

Pathwork™ Steps

The Superstition of Pessimism

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 236

Week 1: Superstition: Trickery of the Mind

Week 2: Connections between Wishful Thinking and Negativity

Week 3: Developing the Courage to Believe in the Good

Week 4: Overcoming Negativity

Week 1: Superstition: Trickery of the Mind

There is what I may call a superstition of pessimism. When you reach a certain level of awareness, you will come across an attitude that says, "If I believe in the positive, I will be disappointed, and by my very belief in it, I may chase it away. So I may just as well not believe in it. It may be smarter on my part to believe that nothing good can happen to me, that I cannot ever change, that I cannot ever grow out of my obstructions." This kind of thinking happens within you. Somehow, my dearest friends, you know, if you choose to know it, that there is a kind of deliberate game, a play, a playfulness -- but such a destructive one -- which is, if you truly examine it, nothing but a superstitious attitude.

The obvious kind of superstitiousness is much more primitive, and most of you do not adhere to this on an outer level. But a superstitiousness of a much subtler nature does exist in all of you. And I ask you, my friends, to ascertain this kind of superstition, to find within you the voice that says, "I dare not believe in the good. It may not happen." It is sufficient to ascertain no more than this voice, this sentence, this "word" you speak into yourself. That is exactly what I mean. In that sentence, in these words spoken into yourself in one form or another, you express this kind of superstitious destructive playfulness. But then you lose contact. You no longer know it after a while. After a while you get lost in its effects. The effects are then very painful for you. One effect, for example, is that you really believe in what you first assumed as a safety measure. Not to believe in the positive, but rather believing in the worst as a supposed safety measure by which you try to appease the gods, as it were, is a destructive thought. You do not know the power of such thoughts. There is no playing with such power without grave consequences. There is no such game that does not have a grave effect.

The power of this particular kind of word needs to be made conscious. It can apply to many things in your life. When you have an illness, it may apply to the healing. When you find yourself alone and unloved, you may "playfully," "safely" (as you believe) express the belief "it will always be that way." When you lack funds or a fulfilling profession, you say into yourself, "I had better believe it must be that way, so maybe then it can come to me unexpectedly." It is as though you hoped for some idealized parental figure to assuage your doubts, to come forth and tell you, "No, no, my child, it is not that bad. It is all going to be wonderful."

There is the underlying aim that you dictate into your soul substance without knowing that you create a belief within you that then really creates circumstances that prove that belief. You then "forget" that you had started this game in a spirit of superstition, or perhaps in a spirit of emotional

manipulation, and become so involved in what you have unwittingly created that you really begin to believe that the negative is the reality. What started out as a superstitious safety measure gradually becomes belief on another level of your consciousness, so that you become filled with this belief. Then, of course, the belief creates the reality, and you stay in exactly that position.

This, my friends, is a subtle attitude that previously you could perhaps not see in yourself. However, due to the work you are doing and to the progress you are experiencing, many of you, I venture to say, are now capable of pinpointing this particular kind of superstition -- the superstition of pessimism. All such inner trickery -- trickery of the mind -- is very dangerous. The danger lies in the misuse of the power of the word, the power of your thinking, the power of your self-indoctrination.

Now, when you encounter this in you, my dearest friends, it is time to halt and question yourself about its effects upon yourself and your life. You need to take a distance from yourself here and observe yourself in what you are doing. You need to connect with the level of intentionality in this respect. I ask you to recognize exactly the way you are doing this, and then the next step will be: "I want to stop this undertaking. I want to stop this kind of self-trickery. I cannot trick life. I must be honest. What I say into myself must be what I really mean on the deepest level of my being. Also it must be what corresponds to the truth of life." This must be the next step. As you thus counter the habitual trickery of the superstition of pessimism in whatever area it may exist in you, so may you then challenge it with your decision to find a new pathway to your mind's activity.

What was begun as a game, as a kind of trickery then reinforces the negative belief until this vicious circle accelerates, and you find it ever more difficult to extricate yourself from the vortex you have created. You swing back and forth from the superstition of negativity, to the wishful daydream. The more you indulge in the wishful daydream to escape from the negativity you create by the superstition, the less can you truly experience beauty, fulfillment, abundance, love, joy, peace, and excitement.

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Daily Review PL 28

Exercise: Keep a record of incidents that disturb you. Focusing upon subtleties may help us from becoming distracted by exaggerating or over-dramatizing a situation. Notice feelings of discomfort, where your suspect you may be uninformed, ignorant, unprepared, or unaware.

Each week, see if you can relate with the sub-topics or suggested exercises. All you need is a ½ page of lined paper per day. Create 4 columns. At some point during each day, jot down brief notes about each incident (limit: 10 per day). Eventually, this can become a thought process. The Guide refers to Daily Review as 'spiritual hygiene'.

1. Two to three words to identify each incident (no details)
2. What feelings or emotional reactions came up
3. The judgments or conclusions you came to at the time

At the end of each week, read through your entries and complete the last column:

4. What do you notice today that you did not notice at the time? Are there patterns?
5. Using your preferred form of meditation (sitting, walking, or while doing 'mindless' chores) reflect upon your early childhood experiences.

Week 2: Connections between Wishful Thinking and Negativity

Now, my friends, there is here a pitfall I wish to warn against: the courage to believe in positive life unfoldment can very easily be confused with wishful thinking. There is a subtle and yet very distinct difference between these two approaches to life. I wish to stress this difference and help you in this respect.

What exactly is the difference between wishful thinking and a virile faith in the positive? You all very easily indulge in wishful thinking, and then, in order to be "realistic," as you think, because you already know and are disappointed in the results of wishful thinking, you revert into the superstition of pessimism.

Let us be very clear about the difference between wishful thinking and the realism and courage of positive belief. There is one very distinct, clear, simple, and important factor that will simplify matters for you in order to distinguish between these two so utterly different and yet seemingly similar attitudes.

Wishful thinking is spinning dreams of fulfillment without any price having to be paid: without any change of personality, of attitude, of approach, of thinking, of feeling, of acting, of being.

You spin the dream that this or that desirable fulfillment will come your way, magically and gratuitously. But there is no investment of yourself into life, into the process of creation, into contributing to the evolutionary process by the commitment to your own purification process. It is all a passive dreaming in which you hope against hope that something will happen to you that is desirable and that does not require of you to remove the very block that prevents this desirable event or state.

The less you invest into yourself that which could make all these desirable events or states a reality; the less can you believe in the actual manifestation of these fulfillments; the more justified the superstition of pessimism; the less desirable your life becomes; the more you wish to escape from it. Hence the more you spin those daydreams that substitute for the reality.

This consumes a lot of creative energy that could be invested into real living and fulfillment. **These daydreams are just the other side of the coin of the superstition of pessimism.** So you see, my friends, the superstition of negativity and pessimism, and the daydreaming are very closely interrelated and not at all mutually exclusive. You may, in one day or even within one hour, indulge in daydreams and then perhaps even in a matter of minutes indulge in the superstition of negativity. The very thing you daydream about, which consumes a tremendous amount of energy and mischanneled creativity, could be realized if only you were to make a total commitment to life and self and give your best to both -- which is one. Your disappointment, when you fail to realize the daydream, reinforces the superstition of pessimism.

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***Exercise:** Notice how many of the 11 'irrational beliefs' (below) you express -- whether energetically or in words or actions -- over the next 24 hours.*

Eleven Irrational Beliefs Based in Duality

Albert Ellis (1962) identified beliefs that are frequently found in American culture and probably in many others as well. Here is a summary of 11 of these irrational beliefs.

1. It is absolutely necessary for me to be loved and approved of by nearly every person with whom I have close contact.
2. I must be thoroughly competent and adequate in all respects or I am worthless.
3. Certain people are bad or wicked and must be blamed and punished. (The person fails to recognize that badness is in the eye of the beholder, and that punishment for its sake alone is irrational).
4. If things are not the way I like them to be, it is a terrible catastrophe.
5. Unhappiness is caused by external events over which I have almost no control.
6. Some things are terribly dangerous and life threatening, so I must keep thinking about them most of the time.
7. It is easier to avoid difficulties and responsibilities than to face them.
8. I am not able to do things myself; I must find someone stronger on whom I can rely.
9. What happened to me in the past determines what I do and think now, and because some event was traumatic in the past it will be traumatic now.
10. I should be very upset over other people's problems and disturbances.
11. There is always a right and precise solution to human problems, and if that is not found, I must be very upset.

Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy

Ellis originally trained in Psychodynamic therapy but came to believe it was quicker and more efficient to tackle the symptoms of mental disorder by challenging people's irrational beliefs and so make them more stoical.

The REBT framework assumes that humans have both innate rational (meaning self- and social-helping and constructive) and irrational (meaning self- and social-defeating and un-helpful) tendencies and learnings.

REBT claims that people to a large degree consciously and unconsciously construct emotional difficulties such as self-blame, self-pity, anger, hurt, guilt, shame, depressive feelings and anxiety, and behaviors and behavior tendencies like procrastination, over-compulsiveness, avoidance, addiction and withdrawal by the means of their irrational and self-defeating thinking, emoting and behaving.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rational_emotive_behavior_therapy

Week 3: Developing the Courage to Believe in the Good

Some Elements of Courage

To be able to experience a pain, a disappointment, a frustration -- the willingness to experience this and learn from it and use it as a threshold.

To risk all that and not to always stand back and have the safety of a little back door open so that one never ventures forth completely into a new situation.

To love, because the loved one may not always respond according to one's desires and self-will.

To give, because the petty heart still believes, steeped in the old superstition of negativity, that when you give you will lose and no one will give you anything. To risk finding out that it may not be that way.

To risk finding out that perhaps in the beginning of trying out these new attitudes, it may appear that way.

To not be discouraged.

Exercise: In what part of your body do you feel courage?

Every cell and every pore vibrates and resonates every divine attitude that you can possibly follow through and allow to express itself through your mind, through your will, through your soul, and so through your entire body.

Courage is required in order to believe in the good.

This is truly an abyss -- one of the abysses of illusion. Without assurances of the outcome, you will have to venture into an unknown land where you believe in the positive, where you assert your faith in the ever benign universe, where you express the truth that all possibilities exist. It is your choice which one of the many roads, the many possibilities, you wish to travel. The road of defeatism, denial, negation, negative expectation, or the road of faith in all unfoldment that is the innate nature of life, faith in the limitless possibilities of beautiful unfoldment in every area. These possibilities are anchored in your own soul.

There is nothing that you cannot realize. There is nothing you cannot experience if you truly give yourself to it, if you remove the anchor that prevents you from this new flowing expansion, and if you allow the involuntary processes with their limitless creative possibilities to carry you and bring you to ever new shores of fulfillment. **This courageous faith in the best of your own inner spirit must be asserted.** The courage lies in bridging the gap between the assertion of the faith and the realization -- until it bears fruit. The temptation to lean on the old superstitious negative beliefs comes from there not being a waiting period, no uncertainty, no growing phase. **As you speak the negative belief, so it occurs.** You have the questionable certainty of immediate results that you are so keen on.

On the other hand, the journey to the positive belief, the faith in the possibilities of positive unfoldment, requires a growing period, a ripening period. This is necessary simply because your mind processes have been so accustomed to the negative belief that they have to readjust themselves. They have to acclimatize themselves, to take root in the new land of beauty and abundance. You are changing from one land of inner being into another land of inner being and establishing new roots and new unfoldment. That is why a period of gestation, as it were, is necessary. For that, you require the

same kind of faith the gardener possesses who sows the seeds and who waits for the plants to sprout. He knows that eventually the plants will come out because he has experienced it before, but the first time he ever sowed a seed he may not have known. It is thus with you. And that is wherein the courage lies -- **the courage to believe in the best your innermost being has to offer** and in what life, therefore, has to offer. That assertion of faith is a substantial step that needs to be reinforced.

You encounter so many times the difficulty of sustaining happiness and pleasure. You have begun to prepare and open the road to it through all the purification work that you have undertaken.

As the results begin to stream into your being -- both outwardly and inwardly -- you shrink back. This is not only an old habit. It is also the result of still being committed to the imaginary safety measure of the superstition of pessimism and, simultaneously, to the wishful-thinking daydreaming where you want happiness and pleasure without changing, without giving, without loving, without bring forth all the riches within your own soul. The very thing that is your fulfillment, your inner richness, can create myriad kinds of more fulfillment. You withhold it and yet strive for the results through the superstition of pessimism and through wishful daydreaming. You avoid delving into the inexhaustible wells of yourself which could enrich your life, every minute of it.

Developing Courage

This material, if you use it, observe it in you, and apply it, will make a difference in the transformation work. You will truly, as I predicted for this working year, become capable of transforming a negative belief because you can see it as a game on a very subtle level. It is a trick, it is meant to be a trick. By giving up that trick and having the courage of the positive belief in your own richness and of the positive intentionality to give of this richness to the best of your ability, you will create the courage necessary to have the faith in the best that life could ever be.

The most productive attitude about the possibility of not realizing the wish in this form right now would be somewhat like the following:

"If such and such a desire is not fulfilled now, I have the courage to confront myself and find out the meaning." It may mean that there are certain obstructions within you that you need to know, not just for the sake of this particular fulfillment, but even more importantly for the sake of your total unfoldment as an entity, so as to become whole, so as to become fully unified.

"I have all the equipment of intelligence, openness, good will within me to learn." This learning can be a glorious experience.

"I can take a momentary disappointment and make it a stepping stone. I need not fear that it must be now, in this particular way. There are many ways." With this attitude, you will create a relaxed inner climate so that attaining the result will not be a question of do or die, which becomes not only an unbearable tension and pressure but is often the direct block to fulfillment of the desire. That would be the growth-producing attitude that would let you off the hook; that would make it possible for you to believe in the best and not fear that it does not happen in exactly the way you want it and when you want it; that it means you are all bad and/or life is all bad. Then it might even happen that way, but if it does not, it is not only not a catastrophe, but you will gain something from it not happening that way. You will open the doors to finding out so much about you, and this will be infinitely richer than the mere fulfillment of your wish in itself could ever have been.

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Week 4: Overcoming Negativity

A prayer” that the God in you expresses”:

As once before, I ask you to listen to your inner God and hear the words that resonate within you. As I say the words, pick up the echo within. This will help you to attune your listening inner ear to the voice of God, filling you with messages such as these:

"I am working through you.
I am in all your thoughts,
 if you hear Me.
I am in all you see,
 if you wish to see Me in all things around you.
I am in all the words you speak,
 if you wish Me to express through you.
I am in all your actions,
 if that be your commitment.
And as I am and as I manifest through you, you rediscover life in new terms.
You will see that life is a glorious oneness in which there is nothing to fear.
 What need you fear if you discover Me?
 What need you fear if you identify with Me?
Know that you are Me. As such you can never die.
Give that which is you now, in your thinking, in your being,
 in your perceptions to Me.
As you give yourself to Me, so must you be eternal."

Listen for a minute into yourselves while I stay with you.
You are richly blessed, my beloved friends."

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Overcoming Negativity PL 176

In order to reestablish the person you once were, before you became involved with negative creating -- long before this earth life -- in order to re-experience yourself as that which you essentially and ultimately are, that which you have always been and that which you will always be, **you have to test and consider the possibility of positive creating.**

You will then see that it is really so much more natural and easy. It is an organic process, while the negative creating, the destructive attitudes are artificial and contrived even though you are now so used to them that they seem the more natural. **The positive is effortless.**

Off hand, it seems that the effort is too great to abandon the negative that has become so much second nature to you. It seems that way because you still believe that by giving up negativity you create positivity as something new. If this were so, it would indeed be quite impossible in most instances. But the moment you realize that **the positive creation is already there within you**, only covered up, and that it can unfold and reveal itself the moment you allow for this to happen, abandoning negativity becomes a relief of a heavy burden that has pulled you down all your life -- and many lives before this one. When you hate, when you distrust, when you take a dim view of things, when you prevent a

favorable outcome by expecting the worst, it already exists in you that you love, trust, know that life is good and can be trusted. All this and more exists already and must only be allowed out to the surface like the sun that comes out behind the clouds. You will see that it is possible to feel this underneath.

Simultaneously you will experience the deep joy that permeates the entire being of a person when this discovery is being made. A few of my friends have already occasionally experienced this, and their way to recapture this ultimate reality will not be quite so difficult. **When we say that God is in man, this is what is meant.**

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Wishful daydreams are often spun by a diminished ego, not by the desire that comes from your higher self, from your inner spirit. Thus in these dreams a diminished ego is seeking a false medicine against a diminished ego.

What was begun as a game, as a kind of trickery then reinforces the negative belief until this vicious circle accelerates, and you find it ever more difficult to extricate yourself from the vortex you have created. You swing back and forth from the superstition of negativity, to the wishful daydream. The more you indulge in the wishful daydream to escape from the negativity you create by the superstition, the less can you truly experience beauty, fulfillment, abundance, love, joy, peace, and excitement.

For example, in a wishful daydream you do not visualize yourself in a productive vocation for the sake of joyfully and meaningfully contributing to life. You do not visualize your success and abundance for the sheer sake of enjoying the fruits of your labor as a valid expression of life. You dream of yourself as a great person in order to impress others -- perhaps your family or those who have slighted you.

However, even in these ego gratifications that you experience in your wishful daydreams and wishful thinking, original facets of true value are contained. The value of your dignity is a reality that you look for and often displace onto the limited ego level. You confuse it with the petty pride of the ego. The true value of your inner spirit aims for rich fulfillment of love, abundance, friendship, communication, and, yes, even recognition and respect. But in the daydream, it all comes in a fairy tale kind of manner that does not really convince you, so of course you cannot believe in it.

Exercise: Pursue this thought and discover yourself hoping in a very subtle way that someone will come along and give you all the fulfillment gratuitously without any effort on your part, without your removing the obstructions, without your even attempting to see that the obstructions to the fulfillment lie within yourself. You hope for this super-authority to reassure you that yes, it will happen as in your daydream, that it will be given to you -- not earned and acquired.

Just ascertaining these random, fleeting, thoughts and making them very concise will make you see their absurdity and help you to give them up. You will realize that abundance is available, but only to the degree you wish to squander yourself into life, to give as generously of your inner riches to the process of the whole as you wish to receive from life's abundance in your own way.

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