

Pathwork™ Steps

Love: Not a Commandment, but Spontaneous Soul Movement of the Inner Self

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 133

Week 1: The Power of Love

Week 2: Two Basic Misunderstandings

Week 3: Distortions Form an Energetic “Foreign Body”

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Week 1: The Power of Love

All religions, all philosophies, and all psychology agree that love is the key to everything, to fulfillment, to security, to creative growth.

And yet, love cannot be commanded, nor can it be a commandment. It is a free, spontaneous soul movement. The more it is tried, due to conscience and obedience, the less does it succeed.

Unreality breeds disharmony. Where there is disharmony, there is no love. The circle closes. Where there is no love, there can be no fulfillment.

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Exercise 1a: Do you believe in the Power of Love?

This work requires rigorous, scrupulous honesty. Before you can be aided in becoming more loving, it is important to uncover any resistance to love itself.

Ask yourself several times a day in various circumstances: do you really believe that Love has the power to change anything?

Notice all your feelings no matter how mild or minor they seem at the time.

Saying no only means that your doubts may diminish your own ability to *open to* the Power of love, rather than affecting the inherent divine Power *of* Love.

Where love exists, there must be all fulfillment. Where lack of fulfillment exists in a life, it is a sure sign that, somewhere, the soul has not yet learned to love. This simple equation is often overlooked although the words may be understood in a general sense.

When love exists, there must be physical health, which is one of the great desirable factors in human life. Love is a purifying force. When love is lacking, to that degree, all sorts of negative emotions cause ill health when the trouble remains sufficiently long unrecognized.

Where love exists, there must be successful human relationships because there is no fear, no distrust, no illusion. For, love can flower only on the substantial soil of reality and fearlessness. Where one perceives the truth, one does not trust or distrust in the wrong place.

One accepts the other as he is and adjusts one's own feelings to this reality. There is no necessity for groping in the dark, fearfully half trusting, half distrusting, being thrown between one's needs and one's fears.

Love and self-confidence are inevitably interdependent. Where love is lacking, the psyche must be confused. It works in both ways -- it is equally true to state that where confusion exists, love must be lacking.

When love exists, all conflict must be eliminated. The personality finds the fine borderline between apparent extremes or between the healthy and distorted versions of an attitude, an expression of feelings and values -- for example, healthy aggressiveness without deviating into unhealthy aggressiveness or hostility. Nor is there confusion between the alternatives of submissiveness and dominating self-will. You will know when to assert your rights, without hostility and false aggression and against unjustified demands whose fulfillment are destructive for all concerned. Nor will you be driven to stubborn rebelliousness because conceding always appears like submissive, humiliating giving in.

It is only through love that these precarious balances are achieved. These fine balances come automatically through the heart's ability to love, but remain elusive when intellectual understanding tries to find the golden mean, no matter how arduously it is sought.

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Exercise 1b: Are you personally willing to unleash the power of Love into your life?

Consider the Guide's words as promises: that love will bring you all fulfillment, good health, successful human relationships, self-confidence, and dissolution of all conflict.

Notice all your feelings when reading these words, even your tiniest reactions such as a physical contraction or lack of desire for such fulfillments.

What would it cost you to test these words by acting in a more loving manner? Write down any protests or objections. See if you can come up with a 'cost' for believing in them.

What would it be worth to you if they are true, and fulfillment in all of these areas was possible? Would it be worth the cost you have written down?

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-topic.

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 columns:

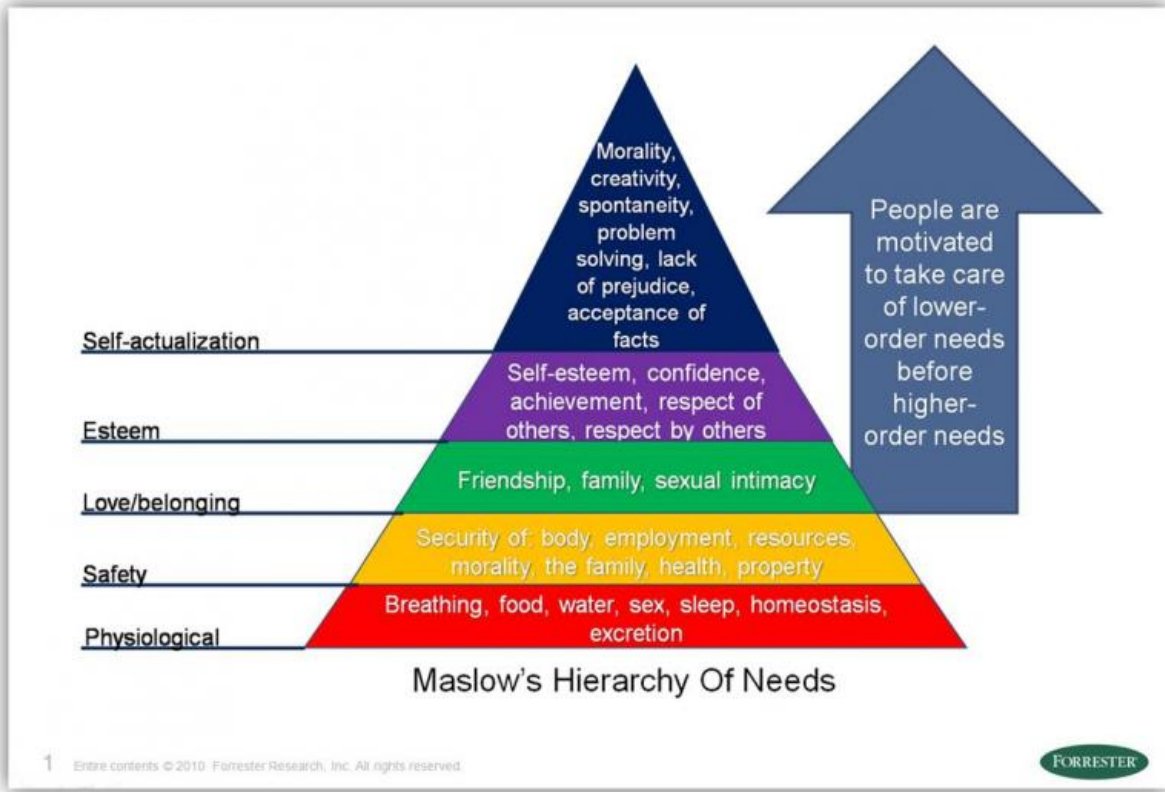
4. What do you notice today that you did not notice at the time? Are there patterns?
5. Using your preferred form of meditation (sitting, walking, or while doing 'mindless' chores) reflect upon your early childhood experiences.

Week 2: Two Basic Misunderstandings

Man shies away from and is afraid of nothing more than allowing himself to love. Loving seems such a risk, so dangerous, so threatening, so irrevocable.

Nothing could be further from the truth. But he builds elaborate defenses, and he flees. He not only flees from involvement and contact with others, or from facing faults and destructive attitudes in himself, but primarily from allowing himself to love. This prohibition causes all other ills.

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Exercise 2a: Connect Your Unfulfillments to Your Unloving

The Guide states that Love can create fulfillment in health, relationships, self-confidence, and reduced conflicts. For each area of your life that doesn't feel fulfilled,

- Write that topic at the top of a piece of paper.
- Divide the paper into 5 sections, and title them using the Maslow Hierarchy of 5 Needs.
- Consider that your unfulfillment may be due to a lack of love / loving intent on your part, regardless of any actions by others. Write down how or why you are not loving in this area, connecting your unloving / decision not to love to the different levels of need.
- Then consider: what are the loving alternatives here?

(see Carolyn Hax column below for an example of alternative thinking)

Carolyn Hax Advice Column
Washington Post August 13, 2018

Dear Carolyn:

My sister-in-law, "Mary," has always been a mess. She has two kids with two different men who never see them and don't pay child support, and she doesn't work. Mary and her children lived with my mother-in-law, "Kate," until Kate moved into a 55-plus community and told Mary she was on her own. Mary has been living with her boyfriend since then.

A few weeks ago — not for the first time — Mary unexpectedly dumped the kids (5 and 3) on my husband, "Dan," and me, saying she was going on a trip. This week she texted us that she's staying where she is and that we should send the kids to live with her mom. Kate, of course, can't take them.

Now Dan is talking about assuming permanent custody. They are sweet but energetic, and love it here since they have a yard and stability. Mary will jump at the chance to get rid of them.

I know these little ones need us but this is not how I saw us building our family, and will delay our having our own children. While I am trying to do the right thing I am crying inside. If I turn these children away I'll feel like a monster, but if I take them in I'll feel like a martyr. What to do? — *Crying Inside*

Crying Inside:

I feel for you, and know exactly how hard it is when something you've counted on, even lived for, won't happen. It's a kind of grief.

But I disagree that your only choices are monster or martyr. "Mom" is available.

And I've come to see "how I saw us _____," whether it's "building our family" or "starting our careers" — or any future we envision — as a false promise at best. We can want and dream and plan, but life always gets its say. Always.

And so I see the path to happiness not as the milestones we strive for, but as a mind open to the opportunities, even beauty, in what we receive.

This "will delay . . . our own children" — yes — but these can soon become your own children, too, thereby accelerating vs. delaying your promotion to parent. These kids need you and are attached to you already, and their chance to grow up in a loving and safe environment isn't just a gift for them. It's a gift for you. It will get you outside of yourself, it will give you sharply illuminated purpose, it will produce two planets to your sun — at least until they are independent, which is also a gift to you in the form of a sense of accomplishment.

Is it Plan A? No. Will it be easy? No. These kids have been raised indifferently, and you can expect some emotional fallout. But everything worth doing takes a piece out of us — that's what makes it so, the investment of an essential part of you.

Absolutely do go cry it out with friends or a therapist even, but when you're ready, please open yourself to the possibility that life just gave you more than it took away.

Re: Kids: Please get legal advice. Protect yourselves and them in case Mary decides she wants to take them back even for a limited time.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/carolyn-hax-sister-in-law-has-dumped-her-kids-try-to-embrace-embracing-them/2018/08/12/adfaac20-9cdb-11e8-843b-36e177f3081c_story.html?utm_term=.2d080cc09e0d&wpisrc=nl_hax&wpmm=1

Prohibition against loving is the result of two basic misunderstandings:

1. Misinterpretation of reality, or illusion

Where illusion exists, confusion results and therefore a host of negative emotions such as fear, hostility, separateness, self-pity, ambivalence, vindictiveness. Hence, love becomes impossible.

It is unthinkable that when man is in reality within his innermost concepts, perceptions, and value system, that he could be afraid of loving.

2. Underestimation of the self, inferiority feelings

Off hand, this may sound almost paradoxical. Superficially viewed, it certainly seems possible not to think much of oneself without impairment of one's ability to love. And yet, my friends, this is not so.

For when you underestimate yourself, in that moment you cannot possibly perceive the other person as real. By dint of your feelings of helpless weakness and inadequacy, others assume the role of giants against whom you defend yourself by rejecting, resenting, or despising them. Even when the latter is the case, it still does not occur to you to sense the other's vulnerability, his human needs. His strengths as well as his weaknesses become distorted and discolored.

Both represent hostile elements, hostile to you personally. Therefore it forces you into a hostile role no matter how this is camouflaged by outer submissiveness which, in itself, may appear as lovingness. Because you think so little of yourself, you do not evaluate the importance of your actions and reactions.

The two misunderstandings create the barriers and the apparent danger to love. It is these two factors that make the human heart so timid and so reticent.

The overcaution to love creates withdrawal and isolation. Many an individual is half willing, but this half willingness denies love rather than affirms it. It makes all sorts of conditions and provisions. There are always so many if's and but's.

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Exercise 2b: Practice your analysis skills

Find several instances where you misinterpret reality based upon your images or illusions. Notice where you jump to conclusions, make assumptions, interpret based upon self-interest, yet pretend that you are operating on a factual basis. Everyone does this at one time or another!

Find several instances where you act as if others have powers they do not have, where you submit because you feel weak or inadequate compared to them. What is the truth?

Consider, what would love do in each of these incidents? How and why would a loving attitude towards all parties create a different response?

Relate or respond to some situations based upon love. Notice any changes in your attitude or the attitudes of others.

Week 3: Distortions Form an Energetic “Foreign Body”

Through the lack of love -- which is a result of illusion and confusion, distorted perception and lack of self-evaluation -- disturbed interaction and disharmony follow. These disturbed emotions and distorted perceptions form a nucleus, almost like a foreign body.

The original being, as it was created, knows nothing of these disturbances. Its nature is love, a fearless state of abundance, of positiveness, of productivity and expansion, of meaningful growing -- in and with the universe. Its natural state is the wisdom that comes from being in reality and from perceiving reality. The nucleus, this foreign body, prohibits the soul from being in its natural state -- the state it is born with and born to.

Man struggles and fights against this foreign body in a wrong way. He senses its existence and wants to rid himself of it, but the choice by which this is attempted is often tragically the opposite of what leads to successful elimination of it. He struggles by denial and flight, by forcing away and superimposing -- as you all know.

But knowing it and having heard these words from me many times has not yet opened the door in many cases. A few of my friends who follow this path do not see that, in spite of being willing, their struggle is against acknowledgment of this foreign body. They often find themselves in an interim state between giving up the shackles that have covered this foreign body so far, and not yet quite being able to muster the courage of acknowledging, in its full significance, all that is part of it.

The fact that this foreign body is denied and looked away from causes more misery than the admission of it. Now, man feels that he has to deny this foreign body because of the teachings of truth and love which he misunderstands in application. Instead of ridding himself of the foreign body, for which purpose it is necessary to closely look at it, understand its nature and the reason for its having come into existence, he acts as though it does not exist and superimposes still another foreign matter on to the soul substance.

Why is it so difficult to acknowledge this foreign body? Not only because of fear that others will find fault and reject him, but the basic fear really is that man is confused and frightened that the foreign body may be the ultimate of himself.

So he struggles against admission of that which is actually foreign to his real nature. But he does not know this. He thinks, fears, suspects the foreign substance is he -- the ultimate. And therefore struggle ensues. PL 133

Exercise 3a: Finding a personal experience of what the Guide means by ‘foreign body’

Can you relate to any sensation, at any time, of a ‘foreign body’ of resistance within? Explore moments when you were defensive, in denial, or when you rejected yourself or others.

Look at any area of your life where you have identified there is a lack of fulfillment. If you were asked to be more loving there, what feelings or sensations come forward?

Such questions require a strenuous commitment to honestly search for feelings that we may have repressed or denied for many years. Allow yourself some time here.

The Paradox of Surrender

Man cannot come to that vital part of himself, that inner being, which responds not out of a must, but out of a natural, unquestioned "I want to." When the latter happens, the response is free and in such utter rightness, without any conflict, that before this vital live-center within is experienced, it is hard to conceive. The foreign substance covers this experience of the real self, the vital live-center with all its spontaneous, loving intelligence, its unconflicting and unconflicted fulfillment. But he fears this vital step so necessary to liberate himself from the substance which is not compatible with his real nature because he anticipates it is the final answer to himself, to who he is.

Now, my friends, many of you have already more or less advanced in certain areas and have succeeded, to some degree, to strip yourself of the superimposition, the pseudogoodness, the pseudolove. But you have not yet quite succeeded in seeing that these pretenses are pretenses because you fear that underneath the pretense is nothing but the opposite of love, that there is no further reality.

So you cannot experience the truth of your genuine lovingness, your genuine generous nature, unless you take the seeming risk of exploring yourself as to whether the foreign substance causing you so much misery is the ultimate you or whether you find the promised land underneath. Only by diligently taking stock of your nonlove can you spontaneously feel your love. Only by painstakingly taking stock of your selfishness can you truly convince yourself of your potential unselfishness.

This requires the courage that comes into being when you reach out for it and when you love truth more than anything else -- the truth of encountering yourself as you are.

Exercise 3b: Take your daily reactions of disharmony and meditate in the following sense:

"If I am in disharmony, somewhere in me there must be misinterpretation. I wish to see the truth. If I resist, I declare that my will to be in truth is stronger than the resistance."

Such a meditation, my friends, must give you the results you wish.

Then you will come to the point where you clearly feel the foreign body as just that.

When you have experienced this -- first only occasionally and weakly, to lose it again and to doubt the reality of the few moments of bliss, later more often and more lasting, commensurate with the victories over your resistance -- you will come to feel that the disturbed area is foreign matter. This stage is significant and indicates good progress.

Exercise 3c: Acknowledging your present state instead of running away from it

To counteract the danger of continuous evasion -- and therefore continuous misery -- the assertion of the following statement must help greatly:

"I am afraid that what I find may be the ultimate of me. Is it or is it not? I will take the chance of finding out, for only such clarity will bring me peace."

My doubt allows for the possibility that there may be more in me than either the pretense or that which is so hard to look at and which I try to shift away from myself in so many ways."

Week 4: Feeling All Our Feelings

It is not the problem itself or the conflict or even the misconception which create turmoil in your soul, but it is your running away from yourself; your not being in the immediate now; your fighting and struggling against it in an unconstructive way; your nonacknowledgment of the immediate now that causes so much soul hardship.

If you remember these words, you will be able to take up the struggle in an ever increasing constructive, successful, and effective way, and therefore you will be nearer to loving because reality and loving are much more interconnected than self-righteous trying and loving are.

QUESTION 1: I am no longer so afraid and frightened, but still something is bothering me. Deep inside I know that I am not afraid, and yet, on a more superficial level, I seem to think that I am. Is that what you were talking about?

ANSWER: Yes, indeed, exactly. It is part of it. You see, you seem to function on two levels simultaneously, as it were. This is a typical experience a person goes through when transcending the foreign body and beginning to experience and sense this other reaction coming from his real self.

The fact that you so often and consistently acknowledged your fear makes you lose it eventually. When you did so -- first even without understanding why, and later going from one to another level, and realizing the true nature of this fear -- it lessened. This is what you now experience.

QUESTION 2: How can I now completely get rid of the fear? Because sometimes I seem to shift the fear to something else.

ANSWER: The moment you shift it onto something else, you again get away from the reality of the immediate now, and therefore new attempts have to be made to get back to the reality of your feelings. What is also often the case with you is that you substitute fear for another emotion so that when you are in fear, you do not face your real emotion. With others it may be the opposite.

Let us suppose a human being would exist who is entirely free. Hence, the inner being is constantly manifest, functioning, and expressing. This tremendous power of the life force would flow into all directions. Since he is free, there is no fear of the unknown, therefore there is no blockage to the free flowing energy current and the vast possibilities of creation and expansion.

Man is so used to holding his forces together, afraid of this expansion. He fears it will pull him apart. Not only does it not pull him apart, it unifies him. The great spiritual laws always seem contradictory. This great possibility is frightening, for the soul constantly is used to holding itself together. To follow through the natural flow brings the soul into the great unity.

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QUESTION 3: So aggression is sometimes a good thing?

ANSWER: Yes, there is a healthy aggression. There exists healthy anger. This is a by-product of the interim stage of human nature. Healthy anger must occasionally exist in a well-integrated life. Healthy anger does not dissipate or weaken the personality. Healthy anger does not create inner disharmony. It is a great misunderstanding to ignore or deny this fact, which comes from the artificial holding together of one's inner forces and from superimposing forced, false goodness. Fear and obedience lead to the impression that occasional anger never exists in a truly spiritually evolved person.

On the human realm, it is, as I have said, a necessity. Without it, there would be no justice and no progress. The destructive forces would take over. Allowing this to happen amounts to weakness, not love; to fear, not goodness; to appeasement and furthering abuse, not constructive living. It destroys harmony rather than furthering it. It destroys healthy growth.

To the extent an individual is capable of experiencing and expressing real love, to exactly that degree is he capable of manifesting constructive, healthy anger. Both come from the inner self.

Any real feeling, whether love or anger or all of the many other feelings in existence, are healthy, constructive, growth furthering in self and others. They cannot be forced, commanded, or superimposed. They are a spontaneous expression, happening as an organic, natural result of self-confrontation.

QUESTION 4: In that case, you would permit physical violence?

ANSWER: No, healthy anger does not necessarily manifest in physical violence. Expression of negative emotions, even when they are not healthy, need not in the least lead to destructive acts, whether they be physical or otherwise.

This is one of the most frequent and hindering misconceptions on the path, which needs so much reiteration. This is why I mention it again and again ever since the beginning; because no matter how many times I have said it, it is forgotten.

The inner psyche fears that acknowledgment of negative emotions must lead to acting them out. This is not so. On the contrary, you are free to choose your act -- whether or not, how and when -- to express any emotion only when you are fully aware. When you are not aware of what you really feel and why, you are constantly driven and suffer from all sorts of compulsions you cannot understand. A compulsion is the direct result of unacknowledged, unconscious feelings and conditions.

The more you know yourself, the more you are in control of your self, not, as you fear, "I cannot look at myself in candor because then I may have to let out these undesirable impulses and do harm to others and therefore ultimately to myself." This vague reaction has to be brought to the surface, too, in order to dispel it and render it ineffective.

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Exercise 4: Please reiterate this in your daily meditation, all of you:

"Awareness of what I feel, no matter how undesirable it may be, will make me free. I will have the choice of my action only to the degree of my awareness. If I choose to verbally express these feelings when there is a good purpose, such as with my helper, I will do so. If I feel that such expression may impair a relationship, I will not do so, but withhold knowingly without self-deception."

Such meditation will strengthen the knowledge and finally penetrate the more hidden and resistant layers.

QUESTION: Regarding expression of anger, I find it unbearable....

ANSWER: Sometimes it is inadvisable, sometimes it is advisable. This is what I mean. You have the choice. When you are not aware, you do not have a choice. Paradoxical as this may seem again, the more you willingly choose restraint, according to alert reasoning and constructive motivations, the freer you become. It is not, as might be supposed, the less self-restraint, the freer the person.

The more direct you are in the awareness of what you really feel, and can express it if you so choose, the more do you avoid detours and evasion. I might say this directness of reaching the core of one's feelings or reactions, thereby understanding their true significance, is the art and the aim of this pathwork. If your aim is finished perfection, you still find yourself in perfectionism, thus hindering your progress. But if your aim becomes *"What is it I really feel at this moment?"* then you have a realistic aim, leading to instant release, truth, harmony, and dynamic progress.

Again, a seeming contradiction, the more man goes to the spot of what happens to be true now, the more he grows into real perfection. The more he strains away from what he now feels, thinks, and how he now is, in an attempt to be more than he happens to be in this instant, the less he grows toward this desired goal. These words I have just expressed should also be used in daily meditation because they are a key for all of you.

Where there is fear of expressing a *justified* anger, to that degree there must be fear of loving. Behind both of them is confusion, misconception, illusion. It is these misinterpreted hurts and pains which cause the nucleus that I was talking about. When there is this insecurity that makes a person too anxious to express justified anger, he is as yet incapable of feeling healthy anger.

If you continue to maintain the struggle, and seek the right struggle, you must experience the beauty of the universe, the truth of being, which knows no conflict, which combines love, loving and receiving one's full share of happiness.

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