

# Pathwork™ Steps

## Perceiving, Reacting, Expressing

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 166

**Week 1: Freedom = Facing + Experiencing + Expressing**

**Week 2: A Threshold of Spiritual Development**

**Week 3: Threefold Principle of Relationship**

**Week 4: Self-Love Empowers Relationship**

**Week 1: Freedom = Facing + Experiencing + Expressing**

Every living creature's aim is to free the eternal spirit. This aim may be unconscious in many, but this does not alter the fact. The burden of the encrustations is heavy, and everyone feels this heaviness. Everyone longs for the brightness and lightness of the spirit that dwells deep within the encrustations so as to truly come into his birthright. This pathwork is very actively concerned with fulfilling this longing.

The living spirit you are, which is perpetually waiting to unfold itself in creative and joyful living and well-being, is contained and held back by condensed emotions, by powerful feelings you do not wish to experience.

It is not the nature of those feelings themselves that creates the heavy condensed crust, but the fact that you deny their temporary reality in you. This heavy mass is the burden you carry around. It imprisons you to the exact degree that you fear letting out this mass and letting it unfold. Only then can it dissolve. This fear must be overcome. No human being born into this limited environment and into the conditions prevailing in this sphere of existence is free from a conglomerate of strong negative feelings.

The way out of this predicament seems to be to deny the existence of the feelings. This seems the only alternative. But the more these feelings are denied, the greater their power becomes.

The spirit self cannot manifest when any part of the inner organism is feared, denied expression, and tightly held together. When you have the courage to experience the pain, the agony, the anger, the violence, and the helplessness, you will truly come to see that it is not at all bottomless, endless, and that this is not all there is to your inner life of feelings. You will see that there is an end. The end is that the living energy of all those feelings you wish to avoid becomes vital, living feelings of love, of joy, of pleasure.

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**Exercise 1a part 1 of 2:** Spend a few moments connecting to your deepest innermost longing.

Say, "*I do not know and I would like to know.*" And the inner knowing, the inner experience of a vaster truth must come from within yourself. And it can come from within yourself only to the extent you are willing to see truth. PL 66QA

You may, at first, only find a sense of heaviness or resistance - the condensed crust that you created to 'protect' your longing, a process that began in early childhood. Allow your longing the time and space it needs to 'bloom'. The conscious mind does not control this process; but it can invite, accommodate, and facilitate.

**Exercise 1a Part 2 of 2:** Try to find some way to capture the essence of what you are sensing.

See if you can expand your spiritual ‘vocabulary’ to sensory experiences, memories, or visualizations. Find pictures or objects that you instantly connect with and place them where you can see them every day – on your bedside table, near a sink, or on a door you use several times a day. Make a drawing, or a collage of images. Write a few cryptic words or short phrases on post-it notes, and place these in various locations in your home and workplace. Only you need to know what these mean!

### **The Brain Interprets Smell like the Notes of a Song - Scientific American**



In the deep recesses of the nose are millions of sensory neurons that, along with our eyes and ears, help conjure the world around us. When stimulated by a chemical with a smell, or an odorant, they send nerve impulses to thousands of clusters of neurons in the glomeruli, which make up the olfactory bulb, the brain’s smell center. Different patterns of glomerular activation are known to generate the sensation of specific odors. Firing one set of glomeruli elicits the perception of pineapples; firing another evokes pickles.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-brain-interprets-smell-like-the-notes-of-a-song/>

### **Love is the Key**

A second point of awareness must also be faced, in order to become completely capable of the courage necessary to plunge into those frightening feelings. Without this second point of awareness, it can, at best, be only a halfhearted attempt.

As a result of all the hopelessness and agony, in the rage that develops as a consequence -- **you have decided, deep inside of you, to turn away** from life, love, and the desire to contribute positively to life. It is this kind of negativity that makes the courage to experience the destructive feelings so perilous.

For as long as it is a fact that you do not want to love -- to give the best of yourself, to forgive and forget what harm life seems to have inflicted on you, that you do not want to generously risk of yourself, in giving of yourself, on the deepest possible level, where no deception can exist -- **there can be no safety in anything you do**. It will be unsafe to hide from yourself, as it will be unsafe to express what is in you.

The key to safety, security, and all the other treasures of life is love. As long as you refuse to forgive and wish to be resentful with life, and therefore with people and with events, you will close yourself up to all the good that wants to flow from you into the world and from the world into you.

As long as this negativity exists, the courage to face, experience, and express the destructive feelings cannot be completely mustered. Therefore these two points [ must be alternately and at times simultaneously worked through. The causal connection between these two points must be clearly understood.

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### **Daily Review PL 28**

<http://www.janrigsby.org/files/PDF/028-DailyReview-Suggestions.pdf>

**Exercise 1b:** Keep a daily record of how, where, and when you withhold love. Become familiar with your resentments and protests. Awareness will lead to understanding, and understanding will eventually become a knowing. Ref. [PL 127 Four Stages of Spiritual Evolution](#)

## Week 2: A Threshold of Spiritual Development

The result of letting the feelings out is an experience of new life, a surge of new spiritual life.

The result of avoiding the feared area is disastrous. It paralyzes your best faculties. If you avoid these feelings, you cannot really live in the true unfoldment of the eternal, living, breathing spirit that you are, from which unlimited good flows into your whole being, into your entire life.

Your spirit self has all the power. The spirit self cannot manifest when any part of the inner organism is feared, denied expression, and tightly held together. Thus living becomes a poor imitation of what it could be and should be. Most human beings somehow sense that, but few have the courage to admit it to themselves and do something about it. Somehow they know that what they experience cannot be all that is to life.

When you approach the threshold where you meet the apparently uncontrollable agony, pain, hopelessness, and violent anger, and where you also meet your fear of not being able to ever exhaust these negative feelings nor of being able to handle them, then you have to make a vital decision. This decision is to bring your reason to bear on this entire question:

- 1) whether to **deny** the existence of these emotions,
- 2) or to **meet and experience them**, let them out into the open, with the constructive view ahead of learning how to handle them from here on.

This also requires a modicum of trust in the world of which you are a part, that there is no bad as such. If this is ever true, it must also hold true of distorted, destructive emotions. And since it is true, you can experience it only as a reality when you give yourself the chance to do so.

Your reason will also tell you, once you think about it, that what exists in you is by no means annulled simply because you look away from it, because you act as though it did not exist and thus live a life of strenuous pretense at the expense of all the vital energy and life force.

Without this energy, the depth of experience you long for cannot ever be yours, no matter what you pin your hopes on. You may flock to this or that panacea, this or that new spiritual approach, always in the vague hope that it will open the gates to life, the full and vital life you somehow know you miss out on. All of these must let you down in the end, for they are evasions, born in the hope that you will not have to dissolve the hard mass of tightly packed feelings of violence and pain.

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**Kubler Ross: Seven Stages of Grief** extended slightly \*\* from the original, which does not explicitly include the Shock and Testing stages. However, these stages are often useful to understand and facilitate change.

Shock: \*\* Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news

Denial: Trying to avoid the inevitable

Anger: Frustrated outpouring of bottled up emotions

Bargaining: Seeking in vain for a way out

Depression: Final realization of the inevitable

Testing: \*\* Seeking realistic solutions

Acceptance: Finally finding the way forward

## Two Points of Awareness:

- 1) Recognition that there is a bottomless fear in you about violent, uncontrollable emotions of any sort and therefore you do not wish to deal with them; and
- 2) Awareness that you wish to remain negative (no one completely, but in certain areas) toward life and others.

The combination of these two points of awareness, my friends, is a key. These first two points must be alternately and at times simultaneously worked through. The causal connection between these two points must be clearly understood. As you see yourself in this resentful negation, and you can even acknowledge this because this awareness has now come, you will comprehend deeper the causal connection between the two points.

Outwardly this may well be concealed by apparently quite opposite patterns. But the false submission cannot ever be a substitute for real inner giving of self. In fact, real giving knows no self-depreciation, no martyrdom, no unjust treatment from the world. I would even suggest that such a pattern points the way to a crass lack of giving when it comes to real feelings. These specifications are often based on stark ignorance of the lawfulness involved in human interchange, on ignorance of the existing conditions produced by yourself, that make such expectations of perfect relationships logically impossible.

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**Exercise 2a:** Looking at the Seven Stages of Grief, consider what each stage might look like, feel like; how it might act out upon, or be perceived, by others.

What stage you are in regarding where you are, in terms of being willing to perceive, experience, and express your emotional development? Notice if you are imagining what it might be like, vs. being fully present. There is no need to share this information with others, only to find the truth for yourself.

## Choose How to Live!

The bottomlessness that you fear so much will prove to be an error only when you emerge from the experience of these emotions. Such an experience is threatening only before you enter into it. Once you overcome the hesitation and reluctance and let yourself into this experience no matter what you feel, it will not at all be what you feared. You will find that you can control the flood of feelings just because you voluntarily choose to let them out.

However, if they explode out of you because they have been artificially denied and held back for too long, then you cannot control them because their expression is involuntary.

So you **choose** to express, to let out of you **when and how long** you desire, in the knowledge that this is your salvation. Doing so will leave you refreshed and strengthened, more yourself than you ever were. Once you overcome the hesitation and reluctance and let yourself into this experience no matter what you feel, it will not at all be what you feared. You will find that **you can control** the flood of feelings -- just because you **voluntarily** choose to let them out. However, if they explode out of you because they have been artificially denied and held back for too long, then you cannot control them because their expression is **involuntary**. So you **choose** to express, to let out of you when and how long you desire in the knowledge that this is your salvation. Doing so will leave you refreshed and strengthened, more yourself than you ever were.

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I want to emphasize once again that this does not imply that you act out destructiveness any which way, but that you **choose** in what way to express it in a manner that no one -- including yourself -- will be hurt by the effect. Do not go away from that point where you say, *"I am afraid of these feelings."* Rather remain there until you gain the strength to let them come to the surface. This is so much better than denying again and going away again from this point of awareness where you know that you fear yourself. For if you fear yourself and do not know it, it is infinitely worse than if you fear yourself and know it.

**Fearing yourself -- and not knowing it -- makes you dead, and makes you miss out on life. It makes you attach this very fear of yourself to any number of other and outer facets, which have really nothing to do with the fear itself, as it is in its original state.** When you have the courage to experience the pain, the agony, the anger, the violence, and the helplessness, you will truly come to see that it is not at all bottomless, endless, and that this is not all there is to your inner life of feelings. You will see that there is an end. The end is that the living energy of all those feelings you wish to avoid becomes vital, living feelings of love, of joy, of pleasure.

This threshold is so essential on anyone's path of evolution. It proves to be a turning point in your inner life, where you go from limited existence of robotlike make-believe to real living, in which you are increasingly in the full possession of the vital energy and creative wisdom of your innermost being.

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**Exercise 2b:** When you see this negation, become honest and humble enough to pronounce it in its true existence: *"I do not want to give anything of myself. Whenever I feel threatened of rejection, criticism, frustration of my immediate desires, I at once withdraw from life, my vital energies, my good will, my positive spirit of participation in life. I want to remain unto myself in anger and resentment."* When you can acknowledge this, you will instantly know that it is this attitude that makes the facing of the rage and the agony perilous.

### **Vicious Circles**

This tentative bargaining and petty, distrustful withholding of all the generous spontaneous moves of the soul close the very door you hate to see closed. Since you do not wish to give to life, how can life give to you? So you run around in circles, and it becomes a vicious circle [[Ref PL 50](#)]

- 1) the less life gives you as a result of your not giving to it,
- 2) the more resentful you become,
- 3) the more you refuse to give of yourself,
- 4) the more drawn into yourself you become, and
- 5) the more violent your anger grows from this uninterrupted frustration.
- 6) Then this anger frightens you so that you hold it back, and on and on it goes -- until the circle is broken.

In such a negative cycle, the vital flow of your energy and feelings becomes a tightly packed, hardened mass behind which your spirit seems to wither. Of course, it does not really do so. It cannot ever do so since it is an eternal living force. But it cannot manifest to you, and you must remain separated from it as long as the negating attitude remains.

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**Exercise 2c:** Draw how your [Vicious Circle PL 50](#), using steps 1-6 above as a guideline.

### Week 3: Threefold Principle of Relationship

- 1) As the wish to remain negative is being given up, and exchanged for a wish to be outgoing, positive, giving, the fear of self will vanish.
- 2) Then the threefold principle about relationships [Perception, Reaction, Expression] will change from the negative to the positive. You will **perceive** yourself correctly; you will **react** productively to what you perceive; and you will **express** it in a meaningful way.

**Exercise 3a:** Notice how each of these three principles manifests in your personal life.

Notice where these are mostly positive, and what outer or inner influences support a positive flow.

Notice where they may go into distortion (perceiving based upon secret agendas, reacting inappropriately or excessively, or expressing yourself flippantly / demeaning your positions and opinions) and what triggers non-constructive behavior.

#### Negativity towards Self is a Defense

Your negativity is a defense, my friends. It arises out of the tragic misunderstanding of duality, the dichotomy that is rampant on this earth sphere where it is so often a question of either/or. In this case, it is believed to be a question of your happiness being opposed to the happiness of the other person. Therefore you secretly feel that by giving to others you will be impoverished, put to some sort of disadvantage; while by grabbing for what you want and withholding of yourself, you add to your advantage.

This belief is always there, underneath, half-conscious or completely unconscious. It creates a terrible conflict. When you examine dispassionately the irrationality of your negation, of your destructive insistence to remain separate and ungiving, you will indeed come to see that this unrealistic dichotomy is contained in your attitude. When you bring it out, you will be able to correct it. Little by little, you will recondition your perceptions, your emotional reactions, your deep inner knowing of the way life is.

You will then know that the happier you are, the more you contribute to others. In the process of removing unhealthy conditions that are a result of false beliefs in the deep psyche, your fulfillment can never really infringe upon those of others, even if at first it may appear that way. When you go to the root of all things, there is no conflict between your fulfillment and those of others -- quite the contrary. So you will not need to be ungiving, nor will you need to feel guilty for wanting your own fulfillment and joy.

With that understanding, all negativity must vanish, even in the deepest regions and the most secret areas of your psyche. Then the unfoldment can become complete, for more and more freely and fearlessly will you be yourself and will you expand into life and will you open up toward life and receive its gifts.

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**Exercise 3b:** As a meditation, say: *"I invest the best I have got into my life. I will not withhold anything of myself. I want to contribute to the cosmic unfoldment and plan of evolution with all the faculties I have -- those already manifest, but perhaps not used in this way, and those that are still dormant in me. I want to contribute. Only as a thoroughly fulfilled and happy person can I do so, not ever as a suffering one."*

### **A Vicious Circle of Self-Negativity**

- 1) Wrong perception of self leads to wrong, destructive reaction and, further, to destructive expression out into the world.
- 2) This in turn must affect all relationships.
- 3) Since you would rather blame others, they must respond in kind.
- 4) Since you are unwilling to be positive and giving and do not wish to admit this. by dint of its disillusioning nature in regard to your self-image, others reflect this negativity.
- 5) Your reaction to that must also be faulty since you choose not to admit your negativity, which makes you feel unjustly treated.
- 6) How can then what you express to others be anything but negative and destructive?
- 7) Moreover, how can your perception of others be accurate when your self-perception closes all eyes to what is in you and seeks others as scapegoats?
- 8) How can your perception of anything be accurate if you are unwilling to perceive yourself correctly?

Rage and agony must indeed seem endless as long as you are unwilling to give up this negative attitude to life in which you hug resentments and use dishonest games of suffering as weapons against others in order to put the blame on them. But the moment you are truly willing to give the best of yourself in principle, even before being able to do so, the Supreme Spirit will help you make this a reality, and there will be no question of fearing bottomless negativity and destructiveness.

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### **A Benign Circle of Loving Relationship with Self and Others:**

- 1) The triad of perception, reaction, expression in truth and creative living works quite differently. If perception is truthful, the entire picture changes.
- 2) You do not have to be already a perfect specimen if you use this in a positive way.
- 3) Your truthful perception of what is far from perfect in you will make you capable of acknowledging this without losing balance within yourself, without losing sight of the fact that you are a divine spirit with all its faculties intact.
- 4) As you perceive yourself accurately, your reaction automatically becomes very favorable.
- 5) For you will then want to get rid of the negativity and will seek the fruitful way that does not deny what is, but bases all further steps on clear perception of the now.
- 6) In that spirit, what expresses itself must be infinitely positive.
- 7) In that attitude, you see everything as it is and where it really belongs. You see the good and the bad in yourself. You see the truth in yourself, and you accept it.
- 8) Therefore your expression will be a truthful one. This will make the unfoldment of highly creative feelings, currents, and knowledge more and more possible.

With such a unified relationship toward the self, rather than a divided one, relationship to others must become equally positive and fruitful. It cannot help being so. Whenever you find yourself in strife there is something in your relationship to yourself that is not according to the positive aspect of this threefold principle. My advice is to acknowledge this fact and let go and then ask for the truth within you. It will come to you. These answers always come if you are sincere in wanting to know and thus properly receiving.

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**Exercise 3c:** Write out how you see the circular dynamics of 3 different kinds of relationships in different arenas of your life, where step 8 inevitably leads back to step 1. How could you make modest changes in your perceptions, reactions, or expressions that could shift the dynamic towards the positive?

## Week 4: Self-Love Empowers Relationship

Relationship is the very essence of life. No one is capable of living productively without warmth and love, without sharing and mutual understanding. It is truly in the scheme of things of the universal creative spirit.

There are certain very basic aspects of relationship that are important to understand. A threefold principle exists that applies to all elements of any kind of relationship and determines its nature. It is perceiving, reacting, and expressing. When this threefold principle operates in health, truth, harmony, and reality, then relationship must be fruitful and joyful. When these three aspects of relationship operate in a distorted, unrealistic, disharmonious way, relationship cannot possibly be fruitful or joyful.

You cannot possibly have a good relationship with others unless you first have a good relationship with yourself. Therefore these threefold aspects must first be applied to yourself.

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**Exercise 4a:** Spend some time with these questions. Your answers will differ depending upon the quality of relationships in different arenas of your life. Human beings are complex, and relationships become exponentially more complex! Consider answering the questions 3 times, based upon the different relationships you used in Week 3 to explore vicious and benign circles.

How do you perceive yourself?

How do you react to what you perceive in yourself?

How do you express that which you perceive in yourself?

### Self-Perception in Distortion

If you are at war with yourself by demanding to be other than you are now, you cannot perceive yourself correctly. *For example*, If you are unwilling and therefore apparently incapable of shedding your idealized self-image, if you insist on living up to its unreasonable demands, then your perception of yourself must be faulty and limited. If your perception of yourself is faulty and limited, your reaction to what you are, must be very disturbing.

### Self-Reaction in Distortion

Anyone of you who is now so close to the threshold of your inner destructiveness, to the fear and pain and rage, and also to the deliberate (although at present possibly unconscious) mean refusal to give of yourself to life and others, will have a negative reaction to all this -- only because your self-perception has been faulty. And you will possibly resist further to reconsider this self-perception. You still battle what is, and insist on being the way you are not. Thus you do not perceive in truth, so that your reaction to it (when it indirectly manifests) must be disharmonious and disturbing.

You will go on denying what tries to make itself known to you, and more dissent and warfare will come into you. For one side, the spirit side, makes an attempt to reveal (what is, for you) the unacceptable truth. The other side battles it. In that battle, your reaction becomes even more painful. Greater dissension with yourself and even more rage toward the world follow. A great part of the rage, anger, and pain are not even so much a question of the helpless conditions of



childhood -- although these may have set it off in this life -- but much of it is produced because you battle yourself as you are, and do not succeed in becoming willfully that which you want to be.

Thus what you perceive makes you more angry and pained. This is vastly responsible for the apparently bottomless despair and rage we were talking about.

### **Self-Expression in Distortion**

When you perceive yourself in the wrong way, and consequently react to what you perceive in the wrong way, your expression of it must be equally distorted and destructive. You cannot express the truth of what you perceive in yourself since you do not know it, do not wish to know it.

In such confusion, helplessness increases. The thus mounting inner tension seeks an outlet. To look for scapegoats that can be blamed for these unpleasant feelings and reactions is a very frequent "way out." And scapegoats can always be found if you look hard enough. Sometimes one does not even have to look very hard, for the imperfection of the world lends itself well to the attaching of the enraged and threatened feelings.

Thus the expression becomes one of hostility and rejection.

### **The Spiral of Self-Development**

If you are not at war with yourself, your perception will be clear. Then and then only will you be able to develop the same threefold principle toward the divine spirit within yourself. You will perceive it more and more. You will react to it -- **not** with the old fear.

For as long as fear exists regarding the indwelling negativity, fear must also exist of the indwelling power for positive experience and unfoldment. You will no longer react with fear to the greatest power in the universe, which is right in you. You will be receptive to it. You will then express this power, for you are a living part of it and become more and more so.

This will, little by little, change your entire life. Wherever life is now disharmonious, limited, frustrating, and withholding, it will open up gradually and, in its unfolding, will give you richly.

Needless to say, this is not an easy formula to apply. Although its truth is simple enough, to put it into practice requires the maximum of investment and commitment on your part -- investment and commitment to the truth within, to the truth of your life, to the living spirit of perpetual growth. It demands time, perseverance, and wise, mature insight into the dynamics of growth. It requires a continuous groping for the right balance of letting the destructive, ignorant, irrational child in you express itself without falling into the trap of believing its truth is the truth, so that an intelligent dialogue can be established with the life resisting part of your personality.

May these words lift you in hope and courage and in renewed stamina to proceed further on this path so that you can break through this wall of your fear of self.

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