

Pathwork™ in Texas

THE IDEALISED SELF-IMAGE

Quotes from Pathwork Guide Lectures #83

Full text of this plus all other lectures may be downloaded from www.pathwork.org

Now I would like to discuss the most important countermeasure man resorts to in the false belief that it will circumvent unhappiness, unpleasure, death, never realising that this very countermeasure not only does not avoid, but brings on the very thing that is most dreaded and fought against. This common, universal pseudoprotection is the creation of the idealised self-image.

It is supposed to be a means of avoiding unhappiness. Since unhappiness automatically robs the child of security, self-confidence is diminished according to the unhappiness and ensuing lack of security. This unhappiness cannot be measured objectively. What one personality may be able to cope with quite well and does not experience as drastic unhappiness, another temperament and character feels as dismal woe. At any rate, unhappiness and lack of belief in oneself are interconnected. Hence, the creation of the idealised self-image serves the purpose of obtaining the missing self-confidence. Thereby pleasure supreme can be gained. This is the unconscious reasoning process. It is not altogether different from the truth. In truth and reality, healthy and genuine self-confidence is peace of mind. It is security and healthy independence. It also achieves a maximum of happiness through developing one's inherent talents, leading a constructive life, and having fruitful human relationships in healthy interdependence. But since the self-confidence established through the idealised self is artificial and not genuine, the result cannot possibly be what was expected.

I have occasionally used the term mask self in the past. The mask self and the idealised self-image are really one and the same. The idealised self masks the real self. It pretends to be something you are not. As a child, regardless of what your particular circumstances were, you were indoctrinated with admonitions on the importance of being good, holy, perfect. When you were not so, you were often punished in one way or another. Perhaps the worst punishment was that your parents withdrew their affection from you, they were angry, and you had the impression you were no longer loved. No wonder that "badness" associated itself with punishment and unhappiness; "goodness" with reward and happiness. Hence, the need to be "good" and "perfect" became an absolute must; it became literally a question of life or death for you. On the other hand, you knew perfectly well that you were not as good and as perfect as the world seemed to expect you to be. This truth had to be hidden as a guilty secret, and you started to build up a false self. This, you thought, was your protection and your means of attaining what you desperately want -- life, happiness, security, self-confidence. Slowly the awareness of this false front began to vanish, but you were and are permanently permeated with the guilt of pretending to be something you are not. You strain harder and harder to become this false self, this idealised self. You were, and unconsciously still are, convinced that if you strain hard enough, one day you will be it. But this artificial squeezing-into-something-you-are-not process can never attain genuine self-improvement, self-purification, and growth because you start building on an unreal self and leave your real self out of commission. In fact, you are desperately hiding it.

The idealised self-image may have many forms and facets. It does not always dictate standards of recognised perfection. Oh yes, much of the idealised self-image dictates highly moral standards, making it all the more difficult to question its validity. "But isn't it right to want to be always decent, loving, understanding; never to be angry; not wanting to have any faults; trying to attain perfection? Isn't this what we are supposed to do?" Such considerations will make it difficult for you to discover the compulsive attitude that excludes the present imperfection, the pride and lack of humility in which you cannot accept yourself as you are now, and, above all, the pretence with its resulting shame, fear of exposure, secretiveness, tension, strain, guilt, anxiety.

Since the standards and dictates of the idealised self are impossible to realise, yet never giving up the attempt, you keep and cultivate within yourself an inner tyranny of the worst order. But since you do not realise the impossibility of being as perfect as your idealised self demands, you never give up whipping yourself, castigating yourself, and feeling yourself a complete failure whenever it is proven that you cannot do so. The sense of abject worthlessness comes over you whenever you fall short of these fantastic demands, and engulfs you in misery. This misery may at times be conscious, but most of the time it is not. Even if it is, you do not realise the entire significance, the impossibility of your demands. And when you try to hide your reactions to your own "failure," you take to special means in order not to become aware of your "failure." One of the most common devices is projection into the outer world, onto others, onto life. This we have discussed at length in the past, but you will now understand the deepest reason of such projections.

The more you try to identify with your idealised self-image, the harder is the disillusionment whenever life brings you into a position when this masquerade can no longer be maintained. Many a personal crisis is based on this factor, and much less on the outer difficulties. But these difficulties then become an added menace, beyond their objective hardship. The existence of the difficulties is a proof to you that you are not your idealised self, and that robs you of the false self-confidence you tried to establish with the idealised self.

Sense of failure, frustration, and compulsion, as well as guilt and shame, are the most outstanding indications of your idealised self being at work. These are the consciously felt emotions of all that lies hidden underneath.

The idealised self has been called into existence in order to attain self-confidence and therefore, finally, happiness, pleasure supreme. The stronger its existence or presence, the more genuine self-confidence or remnants of it fade away. Since you cannot live up to these standards, you think even less of yourself than you originally did. It is therefore obvious that genuine self-confidence can only be established when you remove the superstructure of this merciless tyrant of your idealised self.

Yes, you could have self-confidence if, on the one hand, the idealised self were really you and if, on the other, you could live up to these standards. But since this is impossible and since deep down you know perfectly well you are not anything like what you think you are supposed to be with this "super self," you build up an additional insecurity. Thereby, further vicious circles come into existence. ... A further and most drastic result of this problem is the constantly increasing estrangement from the real self. The idealised self, as I said, is a falsity. It is a rigidly, artificially constructed imitation of a live human being. ... But the more you take out of that live-center in order to invest into the robot you have created, the more estranged you become from the real self, and the more you weaken and impoverish it.

In the course of this work, you have sometimes come upon the puzzling and often frightening question: "Who am I really?" This is the result of the discrepancy and struggle between the real and the false self. So, as you proceed in this particular phase of the work, you will come to understand the exact nature of your idealised self, your demands, your requirements of self and others in order to maintain the illusion. Once you fully see that that which you regarded as commendable is really pride and pretence, you will have gained a most substantial insight that enables you to weaken the impact of the idealised self. Then and then only will you realise the tremendous self-punishment you inflict upon yourself.

What is the Idealized Self Image?

By Kim Rosen

Based upon Pathwork Guide Lecture 83 and the research of Bert and Moira Shaw

ISI is a false self designed to insure happiness, security, and self-confidence.

ISI can hide OR glorify negativities – or both.

ISI can be aloof, invulnerable, and/or ‘good’.

ISI makes tyrannical demands that we believe our lives depend upon fulfilling.

Causes feelings of failure, frustration, compulsion, false guilt, false shame, false needs.

Dissolving the Idealized Self-Image

1. Recognize in detail the ISI’s demands.
2. Understand what it was designed to insure – your particular type of happiness:

<u>Reason Type</u> *	<u>Will Type</u>	<u>Emotion Type</u>
Being accepted	Being seen	Being loved
Being aloof	Being powerful	Being in harmony
Being in control	Being invulnerable	Being “good”

Understand what it was designed to avoid – your particular type of Unhappiness:

<u>Reason Type</u>	<u>Will Type</u>	<u>Emotion Type</u>
Being rejected	Being dismissed	Being unloved
Feeling pain	Feeling helplessness	Feeling rage
Experiencing chaos	Experiencing defeat	Experiencing badness

3. Recognize in detail the damage it’s done: that is creates exactly the experience it is designed to avoid.
4. Welcome opportunities to let False Self die; opportunities to let go of being aloof, invulnerable, “good”.
5. Risk feeling all feelings especially your own particular unhappiness:

<u>Reason Type</u>	<u>Will Type</u>	<u>Emotion Type</u>
Pain of rejection	Defeat and helplessness	Rage and badness
Hurt / chaos	Being dismissed, unseen	Having negative feelings, being unloved

Worksheet on Lecture 83, Idealized Self Image, by Andi Kiva, Pathwork Helper

"GOOD"

Get rewards and happiness



Truth is: weren't perfect .. not as Good as world expected you to be.

This truth had to be hidden

"BAD"

Get punished and parents
Withdrew their love



Felt unloved. **Truth is you weren't good enough**



- To be "GOOD" and "PERFECT" became a **must!**
- Felt like life or death
- I had to hide the truth that I'm NOT perfect
- This hiding becomes a guilty secret
- I need to build a FALSE self to not be BAD and lose love.



Build a FALSE, PROTECTIVE self or (Idealized Self Image)

Believing it's the only way to get love, happiness, security, self-confidence



Awareness of the "false front" vanishes and become permeated with guilt for pretending to be what you're not



Strain harder and harder to become this False Self (ISI)



Belief becomes: if I try hard enough, one day I'll be that (FALSE) self



In actuality: squeezing into something you're not.



Will NEVER get genuine self-improvement, self-purification and growth because you're building on a FALSE foundation



Only way out is to begin to identify with the REAL self.
The one you've been desperately hiding.

THE IDEALISED SELF-IMAGE

Pathwork Guide Lectures #83

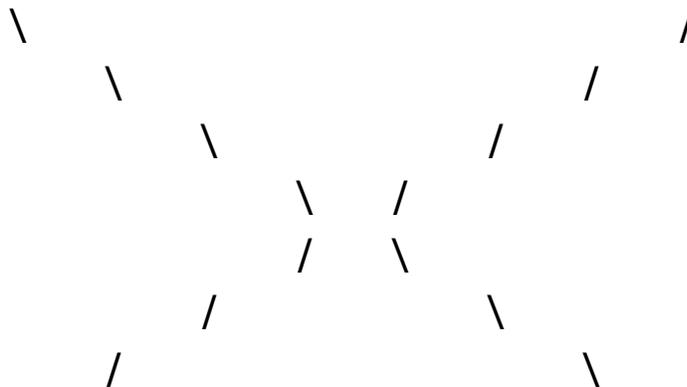
Full text all lectures may be downloaded from www.pathwork.org

Finding Your Images Worksheet

1. Consider a current problem or negative situation in your life.
2. Make a flat, simple statement that describes it.
("I hate being alone" "I have no money")
3. Determine what judgement goes with the statement.
("Alone means I'm not worthy" "Money would make me happy")
4. Use your imagination and consider why someone would want their negative current reality rather than a positive alternative. This will take a bit of creativity, since none of us really believe we want to be unhappy.
("Being with others is more frightening than being alone. I would rather be alone than have my self-worth questioned."
"Money made Dad and Mom miserable, so if I had money I would be miserable, so it is better not to have money".)
5. Look at your life and see where the 'apparent' negativities actually confirm your images, formed from immature childhood impressions or beliefs.

Positive conscious

Negative conscious



Positive unconscious

Negative unconscious

Pathwork in Texas

The Higher Self, The Lower Self, and The Mask

Worksheet for Lecture 14

Full text of this lecture available for download at www.pathwork.org

1. The Higher Self is sometimes known as the Spiritual level of a Human Being. The Higher Self holds a person's positive intention, the knowledge of their life task. Have you any sense of your Higher Self? Was there a particular occasion, or is there a particular area of your current life, where you feel that you have a sense of your Higher Self?

If you have not or do not now have such a sense, try this exercise: Find a comfortable position, slowly relax and allow the details of the day to drift away. Focus your attention upon your heart. Allow your heart to speak to you about a moment, a time, or an event when it felt expansive, full and safe. Stay in that feeling place for a while.

When you feel that you have fully re-experienced that moment, time or event, move your attention slightly to one side of your heart. This will activate your Observer Self, a useful tool for examining thoughts and feelings without fully disconnecting from them.

Allow your Observer Self to tell you what was going on during this experience. What prompted these warm, loving feelings? Are they familiar feelings or have you never observed them before? Can you relate these feelings to others in your life experiences?

Honest, warm, loving feelings are an indication that the Higher Self has been activated. It takes a bit of experience to learn to recognise the Higher Self, because it doesn't cry out for attention or create a fuss when it's around! If you have managed to touch into an experience of your Higher Self, observe in the next few days where and when it shows up - or even if it does not. The act of searching for our Higher Self is actually an act **of** the Higher Self. *The act of searching for the Lower Self is also an act of the Higher Self.*

The lower self does not only consist of the common faults, the individual weaknesses that vary with each person, but also of ignorance, laziness. It hates to change and to conquer itself; it has a very strong will (that may not always manifest outside) and wants its way without paying the price; it is very proud and selfish; it has always a great deal of personal vanity, the ego with all its manifestations. All these characteristics are generally part of the lower self regardless of other individual faults. (pgl 014p1)

2. Can you find examples or aspects of your life that may be influenced by your Lower Self? How do you feel about these? Have you become accustomed to them, just ignoring them and hoping for the best, or do you struggle against them?

The Lower Self can be tricky. It can encourage laziness and hopelessness in order not to be closely examined and identified. It can also encourage acrimony, argument, ill will and anger, which while active and energetic can also be futile, because the negativity of the attempted 'solutions' actually feeds the negative intention of the Lower Self.

When a person recognises that he may get in conflict with his surroundings by giving in to his lower self, he may nevertheless not be ready to take the consequences by paying the price in eliminating the lower self, which means, first of all, to face the lower self as it really is, with all its motives and drives. For you can only conquer something of which you are fully aware. This means taking the narrow path, the spiritual path. Many people do not want to think that far. They react emotionally without even thinking about it. And

the so-called subconscious feels it is necessary to present a different picture of the self in order to avoid certain difficulties, unpleasantness, or disadvantages of all sorts. Thus they create this other layer of self that has nothing to do with reality, neither with the reality of the higher self, nor with the temporary reality of the lower self. It is what you might call "phoney"; it is false, it is unreal. (pgl 014p2)

3. Can you find areas of your life where you are phoney, unreal? consider a particular incident. What were your honest feelings? What different feelings did you present? Why?

4. Can you detect when others are 'in their Mask'? How do you feel when you interact with them?

To lie to oneself, it is often sufficient not to think about one's emotions and true motives at all, but merely to let the emotions react without thinking. (pgl 014p3)

5. Can you observe unconscious Mask actions in others using this description? Can you find any parts of yourself where you allow yourself to react with thinking?

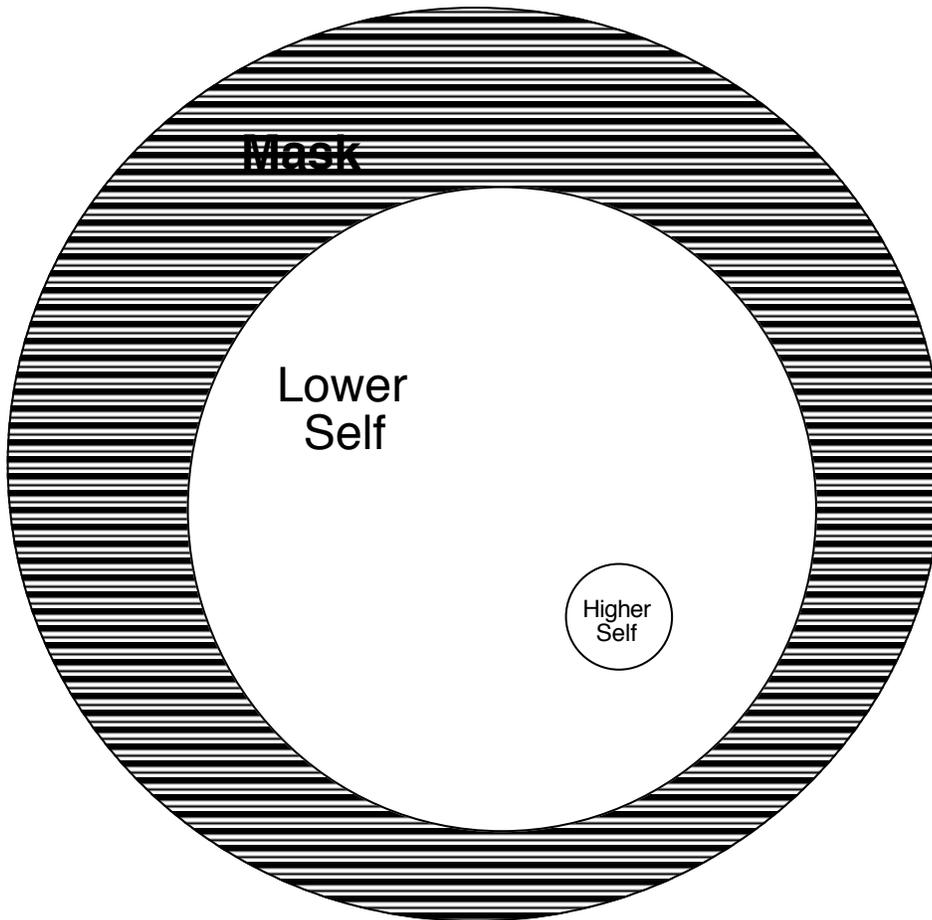
Reactions are feelings that are stronger than the situation warrants; they are knee-jerk responses, a re-enactment to a past event where similar feelings were repressed and not resolved.

He who wants to become happy, healthy, and at peace with oneself, he who wants to fulfil his life truly, he who wants to be in harmony with God and thus with oneself has to realise once and for all -- what is the actual me? What is my higher self? What is my lower self? And where may there be a mask, a falsehood? (pgl 014p3)

It is important for all of you to try to train your inner eye to see yourselves and other human beings from that point of view. The more you become spiritually awake, the easier it will be for you to perceive yourselves and others from that point of view. You will feel when you come into contact with the higher self a very distinct difference with the mask self once your intuition has awakened also in this respect through your personal spiritual development. You will nauseatingly feel the manifestations of the mask self (first of all, your own, of course), pleasantly as it may present itself. (pgl 014p3)

Pathwork™ in Texas

Pathwork in Australia P.O. Box 173 Nambucca Heads NSW 2448 Tel 02 · 6568 · 6888
www.pathwork.com.au 1800 · 00 · 3837



C.O.R.E. = Center of right essence

Mask and Lower Self seek to protect the Higher Self from pain or harm and are not able to be present in the moment. They react from history.

The Mask identifies with the Idealized Self Image (ISI).

The Lower Self identifies with our own Negative Intentionality, Negative Specialists, and the Lower Selves of others.

The Higher Self identifies with the God Sphere and Divine Universality.

Lecture Study Class Outline © Jan Rigsby: 2003
Full text all lectures may be downloaded from www.pathwork.org

The Vicious Circle of the Idealized Self Image

By Jan Rigsby

“The idealised self masks the real self. It pretends to be something you are not.”

Pathwork Guide Lecture 83

Draw a simple clock face and write in the numbers 1-12 in a standard pattern. Add 2 curved lines, connecting 3 back to 12 and 8 back to 6. As you go through this exercise, use the examples as inspiration to find a Vicious Circle issue in your own life. Except where noted, quotes are from Pgl 83.

0/12 = The starting point. We are inspired by our Higher Self and our connection to the Divine. This place is never specific, because the Higher Self is not attached to how things manifest. *Challenge any statement here that feels as if it is already ‘in motion’ or which may harbor an agenda or hold onto fixed idea.* Example: “I want to be good, generous, kind and loving in my interactions.

1= We attempt to manifest this HS desire. This may be somewhat specific, but it does not have a forcing current or agenda yet. The destructive element here is engaging in dualistic thinking, thinking in terms of ‘or’ instead of ‘and’. “My friend could use some help” contains “or unhappiness will result”.

“When man knows and senses that there is only good, freedom, right, beauty, love, truth, life without a threatening opposite, and when he tries to apply this on the dualistic plane, he will immediately be plunged into the very conflict of opposites he needs to avoid. He then fights for one of the dualistic aspects and against the other. Such a fight makes the transcendence impossible.” Unity and Duality, Pgl 143

2= We experience some resistance. In a Benign Circle, we might re-examine our inspiration and how it started to manifest, adjust based upon feedback, and try again. In a Vicious Circle, we decide to push forward without challenging our premise. “I wasn’t able to help this time, but I can figure something out!”

“practically everything man encounters, every human problem and predicament, is determined by this dualistic way of perceiving life.” Pgl 143

3= There is a growing sense that something has gone wrong. Depending upon our personality type and history, we start to question ourselves or others. “I am failing” “I can’t do this” “He/She doesn’t like / understand me” This is a primary exit point for the Vicious Circle, before we have become invested or attached and before feelings have become strengthened into emotions.

“Unhappiness and lack of belief in oneself are interconnected. Hence, the creation of the idealized self-image serves the purpose of obtaining the missing self-confidence.”

4= A decision is made to push forward. We assume that the fundamentals behind both our inspiration and our methods – the Ideals that make up our Image – are valid. “If I only...” “I can’t quit now” “Maybe another way will work...”

“And when you try to hide your reactions to your own “failure,” you take to special means in order not to become aware of your “failure.” Pgl 143

5= Discomfort increases / resolve hardens. We feel forced to choose: give up, or commit further.

“You knew perfectly well that you were not as good and as perfect as the world seemed to expect you to be. This truth had to be hidden as a guilty secret, and you started to build up a false self. This, you thought, was your protection and your means of attaining what you desperately want -- life, happiness, security, self-confidence. For, whenever you fall short, as you are bound to, you feel so impatient, so irritated that such impatience and irritation can snowball into fury and wrath at yourself.”

6= The Idealized Self Image is now in charge. The seduction of the ISI is that it represents our ideals. We have no argument against it – it is ‘good’. Any protest must be ‘bad’.

Since the standards and dictates of the idealized self are impossible to realize, yet never giving up the attempt, you keep and cultivate within yourself an inner tyranny of the worst order. The original insecurity, supposed to be whisked away by the establishment of the idealized self, steadily increases. It snowballs,

and becomes worse and worse. The more insecure you feel, the more stringent the demands of the superstructure, the idealized self, the less are you able to live up to it, and the more insecure do you feel.”

7= We sense the pretense. It is here that negativity’s most attractive aspect – that we do not have to feel uncomfortable or unpleasant feelings – is revealed as a lie. We cannot remain in stasis or contraction. Eventually, some expansion will occur. This process may take days, weeks, years or lifetimes, but it is inevitable and uncontrollable. Living is a verb; life is defined by movement.

“Sense of failure, frustration, and compulsion, as well as guilt and shame, are the most outstanding indications of your idealised self being at work. These are the consciously felt emotions of all that lies hidden underneath. Thereby, further vicious circles come into existence. ...the more you take out of that live-center in order to invest into the robot you have created, the more estranged you become from the real self, and the more you weaken and impoverish it.”

This is another place where we can exit the vicious circle, by becoming more conscious of what is really going on. Going forward from this place by simply expanding our efforts continue the circle.

“You will gain an objective view of yourself in this respect, and this view will liberate you. You will fully assume responsibility for the faulty attitude, being willing to take the consequences upon yourself.”

8= Our imperfections and mistakes are used against us – by ourselves. Under the tyranny of the ISI, we may succumb to its apparent perfection.

“Thereby, further vicious circles come into existence. ...the more you take out of that live-center in order to invest into the robot you have created, the more estranged you become from the real self, and the more you weaken and impoverish it.” Pgl 83

9= We feel the need to choose ‘good’ over ‘bad’, plunging further into dualistic thinking and energizing the choices we have made.

“The more you try to identify with your idealized self-image, the harder is the disillusionment whenever life brings you into a position when this masquerade can no longer be maintained.”

10 and 11 = We move forward within a forcing current, moving past the point on the circle where our original intention came in, remembering our longing but blinded by our ISI’s version of how we should manifest it.

“Needless to say, you also have to recognize most particularly and in detail what your specific demands and standards are; and further, you have to see their unreasonableness, their impossibility.”

Based upon the specifics of the situation or circumstances, a decision is made, blame is assigned, fault is determined and our resolve is hardened.

“First will come changes in your reactions to life, to incidents, to yourself and others. This changed reaction will be quite astounding enough. But little by little, outer things are also bound to change. Your different attitude will cause new effects.

You cannot approach this most important part of your inner work by a general concept. As usual, your most insignificant daily reactions, considered from this viewpoint, will yield the necessary result. So continue your self-search out of these new considerations, and do not be impatient if it takes time and relaxed effort.

The difference between the real and the idealized self is often not a question of quantity (as regards the goodness or badness of a trend) but rather one of quality.

Another important consideration is the time element between these two selves. The idealized self wants to be perfect (according to its specific demands) right now. The real self knows this cannot be and does not suffer from this fact.

Then you will truly experience the following words. The more egocentric you are, the less can you have of self-confidence. The idealized self believes just the opposite. Its claims for perfection are motivated by sheerly egocentric reasons. And this very egocentricity makes self-confidence impossible.” Pgl 83