

Pathwork™ Steps

DISTORTIONS OF THE INSTINCTS OF SELF-PRESERVATION AND PROCREATION

Quotes from Pathwork Lecture 85

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

The instinct of survival, or self-preservation, aims at gaining, maintaining, preserving, improving life. By its very nature, it must work against anything that destroys life or the safety of living. Just as the body aims at health so that it can live, so also does the soul aim at health for its own capacity to live most constructively. In order to live, one needs to be safe from destruction and damage. We know by now that what the healthy soul considers safety is at variance with the consideration of the unhealthy, immature soul in this respect. The unhealthy soul considers any rejection, any withholding of love, admiration, and approval not only as unsafe, but it actually experiences such occurrences as "death." All of you who follow this path and do this work have come across similar emotional reactions. Here you may observe a typical example of how the instinct of self-preservation comes into a wrong channel and manifests erroneously. Your soul believes in order to preserve its life and safety, you have to fight against the illusion of rejection in any form. This fight assumes various forms. One of them is the establishment of the idealized self-image.

This perversion of the instinct of self-preservation brings in its wake further distortions of character trends. Certain faults come into being, according to one's character structure. These are, for instance avarice, an inner or outer tightness, rigidity, prejudice, preconceived ideas -- in short, any trend or inner urge that holds on, that cannot let go. It may manifest on any level of personality. Outwardly for instance, you may be generous in material matters, but in certain areas of your inner life there may exist an emotional avarice and stinginess. If you carefully examine the motions of prejudice and preconceived ideas, you will see that they have the same origin as avarice, stinginess, tightness, with the same ingredient of holding on to something because this appears "safe."... This restriction prevents assimilation of new ideas and attitude changes that may be healthy and appropriate and at a later time productive of correspondingly new emotions and new experiences. This restriction makes rigid rules of behavior and attitude, frozen ideas, opinions, feelings, and reactions that will be unable to change as long as this basic distortion is not changed. This amounts to an emotional constipation which may or may not outpicture in the physical area of being.

Regarding the instinct of procreation, I would first of all say, once again, that it includes more than the physical continuation of the human race. It includes every form of creativity, applying to all levels of being. In its healthy form, it reaches out to communicate. It is ready for new eventualities, ready to enjoy, ready to give and receive and to experience pleasure and happiness. In other words, as indicated in one of the recent lectures, man's yearning for pleasure supreme is connected with the instinct of procreation.

Here you have two distinct soul movements. One is holding on tightly, not letting go that which is obsolete so that new material can be assimilated by the soul. This is the restrictive movement. The other one reaches out, not in a relaxed way, but rather grabbingly, greedily, compulsively.

These soul movements are very subtle. Only this work you are doing can bring awareness of them into your consciousness. Since both distortions are intrinsically self-centered, the reaction on the personality must be of like nature. Self-centeredness brings frustration, anxiety, tension, compulsion, guilt, and insecurity, to name but a few of the negative emotions thus generated. The error is all the more tragic because the psyche erroneously believes that being self-centered would preserve its safety or satisfy the craving. Nothing can be further from the truth. Nothing induces greater insecurity than to be egocentric.

Until one advances to these soul areas, understanding their full impact and significance, each time insecurity is increased by the process described, man tends to strengthen the rigid rules and commands, despairing more and more with himself when they prove progressively less workable.

Both these soul currents, being utterly self-centered, cannot experience and take defeat. From the recent lectures and most particularly from the findings you have made in connection with your idealized self-image, you must now know that it is very proud in nature, apart from its other aspects we have discussed. This pride cannot admit defeat. Since defeat is occasionally inevitable, when it does come, it threatens the very ground you stand on, the precarious ground and pseudosafety of your idealized self-image. The healthy personality can take defeat. You all have to take it. No one can get away from it. But how you take defeat, that is the question!

To experience defeat in a healthy mature way presupposes true humility, not a false one, not a superimposed one. It presupposes a certain generosity of feeling, a certain greatness in that it can admit defeat, and without loss of dignity. This very attitude actually brings on dignity. The child in you believes that the less defeat you suffer, the greater you are. Nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is that you are great to the degree that you cope with defeat -- honestly, humbly, in dignity and poise, without embellishment and coloring, without projection and humiliation, without pretense.

One "successful" way of dealing with defeat that cannot be hidden is to belittle others by making them seem responsible so that your defeat becomes theirs. This creates additional guilt in you. The hostility flows in two directions, towards others and to yourself.

If your pseudosolution is the quest for "love" and you are the submissive type, you will aggrandize the defeat. You will dramatize it out of all proportion. It then becomes a means of forcing others to protect and love you.

If your pseudosolution is the quest for "serenity," you will deny the very existence of defeat as long as possible. This is dangerous because of the self-deception; the unawareness of what you really feel; the lack of awareness of why you act in certain ways as a result of this self-deception.

Even if a person has but one of these pseudosolutions as a predominant trend, one or both of the other trends still exist. Hence, it is more than possible that a person will deal with defeat one time in one way and at another opportunity in another. In one area of life, one pseudosolution may prevail, in other departments another; and since it is not chosen at random, the choice may be predictable according to the nature of defeat. All this has to be individually found and applied.

My advice to my friends is for them to ask themselves the question, "How do I really take defeat?" -- not how does it appear, but how do you feel about it, deep inside? Think back recently or into the past. When did something occur that was a defeat for you?

So when I invite you to question yourselves as to your attitude towards defeat, do not think of what is generally recognized as such. You have to find what you experience as defeat, humiliation, failure. This may vary with each person. Search in this direction, my friends. For, once you recognize this, a great wave of inner strength must come, as it always does from any healthy self-recognition and insight.

Pathwork™ Steps

SELF-PRESERVATION AND PROCREATION AS INSTINCTS IN CONFLICT

Quotes from Pathwork Lecture 86

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

Any distortion is the result of adopting a particular attitude and rigidly adhering to it. This happens when the personality unconsciously regards such an attitude as a solution to life's difficulties.

The function of the instinct of self-preservation is to maintain and safeguard life. It is concerned with avoiding danger and securing safety from danger. In a state of health and maturity, real dangers -- not only physical ones, but any threat to the healthy growth of the individual -- are warded off. But in distortion, the dangers are imagined and unrealistic. When a human being considers himself threatened by not being loved, admired, approved of or agreed with, this represents an unrealistic danger.

I mentioned three main pseudosolutions: (1) the quest for love, (2) the quest for power, and (3) the quest for serenity. In each of these attitudes, the personality feels that living according to the dictates of these "solutions" will help him to master life. ... As far as generalization will allow, it can be said that the distortion of the instinct of self-preservation leads the soul to adopt the pseudosolution of quest for power. The distorted instinct of procreation leads the soul to the quest for love. Yet both instincts may serve both ends, since safety as well as pleasure are necessary in the life of man. If the instincts are distorted, they conflict with, rather than complement one another. Therefore compromise has to be found even in the pseudosolutions.

The distorted instinct of self-preservation will lead to the pseudosolution of a quest for power, with all its demands, aggressiveness, and power drive. The psyche thinks: "If I assert myself and my power, my omnipotence, my invulnerability, nothing can happen to me. I will, as a result, not be threatened by the dangers of a hostile world which does not understand me."

On the other hand, the distorted instinct of procreation contains the pleasure drive, the yearning for pleasure supreme on all levels of being. ... This "solution" of being nonassertive, of giving in, even when it can also be damaging by leaving one open to abuse and disadvantage, is equally doomed to failure. In being that way, the personality unconsciously believes he will be loved, and thus receive pleasure.

As to the third pseudosolution I discussed, namely, withdrawal, the quest for serenity, this is but a secondary pseudosolution. It is the result of the previously indicated two "solutions" fighting one another and tearing the personality in half. When the pressure of this inner conflict becomes too great to bear, this secondary, superimposed "solution" is adopted. The former two "solutions" are adopted in order to cope with life. The latter is adopted in order to cope with the conflict resulting from these two false solutions.

If a person's predominant concern is with inner safety, he is bound to overemphasize and therefore distort the instinct of self-preservation. Therefore the instinct of procreation must, to some extent at least, be squashed and held in abeyance. The whole personality is geared toward obtaining "safety," and it thereby undermines another legitimate need. ... Unconsciously, the person confronts the alternatives of safety or pleasure. For, in order to obtain happiness, fulfillment, bliss, pleasure, there is presupposed a certain courage, a spirit of adventure, so to speak. It presupposes the willingness to risk. But such going-out and risking is the very danger that must be avoided at all costs. So the immature soul struggles to get both safety and pleasure, without daring to risk, without coming out of its shell, but hoping and struggling to obtain what it needs without taking the necessary steps.

Whenever an unsuccessful, halfhearted attempt is made to obtain fulfillment, the fearful soul will regard any minor rejection, criticism, or disapproval as such drastic danger that he will again quickly withdraw either into a false serenity or into a domineering, aggressive, forbidding attitude. This makes the attainment of love more or less impossible.

If the pleasure supreme principle is predominant, the personality will take a risk, but at such a price that further disturbances are bound to set in. The thwarted instinct of self-preservation tries to compromise in that the person will "risk" by submitting. He will go out to obtain happiness by self-effacement and masochism, thinking in this way to combine the need for pleasure and the need for safety. In giving in, the person believes he will receive what he craves for while at the same time obtain protection through his "helplessness," and so be "safe."

If the distorted instinct of self-preservation and therefore the pseudosolution (in a quest for power) is predominant, a vital part of the soul will starve and stagnate. If the distorted instinct of procreation and therefore the pseudosolution (in a quest for love) is predominant, vulnerability and helplessness increase until the soul is actually endangered -- not in the sense that the psyche believes, but in a very different sense -- by continued self-denial and by estrangement from the real self. This brings inhibition and the stunting of creative forces, which in turn causes anxiety, frustration, etc.

Since, in the human soul, both instincts exist in equal strength, and since the distortion of one instinct invariably causes the distortion of the other, both pseudosolutions will be found in every individual. A further and very common compromise "solution" is the attempt to make both aspects serve both ends, which of course cannot work. For instance, the pseudosolution in a quest for power aims at love and pleasure in the unconscious belief that by being omnipotent, strong, and invulnerable, then love and devotion are forthcoming. With this attitude, he believes that he will not only insure his safety and invulnerability, but this very facade will simultaneously bring him so much admiration from others that his quest for love will thus be fulfilled. He never sees that the one makes the other impossible. The more he tries to convince his fellow men of his invulnerable strength, the more frightened will they be of him. And fright has never yet induced love. Nor does the superiority over others induce love, for the other person resents being made to feel inferior and will certainly not respond by loving the one who has belittled him, regardless of how subtly such belittling is accomplished.

The person whose predominant pseudosolution is a quest for love in order to obtain pleasure will compromise by trying to combine this pleasure drive with his need for safety. Often he is even consciously convinced that there is no conflict. If he obeys and does everything that is expected of him, he will receive not only love and pleasure, but simultaneously protection from danger as well. He does not recognize that such tactics generate inner reactions that are bound to destroy his very aim. The more he submits, the more the existing power drive of others will indeed take advantage of him. The more he is taken advantage of, the more is he bound to rebel and resent. Such resentments may not rise up to the surface awareness, but their undermining strength is bound to reject the other person, who will respond with resentment in turn.

It is very often the case that the predominant aspect contains the very opposite underneath. If the predominant aspect is the quest for power in order to be safe -- with all the accompanying hostility, ruthlessness, pride, superiority, pretense at invulnerability -- the underlying core may be the helpless child, looking for love and protection; craving for pleasure and happiness; being vulnerable and submissive; feeling insecure and dependent. If the predominant aspect is the quest for love in order to receive pleasure, with all the accompanying self-effacement, appeasement, self-denial, and masochistic sacrificing; the underlying core may be a ruthless selfishness, self-centered pride, and superiority feelings, excessive demands and often even cruel impulses towards others.

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The Preface to Uh-Oh

Preface and book by Robert Fulghum

“Uh-oh” is not in any dictionary or thesaurus, and is seldom seen in written form. Yet most of us utter that sound every day. And have used it all our lives.

“Uh-oh” is one of the first expressions a baby learns.

“Uh-oh”, or something like it, has been used as long as people have existed. And it may be the first thing Adam said to Eve after he bit into the apple.

She knew exactly what he meant, too.

Across the history of the human family, millions and millions of distinct sounds have come and gone as we continually reach for ways to communicate with one another. Often, the most expressive words we use are not words at all, just those shorthand sounds that represent complex thoughts – grunts and moans and snorts and clicks and whistles compounded by facial expressions and physical gestures: “Uh-huh... no-no... mmmmm... huh... hey... oops... OK... yo... ah... ha... humpf... and an almost endless number of others whose meaning and spelling and cannot be conveyed with letters on paper.

“Uh-oh” is way up near the top of a list of small syllables with large meanings.

We say “uh-oh” to a small child who falls down or bumps his head or pinches his finger. It means that we know the child hurts, but we also know the hurt is temporary and that the child has the resources to handle the hurt and get up and go on about his business. As the child learns, he will not need to turn to a parent to kiss-it-and-make-it-well each time he scrapes himself – he will know where to find the bandages on his own. “Uh-oh” is the first wedge in weaning a child away from us into independence.

The older we get, the more experience and knowledge we have, the more able we are to distinguish momentary difficulty from serious trouble. The more we know that something is “uh-oh”, not 911.

If I had a chest pain, I might go to an emergency room thinking ‘Oh my God, heart attack!’ If my doctor had the same symptoms, she might think “Uh-oh, gas pains, take an antacid” and go on with her work.

What to me is the last gasp of my old truck is a repairable electric problem to my mechanic. “Uh-oh, there’s a short in your ignition wire”.

One might even come to feel the same way about things that cannot be fixed. From the cradle, we know about “Rock-a-bye-baby” and what happens when the bough breaks. In kindergarten we are reminded about these conditions. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men could not put Humpty Dumpty together again. I’m familiar with death, having been around it often in hospitals and cemeteries. If I see my own death coming, my response may well be “uh-oh”.

It says to expect the unexpected, and also expect to be able to deal with it as it happens most of the time. “Uh-oh” people seem not only to expect surprise, but they count on it, as if surprise were a dimension of vitality.

“Uh-oh” embraces “Here we go again!” and “Now what?” and “You never can tell what’s going to happen next” and “So much for plan A” and “Hang on, we’re coming to a tunnel” and “No sweat” and “Tomorrow’s another day” and “You can’t unscramble an egg” and “A hundred years from now it won’t make any difference”.

“Uh-oh” is more than a momentary reaction to small problems. “Uh-oh” is an attitude – a perspective on the universe. It is part of an equation that summarizes my view of the conditions of existence:

“Uh-huh” + “Oh-wow” + “Uh-oh” + “Oh, God” = “Ah-hah!”

Pathwork™ Steps

Outline for June 2009 Teleconference **Self-preservation and Procreation in Distortion**

Pathwork Lectures 85&86

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

Introduction

Lectures are not codified in terms of ‘major’ and ‘minor’ lectures

1/3 of the 258 more commonly used in teaching classes and presentations

Some lectures are relatively unknown – such as these two!

My personal favourites, found during my 3rd year of Pathwork studies.

Seemed to crystallize a vast number of concepts

Allowed me to see selfishness and short-sightedness from a more generous perspective

Easier concepts for me to work from

than others that seemed more abstract, spiritually based.

Unique perspectives in these lectures:

Many lectures work with the premise of personality triads;

Pride, Self-Will and Fear 30

Reason, Will, Emotion 43

Love, Power, Serenity 84

Submission, Aggression, Withdrawal 107/109

All treat each ‘type’ as equal; 86 distinguishes the drives for Power (Will type) and Love (Emotion type) as Primary, with use of Intellect / mental (Reason type) as secondary as it is only rationalization / attempt to resolve the stresses between drives for Power and Love

Idealized Self-Image results directly and immediately from the distortion of Self-preservation. This is a more direct understanding of the ISI as a defensive strategy, where the Mask is only the outward manifestation.

These distortions are particularly self-centered = they emanate from and keep us trapped within the Individual Self Sphere, convinced that ever-increasing self-centeredness is needed (“a part of the personality still clings to the supposed "safety" of the negative reaction.”)

Concepts explored in these lectures:

Daily Review 28

Vicious Circle of Immature Love 50

Idealized Self Image 83

Love, Power and Serenity 84

Wishful Daydreams 98

The Defense 101

Unity and Duality 143

Three Principles of Evil 248

Self-preservation:

“The function of the instinct of self-preservation is to **maintain and safeguard life**. But in distortion, the dangers are imagined and unrealistic. When a human being considers himself threatened by not being loved, admired, approved of or agreed with, this represents an **unrealistic danger**.”

“holding on tightly, not letting go that which is obsolete so that new material can be assimilated by the soul. This is the restrictive movement.”

“distortion of the instinct of self-preservation leads the soul to adopt the pseudosolution of quest for power. ... These trends are aggressiveness, hostility, a power drive, a need to triumph over others, competitiveness, excessive demands...”

Leads to dualistic thought patterns:

“If a person's predominant concern is with inner safety, he is bound to overemphasize and therefore distort the instinct of self-preservation. Therefore the instinct of procreation must, to some extent at least, be squashed and held in abeyance. The whole personality is geared toward obtaining "safety," and it thereby undermines another legitimate need. Unconsciously, the person confronts the alternatives of safety or pleasure. So the immature soul struggles to get both safety and pleasure, without daring to risk, without coming out of its shell, but hoping and struggling to obtain what it needs without taking the necessary steps.”

“Whenever an unsuccessful, halfhearted attempt is made to obtain fulfillment, the fearful soul will regard any minor rejection, criticism, or disapproval as such drastic danger that he will again quickly withdraw either into a false serenity or into a domineering, aggressive, forbidding attitude. This makes the attainment of love more or less impossible. It is needless to say that such a soul suffers a damage that the real self will rebel against. This rebellion, when reaching the outer levels of being, may take on various forms.”

Procreation:

“reaches out, not in a relaxed way, but rather grabbingly, greedily, compulsively.”

“The distorted instinct of procreation leads the soul to the quest for love. ... contains the pleasure drive, the yearning for pleasure supreme on all levels of being. “

“pseudosolution of submissiveness, compliance, appeasement, the quest for love which is supposed to solve all problems.”

“If the pleasure supreme principle is predominant, the personality will take a risk, but at such a price that further disturbances are bound to set in. The thwarted instinct of self-preservation tries to compromise in that the person will "risk" by submitting. “

No-Win Scenario

“If the distorted instinct of self-preservation and therefore the pseudosolution (in a quest for power) is predominant, a vital part of the soul will starve and stagnate. If the distorted instinct of procreation and therefore the pseudosolution (in a quest for love) is predominant, vulnerability and helplessness increase until the soul is actually endangered -- not in the sense that the psyche believes, but in a very different sense -- by continued self-denial and by estrangement from the real self. This brings inhibition and the stunting of creative forces, which in turn causes anxiety, frustration, etc.”

RWE Triads:

“three main pseudosolutions: (1) the quest for love, (2) the quest for power, and (3) the quest for serenity, ... intended to] help him to master life.”

“If your pseudosolution is the quest for power, then your reaction to defeat will be extreme humiliation that has to be hidden at whatever cost. This very process of concealment takes a very heavy toll on your life giving forces. ... One "successful" way of dealing with defeat that cannot be hidden is to belittle others by making them seem responsible so that your defeat becomes theirs. This creates additional guilt in you. The hostility flows in two directions, towards others and to yourself. “

“If your pseudosolution is the quest for "love" and you are the submissive type, you will aggrandize the defeat. You will dramatize it out of all proportion. It then becomes a means of forcing others to protect and love you.”

“If your pseudosolution is the quest for "serenity," you will deny the very existence of defeat as long as possible. This is dangerous because of the self-deception; the unawareness of what you really feel; the lack of awareness of why you act in certain ways as a result of this self-deception.”

“As to the third pseudosolution I discussed, namely, withdrawal, the quest for serenity, this is but a **secondary pseudosolution**. It is the result of the previously indicated two "solutions" fighting one another and tearing the personality in half. In actuality, the person can no longer handle the problem of satisfying both instincts.”

Inevitable back and forth

“Since, in the human soul, both instincts exist in equal strength, and since the distortion of one instinct invariably causes the distortion of the other, both pseudosolutions will be found in every individual. For instance, the pleasure drive will be released only on certain levels of being. For example, a person may feel that spiritual, intellectual, or mental pleasure is not a dangerous pursuit. It does not involve him emotionally and does not expose him to the risk of rejection and hurt. Emotional or sense pleasure, on the other hand, seems extremely dangerous and is therefore eliminated (more or less), depending on the case. It may not always be so crass that a person actively withdraws. It may be more subtle in that the person unconsciously sabotages it and then projects the failure onto others.”

“A further and very common compromise "solution" is the attempt to make both aspects serve both ends, which of course cannot work. The more he tries to convince his fellow men of his invulnerable strength, the more frightened will they be of him. And fright has never yet induced love. Nor does the superiority over others induce love...”

“The person whose predominant pseudosolution is a quest for love in order to obtain pleasure will compromise by trying to combine this pleasure drive with his need for safety.”

Idealized Self Image

“The perversion of the first instinct is resistant to any change and to growth. That is its nature. It is static and tends towards stagnation. The resistance to change is one of the greatest hurdles to be overcome. It can be rationalized in many ways, but whatever is the conscious "reason" for such resistance, deep down you all battle against giving up the "glory" of your idealized self. That, especially, you fear above and beyond anything else. You think or feel you have to hold on to it for dear life because, after all, it was chosen as a "solution." As long as the real reason for resistance to change is unconscious, it is not amenable to change, correction, or reconsideration since anything activated out of the unconscious is resistive to reality.

Unconsciously you hold on to that which was chosen as salvation and safety, the pseudosolution. That makes change, growth, and liberation so extremely difficult.”

1. “the healthier a human being is, the weaker is the idealized self-image.”
2. “The stronger the inner conflicts, the stronger is the difference between the real and the idealized self.”
3. “The desire-life or daydreams are always a good indication of what the idealized self-image is, and of the nature of the pseudosolution. The idealized self-image shows in more than in the desire-life.”
4. “It must show in the rigid commands, the shoulds and musts, the anxiety and guilts when these compulsions are not lived up to. It shows in certain expectations from the self and from others.”
5. “Desire-life is an expression of urgent need. “

Doing the Work / Walking the Path

“The negative feeling has to be let out in its full impact. That does not mean one should act upon it, but you have to become aware of the intensity of the anger, the childish demands and claims, the real reason for one's anger (defeat being inadmissible). If these emotional reactions and impressions are allowed to come to the surface with all their childishness and irrational claims, without rationalizing and explaining them away, they will eventually weaken so that the other set of feelings will become genuine and more and more dominant. Often, if good will is superimposed, it becomes an obstruction unto itself.”

1. “the first major step in becoming aware of the emotions is an inner permission to find out what he really feels. This is to be cultivated by prayer, by meditation, and by a daily resolution of intent.”
2. “The first emotional level of awareness usually will be a welling up of resentments that you were never conscious of and which are connected with guilt and anxiety.”
3. “Thus the establishment of balance due to facing truth and changing where and whenever possible, automatically by itself, as it were, produces a new balance such as was not attainable by means of outer actions, deliberately tried.”
4. “You will find the main components of your idealized self-image, comprising, perhaps, all three aspects.
- 5.” after this is explored, the underlying neglected and shamefully covered core of your problem will evolve into emotional awareness. You will then experience these emotions.”
6. This is a painful process, my friends. The courage to go through this pain, which you may encounter on various levels as well as at the core, has to be experienced. But your inner will to go through it must always be cultivated anew. The inner will to inexorably face the truth in you, regardless of whether or not it is pleasant or flattering, must always be resolved afresh.”

Developing positive attitudes

1. “the more you become aware of and understand the cause and effect of negative emotions, the weaker will they automatically become.”
2. “A proper inner balance will begin to take place. You will cease being -- inwardly or outwardly -- aggressive where it is unjustified; and you will be aggressive where it is healthy and constructive.”

Worksheet compiled by Jan Rigsby 2009
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