

**Shame as a Yardstick for Unresolved Problems
+ Seemingly Favorable Childhood Circumstances as Obstructive as Hurts**
Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 117

- Week 1: Shame as the Result of Pretense and Deception**
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This lecture was given in 1963 to a community of Pathworkers who were committed to personal process and who had access to a variety of Helpers trained by The Guide and Eva Pierrakos. Since most readers do not have easy access to Helpers, nor a community that supports accelerated spiritual growth, the Guide's suggestions have been modified [using brackets] to emphasize self-study. It is my personal belief that the ultimate goal of the Pathwork lectures is for all of us to find – and use -- our inner Helper. jr

Week 1: Shame as the Result of Pretense and Deception

Tonight I should like to discuss **two specific topics** which will at first seem unrelated, but of course they are not, and we shall then try to establish their connection. The contents of this lecture are primarily destined to reach those inner areas and levels of the personality which have already been uncovered or are about to be uncovered in this deep search of self-exploration. You cannot emphasize enough, as a constant reminder for yourself, that awareness is the key -- becoming aware of what is in you at the moment. PL 117

Exercise 1: Meditate on Becoming Aware

Stage 1. Automatism / blind reflex

- Responses based upon deeply imprinted wrong conclusions and generalizations
- Blind reflexes rationalized and explained to prove they are based on choice vs. compulsion
- Cannot surrender or trust, because we are disconnected from our own inner knowing

Stage 2. Awareness

- Starts with becoming aware of the blind reflex mechanism
= blind automatism no longer exists
- Becoming conscious of error, deviation from truth
- Realization that we are / have been driven by false ideas

The transition from automatism to awareness is one of the most difficult that man passes through.

The Four Stages of Evolution: Automatic Reflex, Awareness, Understanding, Knowing PL 127

Shame as a Yardstick PL 117

The first topic is shame. This was discussed in the past in certain connections, such as the shame of the higher self or shame of certain shortcomings. Tonight I should like to discuss this topic from a very specific point of view.

When you pursue this path, you come to a point when you discover certain areas that you are ashamed of acknowledging even to yourself. What you may be ashamed of may be faults, but not always and not necessarily. You may be as ashamed of very legitimate needs as you are of faults, or of assets, for that matter. First, you are not even aware of the fact that such shames really exist. It takes a considerable amount of time and effort before you do become aware of certain facets within yourself of which you are deeply ashamed to face and which you cover with a pretense the reverse of your specific shame.

Slowly but surely, as the pathwork progresses in the right direction, you learn to face the shame only to yourself since you are not yet able to reveal it to others. When this phase is reached, a certain amount of self-deception has been eliminated.

Whatever your personal particular shame and consequent pretense may be varies. But whatever it is, when you come face to face with such an aspect, it takes a considerable amount of struggle and courage to admit what so far had been inadmissible. When the struggle has been overcome, a significant amount of inner freedom and ease has been reached.

It is important to remember that such a victory rarely occurs in one ultimate struggle. The process may have to be repeated because the psyche is not ready to face all its pretenses at once. The degree of shedding the pretense to oneself, and facing that which was regarded as too shameful to admit, results in the concomitant degree of emotional ease and comfort.

He who has reached the point of such self-admission can exactly pinpoint his shame, his pretense, his deception. He has indeed reached a major step in self-realization. Needless to say, he is way ahead, compared to the person who is as yet unaware of his shame and pretense and may therefore believe he has nothing to hide.

PL 117

Daily Review PL 28

Exercise: Keep a record of incidents that disturb you. Notice feelings of discomfort.

Each week, see if you can relate with the sub-topic. *Also see 2008 study guide on [PL 31 Shame and PL 66 Shame of the Higher Self](#) on Jan's websites and the [YouTube video presentation](#).*

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.

Summary of PL 117

Rosalie Chamberlain for the Pathwork Teachers Helper PTH

- 1. Discover areas** where ashamed of acknowledging:” Faults - Legitimate needs - Assets
- 2. Struggle to admit inadmissible-** inner freedom and eased reached when struggle overcome.
- 3. Major step in self-realization** reached at point where you can pinpoint shame, pretense, deception.
- 4. Yardstick of liberation** – degree of ease/emotion comfort you can discuss shame and see shame was illusion.
- 5. Way out** – First, become aware of what you have hidden from yourself – fully utilizing findings:

- If half measures, foggy, admit “I cannot yet bring myself to reveal and discuss this aspect.
- Forcing self will create guilt
- In daily review, explore and admit that you are uncomfortable to discuss
- Find out what you are ashamed of
- To what degree you tackle the issue
- Simply admit this or that causes shame
- Write down exact and precise terms and why you feel need to be ashamed
- Notice your reactions – restraints
- Accept present state and work on it in relaxed, self-accepting way – only acknowledgment.

Eternal Values vs. Temporary Values – *Question everything you accept or reject and find your own reasons for doing so – only way eternal values can be found. Coming into selfhood means not by claiming but rather by examining, feeling and living.*

Eternal Values	Temporary Values
Divine attributes – love, truth, wisdom, courage – what is good and constructive in long run for all concerned	Social, economic, political, geographical
May be pleasurable or un-pleasurable	Often held long after usefulness for which created
Independent thinking; one’s own conviction	Dependent thinking; self-alienation

Inner distortions caused from favorable and positive factors in childhood as well as hurts and frustrations.

Treatment of children often based on temporary value system.

- Restriction and severity was once generally accepted “right way”
- Recent times, permissiveness, lack of discipline, indulgence became norm

Problem: When permissiveness is due to guilt because of parents’ pent-up hostility, pleasurable indulgence and permissiveness creates problems in child’s psyche. Motivation needs to come from love, not guilt.

- Problem is psyche accustomed to indulgence and strives to duplicate pleasurable state.
- Inability to repeat what once had, causes hurt, anger, hostility.

Understanding entire personality depends on examining aspects in childhood experienced in pleasurable way.

- See where you strive to produce what you did not have; and
- See where you strive to produce what you did have.

Summary by Rosalie Chamberlain for the Pathwork Teachers Helper

Week 2: A Process for Finding Feelings of Shame

A 9 Step Process from PL 117:

- 1. Are you aware** of what you are ashamed? If you are not, you still have to find it. If you are, to what degree do you fully tackle this issue?
- 2. Take it in your self-confrontation**, all by yourself, and probe deeper, bringing out the issue of shame.
- 3. Do not try** to find immediate reasons and answers, explanations and justifications.
- 4. Simply admit** that this or that aspect causes you shame.
- 5. Write down** in exact and precise terms what it is and why you feel you need to be ashamed. The usual answer is always the fear of appearing less in the eyes of others, being less loveable and respectable, fearing belittlement and humiliation. But this general fact has to be specifically found and acknowledged as it applies to you.
- 6. Confront yourself** as to what degree you are able to discuss it. Observe your inner freedom of doing so if you succeed, perhaps only in degrees at this time.
- 7. Maintain the awareness of this issue.**
- 8. Do not force** revelation unduly (some force may be necessary at the beginning), but if you decide to wait, do not forget the issue.
- 9. Continue** in the meantime to observe daily reactions in respect to this issue. For you may be sure that your deep-rooted unresolved problem stands in direct relationship to your shame and inhibition and daily disharmonies. Problems directly or indirectly play into this facet. They need to be observed and recognized in this connection.

Exercise 2:

Each [hour you devote to process work] may give you an opportunity to open this particular door a little further. Each time, you will find it easier to discuss that which was formerly inadmissible.

[At the end of each hour], take notice of your reactions -- how far have you gone as compared with previous occasions in revealing yourself and how much do you still falsify and present a different front, be it ever so subtle?

Perhaps a good way to make a beginning may be to discuss with your [inner] helper that you still have such restraints and are as yet unwilling or unable to give them up. You may thus touch upon the general area of your shame without as yet going into detail. This may prepare the way and create the proper climate. It goes without saying that the "inadmissible" applies much less to certain facts in your past life that you do not wish to be known and much more to an emotional pretense, a falsification of personality. The latter is infinitely more important and more damaging. **You cannot begin to know how important this approach is for your progress and your inner health.**

The first stage on this particular road within the path is **becoming aware of what you have so far hidden from yourself**. When this is done to some degree, ask yourself if you have utilized such findings or whether you have allowed them to become hazy again. True liberation cannot come in such half measures.

It would be so much better and so vastly constructive for you to admit to yourself, *"I cannot yet bring myself to reveal and discuss this or that aspect of my personality."* Do not force yourself because if it is too forced, your anxiety and suffering will be such a strong countermeasure that the benefit may be lost. In such forceful measures, you cannot help but present it in a slightly distorted, untruthful, colored way.

This is more harmful than the free admission, *"I am not ready to reveal myself."* In this admission, you are honest. You do not use too much force. You do not breed guilt and therefore resentment. And you gauge your inner stand. This is infinitely better than a dutiful and harried self-discipline of doing something that you are not ready for.

Ascertain in your **daily review**, *"This or that factor brings me embarrassment. I feel too uncomfortable to discuss it."* Come to terms with this factor, instead of having the frequent attitude of being unwilling to face this restraint and therefore not facing the significance of this lack of freedom. Thereby you overlook what is so important to see -- **where do you stand, how far have you gotten, what remains to be accomplished toward this freedom from shame and pretense?** Come to terms with this restraint and inhibition, and say to yourself that perhaps in a week, in a month, in a year, you may get to this point. But in the meantime, observe yourself in this respect; and perhaps, little by little, by dribs and drabs, without forceful discipline, you will reveal more than you intended.

At the beginning, you will be uncomfortable and anxious, embarrassed and inhibited, but each time it becomes easier. Suddenly you will see that your entire shame was an illusion as you gain inner comfort while freely expressing that which seemed so shameful. That is your yardstick of liberation

I also advise those of my friends here who [want to help] others to be aware of this factor, not only in themselves, of course, but also as an issue in those whom they are helping. They should remember that to the degree that they are still unfree in this respect, to that degree they cannot expect this freedom and self-revelation from those whom they help. **It is so important to remember not to use a whip on yourself** by forcing and rejecting yourself in self-condemnation if you do not succeed, but to quietly observe yourself where you stand in this particular respect.

If anyone claims that there is no area within himself which he cannot freely discuss in emotional comfort, I say he has not even found it yet. He has not yet even seen to what degree he still lives in inhibition and self-deception. If you discover that you are not yet as far as you have thought because of such restraint, this should not make you uneasy, for if you go about it in the way I advised, accepting your present stand and working on it in a relaxed and self-accepting way, there need be no compulsion, no guilt, no impatience with yourself -- only acknowledgment.

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Week 3: Contradictions on Apparently Favorable Circumstances

The second topic I wish to discuss is something we have not really gone into before except in a fleeting way on various occasions.

For a long time in this work on understanding and resolving images, misconceptions, distorted unhealthy attitudes, in short, everything breeding problems in your life, we concentrated on unhappy, painful childhood events and conditions. We found that they were responsible for creating psychic conditions damaging to your self-unfoldment. Hurts and frustrations in childhood have been recognized as the cause for bringing out deeply imbedded problems in the personality. Now I would like to shed light on **the exact opposite**. Apparently favorable and positive factors in childhood can be equally responsible for inner distortions.

You may note that I said apparently favorable conditions. Man's evaluation of what is good or bad, constructive or destructive, right or wrong, is often tied in with what is momentarily pleasurable or un-pleasurable, on the one hand; and on the other hand, with what conforms to temporary, superimposed values.

On the one side, he may deem something as constructive and good **because it is pleasant for him.**

On the other side, he may deem the unpleasant as right **because it conforms** to superimposed, arbitrary value systems.

I sometimes mentioned the difference between eternal values as opposed to temporary values. Temporary values may remain the same throughout centuries and still be considered temporary by their nature of abiding with non-eternal valuations. They come into being because of the needs of a particular civilization and mankind's limitation in grasping eternal values. These needs are dictated by the conditions which the specific society lives in. Social, economic, political factors play a role; geography also does, as well as the type of spirit predominantly incarnated in this society. For example, values differ drastically in a patriarchy from those in a matriarchy. They differ in a monarchy and in a democracy. And many, many other factors contribute to make up the value system of a society.

Due to man's inclination and laziness, he blindly follows what is established and retains values for long after their temporary usefulness in the specific conditions for which these values were created. **Man's self-alienation, his lack of independent thinking, makes him cling to what is handed to him without thinking about it.**

This is why it is so important on this path to question everything you accept or reject and find your own reasons for doing so. **This is the only way eternal values can be found.** Each case, each incident, each issue must be tested and probed, questioned and sincerely answered from the depth of one's own convictions. They must be deeply examined. Then and then only can the divine attributes be truly found, not because everyone says so, because society agrees, but because one finds it so oneself. These divine attributes and eternal values are **unchangeable in themselves** but **constantly change in their application**. It is the exact opposite with temporary values.

Love, truth, wisdom, courage, what is good and constructive in the long run and therefore for all concerned, are the sole considerations of eternal values. To find these considerations cannot be done by blind acceptance. **Eternal values may be pleasurable and go against the temporary value system. And they may be un-pleasurable at the moment and go hand in hand with the temporary value system.**

In any personal choice and decision, in important and unimportant issues, in actions, and in emotional direction and attitudes, he is dependent on **whether or not the decision derives from the one or the other value system.**

There is no formula. Coming into selfhood means not by claiming but rather by examining, feeling, and living, "This is the way it is."

The value system regarding the treatment of children has undergone a drastic change in your society in recent times. Until a relatively short time ago, restriction and severity was the generally accepted "right way." Hence, man's unresolved problems entered into these rules, and he acted out his pent-up hostility under the pretext of following the existing value system.

In recent times, the accepted rules are permissiveness, lack of discipline, indulgence. This does not mean that the parent's pent-up hostility does not communicate itself to the child. But simultaneously, these new values cause the parents to feel doubly guilty for them. As a result, indulgence and permissiveness are then executed apparently so as to annul the hostility and so as to conform to the rules. This may outwardly appear as love. Real love may certainly exist as well. But **to the degree that it is diluted by guilt** for the hostility which is not recognized as well as by the guilt for not conforming to present values, to that degree **the pleasurable indulgence and permissiveness will create as many problematic conditions in the child's psyche as hurts and frustrations do.**

If parents are not exclusively motivated by love which is sufficiently far-sighted to restrict, if necessary, their guilt, then inner confusions and the inability to cope with the problems that a child represents will create an inner disturbance. **In order to atone for the common human failings such as impatience, irritation, etc., the child may be overindulged and pampered.** The child may experience this as something favorable and pleasurable at the moment, but the negative effect remains.

Again, it is not the act nor its consequence alone which create the damage, but the guilt, confusion, and conflict in the parents. The identical act may in one case derive from such overindulgence, and in the other from a clear, unconfused psyche. The effect on the child depends on whether it is the one or the other. Moreover, it is the child's inborn health or its lack which determines whether it is affected by the parent's unresolved problems. This applies not only to inflicted hurt, but equally on pleasurable overindulgence. It, too, will have no adverse effect on the child's psyche if no corresponding problems exist.

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Exercise 3: *Expand your personal exploration of this teaching to a variety of parent/child relationships; yours with your parents; intergenerational disputes between family members; old fashioned types of therapy vs. new age approaches, where the client is trying to learn a new approach to life from what they perceive as an more experienced, wiser model; and religions in terms of their reliance upon hierarchy.*

Week 4: The Compulsion to Recreate Childhood Pleasures

Now let us examine the specific effects of apparently pleasurable circumstances such as permissiveness, pampering, indulgence.

The psyche gets accustomed to it, and when life later prohibits similar indulgence, the personality is still driven to duplicate the pleasurable state it once enjoyed. He seeks that which he experienced as love during childhood over and over again, but he cannot find it because other people, not bound in guilt, will have no need to atone and therefore no need to extend such treatment. **The inability to repeat what he once had causes hurt, anger, and hostility.** The insistence upon having the protection and real as well as pseudolove enjoyed in childhood are connected with and dependent upon the hurts and frustrations suffered.

In other words, just as the parent may overindulge as a substitute for inner irritation and rejection of the problems a child brings, so may the child use the compulsive need for overindulgence as a substitute for the negative currents in the parents that he unconsciously feels -- and sometimes even outwardly experiences in a more or less direct way.

It is time, my dear friends, that we now begin to examine those aspects in your childhood which you experienced in a pleasurable way. It took considerable insight into yourself to uncover the hurts and frustration. **A child is apt to take for granted as permanent** that which exists in his life. If he is hurt, he may suffer from it, rebel against it, but it is nevertheless an accepted fact the child cannot evaluate in objective terms. It is a general climate. **It is the same with those pleasurable aspects.** The child may enjoy them, but is no more aware of them than he may be of the hurts. Both are aspects of the general climate the child does not question in spite of enjoyment or pain. Therefore **it needs considerable probing and examination** to become specifically aware of these elements. The experience of the past work pertaining to the hurts and pain during childhood will now prove useful in that it will be easier to become aware of the opposite. But it does require attention, concentration, and self-examination.

When you make some headway in this respect, you will discover how important it is to understand the totality of your present personality, how much it plays a role in your mental and emotional makeup. **You will see how you strive to reproduce not only that which you did not have, but also that which you did have.** In other words, man not only attempts to correct his past lacks, but also perpetuate that which he has had. And this angle is vastly overlooked in the exploration of human psychic disturbance. These words are once more a proof that the conduct is not the criterion for the right and constructive act, but rather it is the inner conditions, motivations, and the underlying unification of the psyche.

Be on the lookout for the following. To the degree that you felt unloved, to that degree guilt-love will have damaged you. Both play a role only because psychic unrealities were already in you before you were born into this life. You will see that a great deal of anger and resentment exist not only for that which you did not have, but also for what you did have and wish to continue having.

PL 117

Combining Shame as a Yardstick + Recreating Childhood Pleasures

Let me now show you, in principle, the connection between the damage of pleasurable childhood experience and shame.

If a human being wants to reproduce pleasurable conditions in later life, **it indicates the desire to remain a child**, on the receiving line. It indicates greed and lack of self-responsibility. This may be inadmissible for some, particularly those who pride themselves on being mature and adult. Most people wish to be so regarded while desiring as well the advantages of adulthood. The desire to be a child, as well as anger for the frustration, must create a shame. This tendency often contradicts completely the ideal which is superimposed, the front which is presented to the world and to the conscious self.

As you know, the **Idealized Self-Image** denies all limitations. It pretends possessing all which the personality feels lacking. **The pretense of the idealized self is the crux of the matter.** The pretense not only hides what the child felt to be missing in its life, but also what it has had and wants to continue having. If you examine your idealized self, this double pretense must be found.

The opposite of this pretense lies underneath. To reveal it seems like a dreadful admission. **You cannot discover the shame if you do not envisage the exact opposite of your pretense.** The consideration of the exact opposite of the idealized self-image should now be taken into this work -- by all of you. This must be the shame, which also connects with certain pleasurable circumstances in childhood.

Perhaps you were praised for certain real or partly real qualities you yourself suspect as not possessing in the measure that your parents claimed for you. Or maybe you only think these qualities are absent because they are still too diluted with your various self-doubts and distortions in various ways.

If you really study this lecture and work through it, I promise that your liberation and progress will be considerable. This will indeed be the crux of that which makes you suffer, of that which alienates you from life and yourself, of that which makes you puzzled and confused. With this, you have a direct key, my dearest friends, each and every one of you, each in a different way.

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Exercise 4: Explore your Idealized Self-Image PL 83 (see 2008 [study guide](#) & [audio presentation](#)). In masking imperfections with the illusion of perfection, the ISI creates deep shame. This shame can cripple your positive intent to grow and transform.

Appendix: Participatory Q&A Session with the Guide

This section is from the 'unedited' version of the lecture.

The Guide often invited questions at the end of a lecture, and a Q&A session was usually scheduled a fortnight after each formal lecture. Questions on any topic were welcomed, including personal process work. Later, readers of the lectures (who had not experienced the community aspects of Pathwork meetings and study groups) were often confused about what was being asked or why so many different topics were brought up. These Q&A sessions are very difficult to index by topic, yet can be very helpful insights into working with the concepts.

John and Judith Saly developed an edited version of the lectures that was completed in 1996. Only these edited versions are available to the general public. The free version of this lecture contains a single question and answer.

Sometimes questions would trigger a mini-lecture on a new topic, and the Q&A session was given a formal title. Some were sub-numbered (PL 23qa) and some were given their own number (PL 25qa, for which there is no PL 25. These Q&A sessions are included in the additional materials.

The Unedited Versions plus a number of additional materials are available online to members the Pathwork Foundation who pay dues annually in order to support the Pathwork Foundation website, or by purchasing a CD-Rom disc. See www.pathwork.org.

I encourage you to use this section as a basis for discussion or reflection:

What issues resonate?

What do you understand or not understand from the Guide's answers?

What questions would you ask?

Q&A section of PL 117:

It may be constructive, my friends, if I now let you participate. Can any of you see a connecting link? Who has an idea?

QUESTION 1: I think it would be a very shameful feeling not to be grateful for what was meant to be good if you didn't feel it was good or if you were given something you did not want.

ANSWER: This may be quite true, but actually what I was referring to was not that you were given something which you did not want, but something which you very much enjoyed, but which you were perhaps just as unaware of as of a hurt. I did not mean something not wanted.

QUESTION 2: If a girl loves her father very much and asks for the same love in a man, later the child may experience the love for the father almost in a sexual way. Then she wants the same love from the man but can't get it; then she may have a shame in this respect.

ANSWER: This is a good example.

QUESTION 3: I have a feeling if parents are neglectful in some ways and, through their guilt, are particularly indulgent toward a child when it is sick, the child will want the sickness in order to get the love. Later in life, when the person is sick, he will be disappointed and hurt

when the love is not forthcoming. At the same time, he will be ashamed for using sickness to get love.

ANSWER: This is a good example, too.

QUESTION 4: You may also be ashamed when you are told you are loved as a child, but don't feel it.

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION 5: Shame is always connected with guilt, isn't it?

ANSWER: Not always. They may go together, but it is also possible to feel shame without guilt, and guilt without shame.

QUESTION 6: When the child receives an allowance and he feels guilty for keeping it while not actually deserving it, he later feels shame for receiving a salary.

ANSWER: Such a case requires further understanding why this guilt and shame for having received an allowance exists.

QUESTION 7: I know a case of an adopted child. Here the parents gave the child too much leeway, continuously admiring him. This was probably due to lack of real love. Later when the child was about eighteen years old, he became even more demanding, and the parents could not gratify these demands. I think the child was ashamed of not having his real parents.

ANSWER: This may be so. These are partly good examples. Such participation will help you to assimilate better.

QUESTION: If a child was a favorite and in a privileged position, is it that later he may unconsciously claim a similar privileged position -- that he may want special consideration?

ANSWER: Yes, indeed. This may be absolutely unconscious, for it may be diametrically opposed to one's idealized self.

If the child held this special position because it was a good child, this goodness is then an integral part of the idealized self. Goodness means also self-sacrifice and unselfishness. Yet this contradicts the claim for special treatment. In this inner confusion, so much is repressed, and the more this is the case, the less clarification can be gotten.

When all these various inner demands and attitudes are out in the open, the clarification, liberation, and relief must be great.

PL 117

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