

Pathwork™ Steps

The Spiritual Significance of Human Relationship

Quotes from Pathwork Lecture 180

Tonight's topic deals with relationships between human beings and its tremendous significance from the spiritual point of view -- from the point of view of individual growth and unification.

The principle of unification ... cannot be executed with another human being unless it has first been applied to one's inner self. If the divergent parts of a self are not approached according to this truth and ambivalence not faced, accepted, and understood within a self, the process of unification cannot be put into practice with another person. This is a very important fact which explains the great emphasis of this pathwork on the primary approach to oneself. Only then can relationship be cultivated in a meaningful and effective way.

...relationship represents the greatest challenge for the individual. For it is only in relationship with others that unresolved problems, the difficulties, and conflicts that still exist within the individual psyche are affected and activated. It is because of this that many individuals withdraw from contact with others, from interaction with others. The illusion can sometimes be maintained that the problems arise from the other person when one feels disturbance only in their presence and not when by oneself.

The friction that arises out of relating with others is a sharp instrument of purification and self-recognition, if the self is so inclined.

By withdrawing from this challenge and sacrificing the fulfillment that intimate contact is, many aspects of inner problems are never called into play. The thus resulting illusion of inner peace and unity has even led to concepts that spiritual growth is being furthered by isolation. But these periods should always alternate with contact, and the more intimate such contact is, the more it bespeaks of spiritual maturity.

Relationship with others is a mirror of one's own state and thus a direct help to one's self-purification. Conversely, it is equally true that only by thorough self-honesty and self-facing can relationships be sustained, feelings expand, and contact between human beings blossom in long-term relationships. So you can see, my friends, that relationships and human contact represent a tremendously important aspect of human growth. ...Outer good fellowship does not necessarily imply a capacity and willingness for inner closeness.

When people who are of uneven spiritual development are involved with one another, it is always the higher developed person who has the responsibility for the relationship. I mean here specifically that he is responsible for searching the depths of the inner level of interaction, responsible for any friction and disharmony between the parties. The lower developed person is not capable of such a search. He is still involved with blaming the other and is dependent on the other's doing "right" in order to avoid unpleasantness or frustration. Also, the lower developed person is always caught up in the fundamental error of duality. He sees any friction in terms of either he is right or the other person. Conversely, if he detects a problem in the other, this seems to automatically whitewash him although in reality his own negative involvement may be infinitely more weighty than what he sees in the other person. It is only the spiritually more developed person who is capable of realistic, undualistic perception.

The tendency to make oneself emotionally dependent on others -- the awareness of which is such an important aspect of the growth process -- is largely due to wanting to absolve oneself from either blame or difficulty when establishing, maintaining, and sustaining a relationship.

If the higher developed person refuses to adopt his innate duty to assume responsibility for the relationship and look for the core of dissension within himself, he will never really understand the mutual interaction -- how one problem affects the other. And the relationship must deteriorate and must leave both parties confused and less able to cope with the self and others.

When two equals relate, both carry the full responsibility for the relationship. This is indeed a beautiful venture, a deeply satisfying state of mutuality. The inner reality of interaction will become increasingly the more real one.

Let me emphasize here that when I speak of being responsible for the lower developed person, I do not mean that another human being can ever carry the burden for the actual difficulties of others. This can never be so. I mean that difficulties of interaction in a relationship are usually not explored in depth by the individual whose spiritual development is still more primitive. Only he who assumes responsibility for finding the inner disturbance and mutual effect can do so. Hence the spiritually more primitive person always depends on the spiritually more evolved.

The exploration of the underlying interaction and effect of a relationship where both people's difficulties are explored and accepted is by no means an easy process. But nothing can be more beautiful and rewarding. Anyone who comes into the state of enlightenment where this is possible will no longer fear any kind of interaction. Difficulties and fear arise to the exact degree that he still projects his difficulties in relating on others and still renders others responsible for anything that goes against his liking.

My dear friends, no matter what wrong the other person does, if you are disturbed, there must be something in you that you overlook. When I say disturbed, I mean this in a particular sense. I do not speak of clear-cut anger that expresses itself guiltlessly and which does not leave a trace of inner confusion and pain. I mean the kind of disturbance that comes out of and breeds further conflict. One of the roles or games we have discussed recently, which is one of the most favorite tendencies of mankind, is the one that says "you are doing it to me" -- making the other person guilty. The game of making others guilty is so overall that it constantly passes by unnoticed. It is so taken for granted. One derives pleasure doing this although the pain that ensues and the insoluble conflicts that follow are infinitely disproportionate to the puny, momentary pleasure.

The only way you can avoid becoming a victim to blame and guilt-projection is that you avoid doing it yourself. To the degree you indulge yourself in this attitude (you may do it in a different way than the one who does it to you), to that degree you will be unaware of it being done to you and will therefore become victimized by it. The mere awareness will make all the difference. How can you assert your rights, reach into the universe for fulfillment and pleasure, how can you love without fear unless you approach relating to others in the way outlined above? Unless you learn to do this, thereby purifying yourself, there must always be a whip lurking in the dark when it comes to intimate closeness: the whip of loading guilt upon each other. Loving, sharing, and profound and satisfying closeness to others could be a purely positive power without any threat when these snares are looked at, discovered, and dissolved. It is of utmost importance that you look for them in yourselves, my friends.

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Relationship – The Final Frontier

by Gregory Alper 7/23/08

A few brief notes and hints on the Art and Practice of Relationship

Relationship is the final frontier. It's purpose is "the complete revelation of one soul to another - to constantly discover new vistas of the other being."^[1]

This voyage into uncharted territory will activate the best and worst in an individual. It will stretch who you are, bringing you the greatest joy and most intense pain you experience in life. It will test and develop the limits of your skills – acceptance, awareness, patience, creativity, openness, determination, commitment, compassion, collaboration, understanding and communication. "Whenever your relationship brings out the madness in you or in your partner, be glad. What was unconscious is being brought up to the light. It is an opportunity for salvation. Your relationship then becomes your spiritual practice."^[2]

"A true soul mate is a mirror, the person who shows you everything that is holding you back, the person who brings you to your own attention. A soul mate will tear down your walls and smack you awake. Their purpose is to shake you up, tear apart your ego a little bit, to show you your obstacles and addictions. They break your heart open so a new light can get in - and make you so desperate and out of control that you have to transform your life."^[3]

The most important element in determining the success of a relationship is the proportion of positive interaction to negative interaction. ^[4] When you have positive feelings and thoughts about your partner, do you express them? How do you express them? How well do you know yourself and your inner motivations? How willing are you to express these, to show yourself as you really are to yourself and to your partner?

In meeting this challenge you not only discover the miracle of the other person, but of yourself. "Only when you meet love, life, and the other being in such readiness, will you be able to bestow the greatest gift on your beloved -- namely your real self. And then you must inevitably receive the same gift from your beloved."¹ Happy Exploring

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[1] Pathwork Guide Lecture # 44 Love, Eros and Sex

[2] Practicing The Power of Now – Eckhart Tolle

[3] Eat, Love, Pray – Elizabeth Gilbert (paraphrase)

[4] Why Marriages Succeed or Fail: and How to Make Yours Last - John Gottman

Pathwork™ Steps

The Spiritual Significance of Human Relationship Worksheet for Pathwork Lecture 180

1. Do you have a strong sense of yourself - who you are, what you want out of life, what you believe in, and what your values are?

If the divergent parts of a self are not approached according to this truth and ambivalence not faced, accepted, and understood within a self, the process of unification cannot be put into practice with another person (180/p1)

2. Can you occasionally feel yourself withdrawing rather than being willing to face the pain of interaction with others? Do you feel that it is the 'other' who creates the conflict?

For it is only in relationship with others that unresolved problems, the difficulties, and conflicts that still exist within the individual psyche are affected and activated. It is because of this that many individuals withdraw from contact with others, from interaction with others. The illusion can sometimes be maintained that the problems arise from the other person when one feels disturbance only in their presence and not when by oneself. (180/p2)

3. Can you identify with this statement? Can you perceive where interaction with others aids you in bringing up issues and feelings that would otherwise lay dormant or ignored?

The friction that arises out of relating with others is a sharp instrument of purification and self-recognition, if the self is so inclined. (180/p2)

4. How do you perceive your unfulfilled longings? Are they due to your failings and faults, or are they due to external forces? How would you feel about accepting all your unfulfilled longings as your own responsibility, rather than the results of the actions of others?

When sharing is wanted on the basis of receiving only according to one's own terms while the self is really (although secretly) unwilling to do any sharing, longings must remain unfulfilled. People would be well advised to consider their unfulfilled longings from this point of view rather than indulging in the usual assumption that one is unlucky and unfairly put upon by life. (180/p2)

5. Can you identify personal relationships that mirror gaps in your own development? Have you ever thought that this might be due to you rather than being the 'fault' of the other? Do you accept or resist this idea?

One's contentment and fulfilment specifically in regard to relationship is a much neglected measuring yard to one's own development. Relationship with others is a mirror of one's own state and thus a direct help to one's self-purification. Conversely, it is equally true that only by thorough self-honesty and self-facing can relationships be sustained, feelings expand, and contact between human beings blossom in long-term relationships. (180/p2)

Difficulties and fear arise to the exact degree that he still projects his difficulties in relating on others and still renders others responsible for anything that goes against his liking. This can take many subtle forms. One may constantly concentrate on the faults of others even though, at first glance, such concentration appears justified. One may subtly overemphasize one side to the exclusion of other aspects. These and other distortions indicate projection and denial of self-responsibility for difficulties in relating -- hence dependency on perfection, consequently fear and hostility for feeling let down. (180/p4)

6. List 4 relationships with which you have difficulties.
- Who is involved?
 - What is the difficulty centered upon? (feelings, external issues, disagreements?)
 - What fault of the other contributes to the difficulty?
 - What action on their part would resolve the difficulty?
 - Where are you 'right'?
 - What might you be expecting the other person to see or do or realize in order for the situation to be resolved to your satisfaction?
 - What aspect of your character or personality might be in denial of your own self-responsibility for these difficulties in relating?

7. In each of these 4 relationships, how are they 'guilty'?

One of the roles or games we have discussed recently, which is one of the most favourite tendencies of mankind, is the one that says "you are doing it to me" -- making the other person guilty. The game of making others guilty is so overall that it constantly passes by unnoticed. It is so taken for granted. One human being blames the other, one country blames the other, one group blames the other. This is a constantly ongoing process at this state of development. It is indeed one of the most harmful and illusory processes imaginable. (180/p5)

8. What is your (possible) part in the problem?

Only to the degree that you undefensively explore, face, and accept your own problematic reactions and distortions, negativities and destructiveness, can you refute someone else's guilt-projection. Only then will you not be drawn into a maze of falseness and confusion in which uncertainty, defensiveness, and weakness may make you wither in retreat or be overaggressive. Only then will you no longer confuse self-assertion with hostility and flexible compromise with unhealthy submission. (180/5/6)

9. What might have been unattended to in each of these 4 relationships?

Difficulties that arise in a relationship are always a yardstick for something unattended to. It is as though a loud message were being spoken. The sooner it is heeded, the more spiritual energy will be released so that the state of bliss can be expanded and grow along with the inner being of both partners. (180/6/5)