing my practice or I'm not getting around to see each of the grandchildren do their thing for a season, or I'm not supporting Joe well at the church, or I don't have peace when I lay down to go to sleep at night, then I know that I'm out of balance. And then the question is where? And the answer is, for me, almost always, I'm not thinking productively.

Emily P. Freeman:

Mm-hmm. It comes back to that.

Suzanne Stabile:
Yep.

Emily P. Freeman:
What a sign. Well, because that is so helpful, I would love to talk about these other two stances.

Suzanne Stabile:
Okay.

Emily P. Freeman:
The withdrawn and the aggressive. And you can start where whichever one you want to go with next, I'll let you think about it and decide.

Suzanne Stabile:
Well, I have a habit of just going around, so I'll just keep going. And so we'll start with withdrawing and we'll save those aggressive numbers for last, that makes them listen longer. That's one of the reasons I-

Emily P. Freeman:
That's good. I like that tactic. That's good.

Suzanne Stabile:
Yeah. Yeah, I can hold them. The withdrawing stance, fours, fives and nines are doing repressed, but that doesn't mean they don't do things. So fours have a tendency to do what makes them feel seen, but in a valuable, uncharacteristic, uncommon way. Authenticity is their desire. And so they do what interests them, knowing that what interests them doesn't have a wide audience. I think there are fewer fours than any other number on the Enneagram. And they get satisfaction from that, but they're then trapped in, "I didn't pick up the cleaning on time and I need that dress for tomorrow. I don't do things at the same time, so I have chaos because of that. I don't have a pattern, I don't have a rhythm because what comes up, I go do that helps me express myself in ways that maybe people will understand me and I will be seen and hopefully understood."

Fives plan more than they do. They have a limited amount of energy, the same limited amount every day, but it's like manna, you can't save up. You get what you get for the day. And so for fives, they have to manage their time, so they don't do without thinking and without having thoughts and feelings about what they're going to do. And so they end up planning and over-planning for things they're going to do and then not doing. And then finding themselves up against deadlines and having missed opportunities to do things that were theirs to do. Nines are always doing something, they're hard workers, always doing something and sometimes it's what needs to be done. But often it's the result of distraction and they've all day done whatever was right in front of them, and then they didn't get done the things that needed to be done. So give you an example of that.

In the United Methodist Church, Joseph Methodist pastor, you're appointed by the bishop. And so you end up moving during your career to different churches from time to time. And we were moved to a church where we then stayed... Joe was pastor there for 12 years, but they had remodeled and they put... As you walk in the new building, they put the receptionist secretary's office just on the right as you walk in the door. And Joe's office or the pastor's office just on the left, and Joe will not pastor from an office

that doesn't have a door with a window. And he's a nine on the Enneagram. And he was distracted by everybody who came in and they all could see him and they all wanted to talk to him about something. And he did that all day every day, which doubled his work at home, which took time away from me and the children, which did all the stuff that causes trouble.

So he remodeled, a small portion of the remodel, and moved his office behind the secretary's office so that he could get his work done. And so I think it's important for us to recognize with that example that some of the things we need to do are just basic things that will help us do the work we need to do around our repress center. Fives need to limit how much time they're going to give themselves to make a decision about something that they're planning to do. And fours need to have a rhythm to their life, that includes taking out the garbage, going to the grocery store, picking up the cleaning, all the things so that they don't have the constant shame and frustration of not doing those.

Emily P. Freeman:

Well, I can relate with that. I joked with a friend of mine who does not have a withdrawn stance about how I love to make soup. Soup is lovely. Why? Because I feel great when I eat soup and I like the way my house smells. There's a vibe. Soup has a vibe.

Suzanne Stabile:

I agree.

Emily P. Freeman:

But what I do not love Suzanne Stabile is all the chopping that has to happen.

Suzanne Stabile:

Yeah.

Emily P. Freeman:

Like I'll chop half an onion and have to leave the room. And it's not just because my eyes of water and it's because I'm so deeply bored. It's like it's everything in me to finish. And I'll notice I do this a lot, I'll half get something ready that's kind of boring. And I would rather sit with someone... As an Enneagram four, most people know that listening. But in case you don't, Enneagram four here, I would rather sit in hold space for someone in the darkest moment of their life. And I will leave that energized than chop up vegetables for a soup.

Suzanne Stabile:

Right. Right.

Emily P. Freeman:

And I have a lot of judgment about myself for that. On the one hand, it feels important to do that for people, but I also know that the reality of living life is sometimes you have to chop the carrots. And that's like a grown up thing to do. So I've done a lot of work with my schedule and my work life. I've had to do a lot of work with rhythms of life and establishing rhythms and practicing doing my next right thing when it comes to my work. But when it comes to my life, like my kitchen life or my family life or those, quote-unquote, more mundane things, I'm still deeply in process with that because of the energy it takes to do

those things.

Suzanne Stabile:

Okay. I have an offering for you.

Emily P. Freeman:

Oh, I can't wait. Or maybe I can.

Suzanne Stabile:

I've been kind of dancing around work with shame and fear and anger in relation to each of the triads for a long time. And about three years ago, one day I thought, "You can't manage your dominant emotion without your support center." So as a four, you're feeling dominant thinking support's feeling, and you're doing repressed. And when you say you have all these negative feelings around that reality about how you're put together and how you see and how you are, I would suggest that the work you need to do from here moving forward is you have to resolve the shame that you feel about that with thinking, not with doing and not with feeling.

Emily P. Freeman:

Oh, say more about that.

Suzanne Stabile:

Well, the tendency, see, is to try to resolve shame with either your repressed center.

Emily P. Freeman:

Yes.

Suzanne Stabile:

Oh, if I do things differently-

Emily P. Freeman:

Right. Yes.

Suzanne Stabile:

That will handle everything. But that didn't work.

Emily P. Freeman:

That's not it.

Suzanne Stabile:

Because it's out of balance, and if you try to resolve it with feelings-

Emily P. Freeman:
Oh yeah, that doesn't work.

Suzanne Stabile:

No, that doesn't work at all, right? You have to resolve it with your support center. And so I am not sure when it will be available. It may already be available. I'm sorry about that. But my big event, I do a big event on the first weekend of August in Dallas every year. And the big event this year was dealing with shame and fear and anger and teaching that support center piece. And I spent my life as a two trying to deal with shame without thinking, and I just wasn't getting anywhere. And honestly, a good therapist has been very helpful for me in bringing up thinking. An example, it's my story and it's a big story and it's big part of my life but it's just an example, so it doesn't seem so out there. After 17 years with the same therapist, he leaned up and said to me about three years ago, "Suzanne, no matter how much work we do, the reality is that everything that you bring to me that you're trying to work with has to do with adoption and shame."

Emily P. Freeman:
Mm-hmm.

Suzanne Stabile:

"And that's the bottom line over and over and over and over. So what we have to do now." He said, knowing the Enneagram from me. He said, "We have to think about ways for you to think about the shame that you feel inherently about adoption until you can manage that and then you can do this other work." And that is a perfect example of why the Enneagram is great and it's not all that by itself.

Emily P. Freeman:
Mm-hmm.

Suzanne Stabile:

And so when we get to the depth of the level of Enneagram work that you and I are talking about today, then I have to keep saying over and over, "Yeah, the Enneagram and therapy, the Enneagram and the spiritual director, the Enneagram and prayer."

Emily P. Freeman:
Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Suzanne Stabile:
Right?

Emily P. Freeman:
Yeah.

Suzanne Stabile:

All the Enneagram and all of it.

Emily P. Freeman:
But your repressed center is thinking.

Suzanne Stabile:
Right.

Emily P. Freeman:
And your support center as a two-

Suzanne Stabile:
Right.

Emily P. Freeman:
Is what?

Suzanne Stabile:
Doing.

Emily P. Freeman:
Doing.

Suzanne Stabile:
But I can't do anything about being adopted.

Emily P. Freeman:
Right.

Suzanne Stabile:
So I have to think about what to do about the reality that I keep bringing adoption into the room with me in my bag every time I go to therapy.

Emily P. Freeman:
Yes. Yeah.

Suzanne Stabile:
And what I had to do was ritual and I got the ritual from my spiritual director.

Emily P. Freeman:

Oh, look at that. There it is.

Suzanne Stabile:

See.

Emily P. Freeman:

In community.

Suzanne Stabile:

Absolutely. And so what I had to do was create a ritual where every time that adoption stuff rises, I have a ritual that I do and it's very personal, so I'm not going to share it, but it works. Takes about four minutes and I do it and I can leave adoption at the door whenever I want to. It comes back, of course.

Emily P. Freeman:

Sure. Right. But that is such a beautiful example of you thinking on purpose about the right things to take an action as you move forward into your next right thing, literally going in-

Suzanne Stabile:

Yes. Literally.

Emily P. Freeman:

Walking into a room.

Suzanne Stabile:

Yeah. So I have a bag that's just for that.

Emily P. Freeman:

Mm-hmm.

Suzanne Stabile:

It's just for all that stuff that has to do with shame and adoption. And sometimes I take it with me when I'm going somewhere to teach. Sometimes I take it spiritual direction, sometimes I take it lots of places. And if somebody takes the bag, I have five more just like it. So I don't care, I just leave it outside the door. It's usually there when I go back. And then the decision is, good thinking is, "Do I pick it up? Can I carry it? Now, can I carry it home and put it away, or should I just leave it here?"

Emily P. Freeman:

So that twos, threes and fours, those of us who live in that cul-de-sac, that heart center where we kind of go to shame, that's kind of where we go to confront that or to... I don't know if the word is manage that you would use there.

Suzanne Stabile:

I would use the word embrace. You can manage for a bit and then you think... You're actually managing yourself, not your shame.

Emily P. Freeman:

Mm-hmm. Oh yeah. That's right.

Suzanne Stabile:

And same is true for fear and anger, right?

Emily P. Freeman:

Sure. Right.

Suzanne Stabile:

You're just managing yourself.

Emily P. Freeman:

Right.

Suzanne Stabile:

And then it gets to be very myopic and you pretty quickly move into small self. If you're just managing you and thinking about you and all this stuff. "This is me stuff." Right? So what you have to do then is embrace the fact that we convert emotions that we can't immediately incorporate into what's happening. All the emotions that come that twos, threes and fours can't incorporate into what's happening. They intuitively turn into shame.

Emily P. Freeman:

Yeah.

Suzanne Stabile:

It just intuitively happens. And so you've got to think, "Oh, that shame." For me, and then I have to do something about it.

Emily P. Freeman:
Mm-hmm.

Suzanne Stabile:

Right. But for you, you have to do something about the fact that you know their shame so that you can think then about how to manage that or how to embrace it. And fours spend their lives, their whole lives because of their unique, necessary, valuable, textured way of seeing the world. And because of the lack of that in other numbers, you spend your life feeling like you're on the outside looking in. And rather than seeing that as a gift that you can address and that you have an offering for, you see it as shame and you just have to use thinking to see it differently.

Emily P. Freeman:

Well, that's a good word right there. I could sit on that. I need to go journal about that.

Suzanne Stabile:

I think the whole workshop that I did is on our website, it's Intuitive to Intentional. I'm not sure it's available yet, but if it isn't, it will be.

Emily P. Freeman:

If it isn't, it will be. So we'll be sure to direct people that way. Let's finish up with the aggressive stance.

Suzanne Stabile:

Okay. Well, they're feeling repressed and they all look at me like, "I'm not feeling repressed, but I'm not afraid of them anymore."

Emily P. Freeman:

That's right.

Suzanne Stabile:

So threes take in information from the environment with feelings, but then they set feelings aside and they plan to deal with them later, but they find feelings to be really messy and they interrupt the flow of reaching their goals and doing the stuff, all the stuff that they have to do and that they do very well. We'd be in trouble without them. And so they believe that because they take in information with feelings. That's it, they know what the crowd feels. They know who's not happy, but they don't use feelings to make sense of that. Meaning they don't use feelings to decide what to do about that. Sevens say, "What do you mean? I'm feeling repressed?" But the reality is that sevens rather than have a full range of emotions, they have a half range of emotions, and the half range is the happy half. And sevens have the unique gift and problem. The best part of you is the worst part of you.

Emily P. Freeman:

Mm-hmm.

Suzanne Stabile:

And their gift is that they can reframe any negative into a positive in an instant. Just in real time, in a moment, they can do that. And so they're reframing all the time. And then they realize through the reality and the difficulties of life that they have to learn and practice how to welcome and deal with negative emotions. And it's a hard lesson and it's hard for them to manage, but it does teach them that they don't have a full range of feelings and therefore they're feeling repressed. Eights, their passion is lust, but it's not sexual lust. And they either are all in or they're not in at all. So they're running on high passion. They have passion for what they do, and they think that's feelings.

And it's one feeling, but it's just passion. Passion or boredom. There are two feelings and there are a lot more that have to be received and allowed and felt in order for eights to be whole. I would say that eights and threes have to have a big failure before they can do the necessary work around feelings. And I would say that for people who feel so confident most of the time, when they do have that big failure and they're vulnerable, then the feelings come. And with some Enneagram help in other spiritual practices, they can become more holistic in their approach to life. Sevens kind of have to just settle. They have to settle down, and they have to be willing to allow negative feelings.

I quote and push this book all the time, Miriam Greenspan wrote a book *Healing Through the Dark Emotions*. And I think it's particularly important for three sevens and eights, but for all of us, the problem for sevens is we actually don't want them to feel anything [inaudible 00:59:44] like the happy half. So generally, we are not good unless we're doing our own work and have some awareness at walking with sevens through life. Because when things get a little dark, we try to pull the light back out of them.

Emily P. Freeman:

Mm-hmm.

Suzanne Stabile:

We deny them the right to not be up in the life of the party and creative and have an idea of the next thing that we might want to do.

Emily P. Freeman:

It's a tough sell for threes, sevens and eights who repress feeling, who set their feeling aside to say, "No, we want you to feel those dark emotions." What would be your pitch to them to say, "Because here's why."

Suzanne Stabile:

Well, rather than the, "Here's why." I start with, "Here's what you do to get there."

Emily P. Freeman:

Mm-hmm.

Suzanne Stabile:

And then they know why. So I suggest to eights that they do... Here's one practice, anything similar would work it. It's a matter of going to volunteer somewhere, once a month, once a week if you have the time, once a quarter for a whole day, whatever you can do where there's nothing there for you to fix. And you have to be present to pain. In other words, I'm asking eights to walk in the part of the community that

for you as a four is comfortable, nothing to fix, just go be. So that would be a children's cancer ward in a hospital, that would be a food line for the homeless. There are lots of places to go where aggressive numbers don't need to come up with a plan and tell them how they could better run their program, but they just need to go be present to human beings who are having feelings and a reality that is not in the happy range of emotions or that you can't control or fix.

And then they have feelings that they know are familiar that they haven't been able to access. And then they begin to look at situations and learn to know that there's an accessible feeling that will make a connection rather than a disconnection. Which even though aggressive numbers, they all want that.

Emily P. Freeman:

When we think about these stances and as we begin to land the plane in our conversation, big picture, which I know is hard to do because each of these numbers are so nuanced. There's so many lenses through which we could talk about, not just the Enneagram, but each individual number and place on the... It feels endless in many ways. But when we think in terms of looking at the Enneagram through the lens of the stances as we've done withdrawn, aggressive, dependent, do you have any words or maybe in summary, in thinking about how we approach and walk into the room of decision making, even if it's just regular daily decisions or things we should be aware of that are common to those of us in dependent stance or aggressive or withdrawn.

Suzanne Stabile:

I think the realization that for all nine numbers you have three native intelligences and we all have all three, and you have it from birth on. Why in the world if you have three natural resources, would you rely on one or just two when you have three? And so for stances, don't rely on the two that you're comfortable with and that got you here, but don't get rid of them either.

Emily P. Freeman:

Right.

Suzanne Stabile:

Add the one that is repressed for you. You have to understand it and its purpose to add it well. So you've got to do some work around knowing the purpose of each the three centers. I feel sure in this feeling center with me, that you run into people who believe that they can think their feelings. And you and I believe that we can substitute feelings for thinking. We kind of can say in our feeling space, "well feelings are where we're headed, so why not skip thinking to get there. Or skip doing in your case to get there." Right?

Emily P. Freeman:

Mm-hmm.

Suzanne Stabile:

So I think it's a matter of asking the right question and then of talking about a really important thing that we haven't talked about yet. And the right question is, am I using all three of my native intelligences to look at, address, embrace, and then move forward with what is mine to do? And then the other thing is that all of my time is spent teaching people who they're not. And the goal of my work is if you know who

you're not, then you can figure out who you are and who you're created to be as God's beloved. And all of this that we're not, we put on in childhood and beyond in order to make our way in the world. But there comes a point where you have to recognize that there are parts of your personality that you needed when you were five or 10 or 15 or 20 or 30 or 50 or 60, for me, that you don't need anymore. The trick is you have to allow that part to fall away.

And in the West, our tendency is to believe that we have to make it go away. And the more we do to try to make it go away, the bigger our personality gets, not the smaller. And so I believe that good decision making involves thinking and feeling and doing and allowing. I began to listen in our culture. Maybe 10 years ago, I started using allowing. It is only used in negative context. "You know you're not allowed to bring that in here. No, you're not allowed to do that. You're not allowed to do that. We don't allow that here. No, we don't allow groups of 10. No, we don't allow..." All of it. You don't hear, allow anywhere. And it's what's required because you can't carry everything. And so you see if you can find balance and thinking, feeling and doing, and then you allow what you don't need anymore to fall away. And then I believe that you can see more clearly as far as the headlight.

Emily P. Freeman:

Amen. You all, we've been talking with Suzanne Stabile about how, as she says, "Living a balanced life will forever be elusive if we don't learn to appropriately use the repress center. And to allow what we no longer need to fall away." And I love how you say and remind us that we all have access to all three of these centers of intelligence thinking, feeling, and doing. May it be so in us and among us. Suzanne, one final question for you, and this is something I like to ask all of my guests who come on *The Next Right Thing*, and that is, for you, what is your next right thing?

Suzanne Stabile:

Well, I've done now the work I want to do with the three books. I've planted my flag on a couple of things that are new to Enneagram wisdom, although I checked it with all the people I trust. And I'm convinced from some personal experiences I've had that the next thing for me is to talk about the Enneagram and moral injury. And that's a big umbrella. And I'm not completely sure all the things that are going to fall under that, but I do know that adoption and fostering is going to be part of that. And I'm going to begin working with the military again in some way. I'm planning to teach at an Air Force base early in 2023 to families there.

And I did some work with veterans maybe 10 years ago, and I really loved it. And there were other things that were mine to do at that time. And so I feel and think and know that right now the next thing for me to do is get under this umbrella and learn all I can from people who know far more than I do about moral injury and then start connecting the Enneagram to those realities of life for some folks.

Emily P. Freeman:

Mm-hmm. Well, we bless you in that Good work. Suzanne, thank you for being with us today.

Suzanne Stabile:

Thank you, Emily. I just want to close by saying I really, really appreciate you and I have a lot of respect for your work, and I was thrilled to be invited to join you for our conversation.

Thanks for listening to episode 253 of The Next Right Thing. Well, I hope this simple practice of learning more about your stance can be just one more rung on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow. Because while it's true, this is a podcast about making decisions, the bigger truth is that all those daily decisions are actually making our lives. You can find our guest today at suzannestabile.com or on Instagram at Suzanne Stabile, where you can learn more about her work, including her books and workshops. As always, you can find me on Instagram at Emily P. Freeman or online at emilypfreeman.com, where you can find a transcript of this and every episode, thanks to the diligent work of one Leah Jarvis. And a shout out to the incredible humans at Unmutable who edit the audio for our episodes.

Remember, you can use the promo code NRT at ivpress.com for 30% off Suzanne's newest book, *The Journey Toward Wholeness*. Simply enter that code NRT at the review and pay step on their website. Remember, it will expire on December 5th, 2022. In closing, here are a few final words from Suzanne. It has become clear to me that few of us realize how many of our responses are habitual, patterned, and predictable. Enneagram wisdom makes us aware of that reality and shows us a better way. Our illusion of control is often just mindless response, but we can't know that until it's named for us. And then moving forward, we can learn to identify and name it for ourselves. Thanks for listening, and I'll see you next time.