A Personality Test Can’t Tell You Who You Are

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Juanita Hernandez is a 25-year-old Miami-based anxiously attached Aries (Scorpio moon, Taurus rising), ENFJ, Enneagram Type Two. Until recently, she considered quality time her love language, but after listening to an episode of the podcast *If Books Could Kill*, she now thinks love languages are “kind of bullshit.”

Her path toward inner omniscience first began with a foundation in astrology, which Hernandez says she discovered as a child. Then came Enneagram — a personality test labeling respondents with one of nine types — which predated learning her attachment style at the behest of her therapist. Later, she took the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

Just as a medical diagnosis can explain a patient’s symptoms, Hernandez sees personality identifiers as succinct validation for why she is the way she is. She attributes descriptors such as “insecure,” “reliable,” and having an “intense relationship with your mother” to her various personality types. Whenever she mentions her astrological sign or attachment style to other similarly personality-informed conversation partners, “I feel like they understand who I am just by these signifiers,” Hernandez says. “It makes conversations easier.”

People have long been motivated to define the inner workings of their minds, but never quite had the wide array of tools or language to clearly communicate who they are until fairly recently. From Myers-Briggs and Enneagram to love languages and Hogwarts houses, we are sufficiently armed with the means to classify and define ourselves — and with bite-size descriptors in which to broadcast our findings.

These assessments and quizzes and identifiers, though, only tell one side of the multidimensional story that is a human life. Self-reflection has its utility, but a test or a rigid personality type may not provide the answers we’re looking for. The question of whether we can ever truly know ourselves — and whether the means of obtaining that information from a quiz is legitimate — isn’t as important as what we do with that insight.

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