

Pathwork™ Steps

Pleasure: The Full Pulsation of Life

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 177 Part 1

Week 1: Pleasure is a Legitimate Human Need

Week 2: The Pleasure Principle

Week 3: Bliss as the Spiritual Level of Pleasure

Week 4: 'I can't' conceals 'I WON'T'

Week 1: Pleasure is a Legitimate Human Need

This need is not only *not* in opposition to true spiritual self-realization (as many people falsely believe) but is, in fact, one of its necessary prerequisites.

Or to put it differently: he who blocks pleasure must perforce also block the deep connection with his spiritual self. Conversely, only he who is free enough to let go in one respect is free to do so in the other. These apparently "two" experiences -- spiritual self-realization and the capacity for pleasure -- become one and the same. They are interactive and interdependent.

I do not mean pleasurable pastimes of the mind; I do not mean shallow substitutes and escapes. I mean a state of physical and spiritual bliss that is experienced in every particle of one's body and soul, of the outer and inner being -- with all sensations and faculties alive, awake, and feeling. This state is very much here and now.

Yet this state is also the ultimate spiritual reality of every entity. It is your birthright, my friends. Your longing for it is the most real and healthy movement within yourself. It is only your confusions and dualistic splits that create misconceptions and fears and shames that are so superfluous.

PL 177

It is essential that man say to himself -- again and again and again -- "*I want to look at everything, I want to see even that where I am most resistant.*" Then and then only can he fulfill himself. Then and then only can all the difficulties, all the apparently insurmountable obstructions dissolve and things fall naturally and effortlessly into their proper place and order so that a non-wasteful, meaningful life establishes itself.

Self-Liking: The Condition for Universal State of Bliss PL 150

Exercise 1a: What is your attitude towards pleasure? Be honest. Write it out.

Say "*I want to look at the truth in myself*" every day, again and again, and particularly at moments when you feel discontented and disconnected. Anyone who does this will experience amazing results. PL 150

What pleasure IS:

- based on autonomy, mature self-responsibility based on love; union of sexuality and spirituality. Goes with emotional maturity, decency, physical health
- Total, real pleasure depends on the ability of the ego to let go of itself and be carried and lived by a greater power within the body and soul"
- Instructions for feeling pleasure: "The pleasurable rhythm of the universe... In order to be thus attuned, an inner calmness must prevail. All agitation of the mind must settle down. The turbulence must cease. Then another kind of movement within you will make itself known that is neither active nor passive in the outer sense, but it combines an inner activity of the most pleasurable rhythm with an inner calm receptivity and apparent motionlessness... "
- "You become capable of taking in genuine pleasure only to the degree that you give up the false, negative pleasure."

What pleasure is NOT:

- ego-based, disconnected from God
- pleasurable pastimes, shallow substitutes, escapes
- if ego-based, card games become. Negative/competitive/dualistic. or card games can be vehicle for connection.
- negative pleasure: pleasure at expense of another human being - e.g. in card games (or with sexuality) = Ego gratification (triumph, winning over) vs. connection
- pseudo-satisfactions of pretenses/role playing/defenses vs. letting go to the Life Stream.
- dependency, wanting others to be responsible for oneself, to "give it to you"

Notes by Susan Thesenga for the Pathwork Teachers Helper (PTH)

Exercise 1b: For 1 week, *reverse* the normal focus of Daily Review entries; instead of noticing disharmonious experiences, focus solely upon feelings or sensations of pleasure. At the end of the week, ‘grade’ these experiences from 1 to 4, depending upon how many **What pleasure IS** bullet points match that experience. You may also realize that the same experiences include **What pleasure is NOT** points. Include a separate negative score (-1 to -4) for those.

Daily Review 1.0

Let the whole day pass in front of your eyes, in your memory, and think of everything that has happened that has given you in some way a feeling of dis-harmony. [The Call](#) PL 17

Daily Review 2.0 PL 28

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

Track your daily experiences of disharmonies. Find a common denominator after keeping logs for several weeks

<i>Daily Review</i> Graphic created by Shakila F.				
DATE	SITUATION	REACTION	BEHAVIOR/ RESPONSE	JUDGMENT
	Facts/Circumstances of Disturbance	Feelings, thoughts, emotions	How You Acted (Exaggerated/Minimized)	Affirmed/Negated My Belief That...
10/01/20	Late for work	Fear/anxiety about job	Yelled at kids	I'm a bad mom
10/01/20	Fight re dinner cleanup	Felt let down by family	Didn't speak for hours	People are inconsiderate

Daily Review 3.0 from PL 56

Learn to investigate your reactions, and ask yourself what the meaning and further significance of them may be. What do they imply? What lies behind the emotions you register in the most casual incidents of your life? What is the emotion you register just at first, and what is behind it?

The Capacity to Wish: Healthy and Unhealthy Motives in Desire PL 56

Week 2: The Pleasure Principle

The pleasure we speak about here is, as I said, a total experience, not a divided experience. It is not a physical experience with the spiritual self left out. Nor is it a spiritual state that does not include the physical state.

It means that your entire being vibrates and pulsates undividedly in harmony with yourself, the universe, and hence with another human being. There is no division in you, no no-current, no doubt about the rightfulness of your bliss. There are no if's and but's because your bliss interferes with the world around you.

You feel no guilt or hesitation. On the contrary, you will deeply feel that the greater your ecstasy, your pleasure, your joy, the more you contribute to the world. When you reach this inner awareness -- not a theoretical, but an experiential awareness -- you will create the following conditions within yourself: you will

- make the total experience of pleasure a spiritual and practical goal.
- act unceasingly on behalf of this goal.
- remove all inner obstructions and patiently explore your own unconscious in order to bring the obstructions to light.
- devote time and effort to this venture.
- feel increasingly that personal fulfillment and pleasure further spiritual growth and realization, and vice versa.

The capacity to love intimately and completely with your body, your soul, and your spirit will be the goal that simultaneously furthers your self-purification, for one cannot exist without the other.

PL 177

Exercise 2a: Recall experiences of pleasure. Focus on simple, brief moments of awareness, realization, and appreciation. The smell of food, fresh laundry, or nature; taking a break, settling down, cooling off after a workout; smiling at something 'for no reason', reaching out to help; joining friends or a loved one, or finally getting a quiet moment to yourself! Make a list.

Then explore these moments based upon the principles above.

Experiencing 'Full Pleasure' on all levels of the human personality:

As regards the physical level, physical health and well-being is totally regulated by and dependent on the state of pleasure a human body is capable of allowing. Since the streamings of pleasure are, at the same time, the forces of life, health, self-renewal and regeneration; health and longevity are results of the capacity for pleasure. Conversely, to the degree you deny yourself pleasure -- due to shames, fears, misconceptions, negativity, impurity, etc. -- to that degree you cut off your body from the wellspring of the universal flow.

From a psychological point of view, the importance of pleasure is at least as great as from a physical point of view.

Exercise 2b: If you do / did not allow yourself to have and feel pleasure, consider how that lack would affect your answers to these questions:

- How can you shoulder mature self-responsibility?
- How can you accept the difficulties of the temporary reality which surrounds you and which is, in effect, the expression of your state, where you are now within yourself?
- How can you be asked to deal and cope with the frustrations that come your way? Of course, they come your way, in the last analysis, due to your own inner limitations, but nevertheless you also have to accept your own limitations, and that is not easy.
- How can you really want to give up the various ways in which you violate and impair your integrity, in which you want to secretly cheat life, in which you want others to carry the burden of responsibility for your mistakes?
- How can you truly commit yourself to integrity, truth, deepest honesty, and a positive approach to yourself and life?
- How can you wish to abandon negative pleasure? the pseudo-satisfactions of your pretenses, your role-playing, your defenses?
- How can you begin to wholly and consciously commit yourself to the reality of living, not for the sake of appearances, but for the sake of what is, when you are not aware of the fact that the deepest bliss is awaiting you just as a result of abandoning these pseudo-satisfactions and pleasures, these poor substitutes?

PL 177

Avoiding Pain Can Out-Prioritize Feeling Pleasure

When all images, pseudosolutions, misconceptions, and inner conflicts are brought down to the simplest common denominator, it will be found that **the infant struggles between attaining pleasure and avoiding pain**. It is an erroneous, blind attempt to overcome the duality and, as such, not real and productive.

Pain and pleasure must live together because your painful experience could not be assimilated otherwise. These childhood phases have to be gone through, re-experienced, and seen in their proper light, my friends. This opens the spiritual vistas of union.

Humanity often claims that pleasure for its own sake is wrong. The truth is exactly the opposite. When the personality is harmoniously developed, the pleasure drive includes others. It gives and receives -- and this is as it should be.

Man is meant to experience the maximum of pleasure, but as long as this occurs at the expense of harming either others or oneself, a harmonious balance has not been established ...within the personality. Harming oneself also occurs out of unjustified guilt feeling, and this eventually is also bound to harm others.

[Movement, Consciousness, Experience: The Essence of Pleasure](#) PL 119

There is no outside power that determines the extent of your fulfillment, the extent of your fruitful life experience or the pain, suffering, and frustration you have to bear. The violation of spiritual law within the psychic organism simply creates a climate ill equipped to "endure" blissful, joyous feelings. Bliss, pleasure, fulfillment require the greatest of all strengths. Unhappiness requires much less strength than happiness.

The very nature of unhappiness is frustration -- the absence of something that should be there. Therefore each unhappiness implicitly holds out the promise or knowledge of an opposite state.

One begins to displace and project the causes onto the outside world, with less and less relief. No matter how true some of the blames one launches against others may be, they never remove the suffering. If you ignore your own inner obstructions and believe that others or fate is the cause, you cannot help but live in a state of tension and fear in regard to others and life.

Anything that is contrary to the laws of love and truth must make the organism unprepared to sustain the powerful energy of happiness. For happiness is indeed a powerful energy. It requires more strength than unhappiness

Fear of Bliss versus Longing for It -- The Energy Centers PL 170

Pleasure Supreme Can be Yours

Pleasure, in the real sense, is intensely fleshly and intensely spiritual. There is no division between the fleshly and spiritual state of man. This is why there is no need to dwell too much on the philosophical aspects of pleasure in the scheme of creation.

The only thing I would like to mention about cosmic reality in this regard is that the ultimate state of liberation, of cosmic being, is total pleasure. The ultimate reality is pleasure. It is not, as religion seems to imply in its misunderstood interpretations, that bliss is a reward for having been "good." It is the natural state of a unified being in harmony with himself and the universe.

Only when a person reaches the point where he can open the inner flow to remove all inner obstructions and blocks so that a high degree of bliss is experienced, will he deeply know that human pleasure is essentially the same as the cosmic state of bliss, that spiritual and physical pleasure are one -- not opposites.

Dwelling too long on the cosmic meaning of pleasure always runs into the danger of making it appear as too remote from your present life right now. In reality, this is not so at all, for all cosmic reality is applicable at any state in the now. But it is easy to misread and misapply.

PL 177

Exercise 2c: Apply these meditations to a commitment to experience full pleasure:

1st Meditation: Explore Any Negativity Underlying Your Indecision: *Will* the truth, and open yourself for it! Ask God for recognition! Then you will realize that the pleasure of giving in to your faults is insignificant in comparison to overcoming them.

2nd Meditation: Explore any Lack of Commitment: The next decision that has to be made to establish this contact with God's spirit world -- after your decision was "yes" -- is to devote time daily. If you are not willing to do this, you cannot expect to accomplish much. The price for the happiness of this path is will power, patience, stamina, discipline, and a certain amount of time. That price is truly not too high!

Decide! Asking for Help and Helping Others / Perfection, Bliss, Fear, Trouble PL 7

Week 3: Bliss as the Spiritual Level of Pleasure

Religion speaks of the ultimate bliss of being. However, this is, most of the time, completely misunderstood. The bliss of being is believed to be a state that is totally different from the human state of ultimate pleasure, or from the human potential for it -- whether it be realized or not.

In reality, there is essentially no difference between the ultimate, spiritual state of bliss and the human potential for it. Only the degree of intensity varies, for no human being is capable of the depth of experience which is possible for unstructured highly developed consciousness.

But pleasure remains pleasure. Spiritual pleasure is not bodiless, for even unstructured consciousness is not formless. It creates the so-called "subtle bodies," consisting of streaming energy in the purest form. This energy form is without obstruction. It is pleasure itself.

The human body represents in its gross matter an obstruction that can be overcome only when the total personality attains harmony with the energy streamings of cosmic origin. A very liberated human being with little or no blocks and inhibitions, without distortions and negativity, is capable of a high degree of pleasure, for the energy of the subtle bodies penetrates the surface body.

It is therefore correct to say that spiritual unfoldment must bring an increase of pleasure and not, as many authoritarian religions want to have it, denial and sacrifice of pleasure. This concept of martyrdom is total misunderstanding of spiritual truth. But this truth, as I say it here, can be understood only when pleasure is no longer negative and therefore no longer at the expense of another human being, when it no longer carries destructive currents.

Anyone can confirm the truth that the degree of deeply experienced pleasure determines energy and well-being. This is not something you have to take at face value. You can experience it yourself.

PL 177

Exercise 3a: Find this connection for yourself: where do you have (or had) energy and a sense of well-being? Connect to deep experiences of pleasure in that area of your life.

Bliss is the Natural State of Being

Bliss, pleasure, fulfillment require the greatest of all strengths. Unhappiness requires much less strength than happiness. This strength can only be generated if the divine powers within the self are actually, deliberately, and concisely stimulated, activated, called upon to help you in a state of bliss so as to become better equipped to sustain it, to guide you specifically that you do not inadvertently, unconsciously by dint of the deeply imprinted mechanisms, close up against happiness.

Bliss is a necessity, for bliss is expansion. You cannot expand and utilize your own inherent potentials unless you are in a state of joyousness. Expansion and bliss belong together,

as stagnation and frustration belong together. Expansion is a self-activating process that combines the masculine and feminine principles in perfect harmony. If bliss, and therefore expansion, are feared, fear of growth and change must also exist. So must there be fear of man's own inherent powers.

Fear of Bliss versus Longing for It -- The Energy Centers PL 170

Man unconsciously knows that a state of pleasure supreme is his birthright, and he constantly strives for it, whether he realizes this or not. That this striving goes in a wrong direction, as just mentioned, does not alter the fact as such. Once man learns to search in the proper direction, he will find what he seeks.

The entire universe is constituted in such a way that each created individual is capable of being in a constant state of bliss. Each created individual is made in such a way that this is not only a theoretical possibility, but it is man's natural state of being. It is the natural law. When an individual is not in a state of bliss, it is an unnatural, disturbed condition. It is exceedingly important for you, my friends, to really grasp and appreciate this fact.

When I speak of a state of bliss, I do not mean this for a vague future -- a future either in this life or for a future in a life beyond the physical state of existence. It is indeed possible right here and right now. Nor does this depend on some complicated feat, a difficult state of perfection foreign to your present way of being, or outer events or anything having to be different from what it is right in this minute.

Man is prone to think that if only this or that were different (within or around him), then nothing would stand in the way of his happiness. Total happiness is possible immediately, as you are now.

Self-Liking: The Condition for Universal State of Bliss PL 150

Exercise 3b: Spend some time exploring how your body, your senses, and your feelings might differentiate between simple, straightforward human pleasures (a sense of wholeness and satisfaction) and the spiritual ecstasy of bliss (a sense of self-activating expansion).

The Vicious Circle Ref: PL 50

As long as you are convinced that these substitutes are all there is to life as far as pleasure is concerned, and that decency of living implies sacrifice for its own sake, you cannot even believe in pleasure. This difficulty is intensified by the fact that you cannot bear pleasure to the degree that you cling to all these false ways of life. You become capable of admitting pleasure only to the degree you give up the false, negative pleasure.

You must therefore find a way to break through the vicious circle in which you are caught. The less you can truly want to give up all these subtle falsities and subterfuges, the destructive defenses, the less you can accept pleasure. Therefore you cannot believe in it. Therefore you cannot want to give up that which obstructs you from experiencing it. Therefore there exists no real will or commitment for either pleasure or the giving up of destructive, life-inhibiting patterns of feelings, attitudes, and actions.

PL 177

Here lies the vicious circle:

- 1) The more he sells out
- 2) the less man likes himself
- 3) the greater his need to receive approval by others to assuage his self-doubts. Then,
- 4) the greater his attempt to have others give him what he himself can effectively supply
- 5) the more he is driven to betray the truth of the universe
- 6) and the truth in himself.

One can only get out of such a vicious circle by working on a path of self-finding. Each moment of discontent contains answers for you. If you look for these answers, you transcend the now and experience the truth of the universe, which is that every fraction of life is infinite bliss. Each moment offers a richness, a perfection, a fullness, no matter where you are, no matter what is your particular predicament.

[Self-Liking: The Condition for Universal State of Bliss](#) PL 150

Exercise 3c: Draw a circle that describes 6 steps (described above) in your own vicious circle of disliking some part of yourself. What might slow down or stop the dynamic? Spend some time noticing a need for approval, or a request to get from others what you refuse to give to yourself.

Both Pleasure and Bliss Pulsate

A totally relaxed inner state is needed for pleasure, but relaxation is not to be confused with passive apathy, paralysis, or inertia. True relaxation is a constant, harmonious movement. It is the movement of the universe. Any human entity who is sufficiently free to be in this unified state of pleasure will feel the cosmic pulsating rhythm and will be in harmony with it. This pleasurable rhythm of the universe is in each microscopic universe. It means being very finely attuned to the cosmic rhythm within. It means following the soul movements -- not of distortions -- the movements that are the reflections of the greater Cosmos.

In order to be thus attuned, an inner calmness must prevail. All the agitation of the mind must settle down. The turbulence must cease. Then another kind of movement within you will make itself known that is neither active nor passive in the outer sense, but it combines an inner activity and movement of the most pleasurable rhythm with an inner, calm receptivity and apparent motionlessness, which is not contradictory to the former, but an intrinsic part of it. What appears to be a contradiction on the ego level becomes a unification on a different wavelength. In that state, there can be no division or struggle against the self. There can be no pushing or tense striving. In that state, there is no harassment from time, for there is timelessness, even now, while you are in the body.

Of course, we take it for granted that this state cannot be realized at all times. But it can be realized again and again, leaving you each time a stronger, more unified, more complete person with your ego fully intact, more integrated with the greater self.

PL 177

Exercise 3d: A cosmic pulse would create sound waves. Scientific equipment allows us to 'hear' these. Google 'Sounds of the universe' or listen to some recent discoveries: [Schumann Resonance/Sounds of the Earth's Core](#) 8 hrs; [Nasa Space Sounds](#) a tour of the planets, 5 mins.

Week 4: 'I can't' conceals 'I WON'T'

Just as with the negativity I discussed in the last lecture, you will also have to find out the further consequences of your denial of pleasure, and why you do so. The first thing I would like to say about why you are afraid of pleasure is this. Again the connection with the last lecture must be made. [[The Overcoming of Negativity](#) PL 176]

Your holding on to the negativity, your not wanting to give up negative and destructive patterns of behavior, of feelings, makes the real pleasure not only undeserving in your own unconscious estimation, but also actually frightening. It is too frightening to be open to it, for your negativity creates a state of soul and body that is essentially incompatible with pleasure. It creates tension, separateness, contraction. It comes from an excessive ego orientation. It is therefore totally alien to a state of pleasure. Any kind of physical illness or deterioration, therefore also physical death, as it were, is a manifestation of division, conflict, and denial of pleasure.

Negative pleasure is always, in some way, more geared to gratifying ego goals than fulfilling the real and legitimate needs of the entity for bathing in the light of pleasure supreme. It harbors the three attitudes that are at the roots of all destructiveness and deviation -- yes -- [pride, self-will, and fear](#) [PL 30]. Where there is pride, where there is self-will, where there is fear, there must be a state of contraction. Contraction cannot be fully given up, ever, no matter what approaches of therapy are used and no matter how good they may be, as far as they can go, if pride, self-will, and fear are not abandoned. In pride, self-will, and fear, the ego structuring becomes more tight and rigid.

Self-will says, "me, me, me" -- the little me, the little self, the self that puts its stake only into the outer, conscious ego personality and that completely disregards, ignores and rejects the greater consciousness, the cosmic consciousness, the universal consciousness, of which you are an expression. Unless the total person is unified with this greater consciousness that transcends the ego, holding on to the ego becomes imperative. The ego would not be so emphasized if the false belief would not exist that the self is annihilated the moment the ego is not the sole ruler of the human life. Hence, when you identify exclusively with the ego, you cannot identify with the greater consciousness nor with the feelings in your body, for they go hand in hand. For direct experience of spontaneous feelings in your body are as much an expression of the universal truth of being as the guidance inspiration and knowledge that spontaneously flow into you when you identify with your being that extends beyond the ego consciousness.

If you identify with the ego, you create a tightness in the ego structure that says in effect, *"It is my ego world that counts. This is all there is to me, and therefore I cannot give it up. Otherwise, I cease to exist."* With this attitude, pleasure becomes impossible, for total, real pleasure depends on the ability of the ego to let go of itself and to let itself be carried and lived by a greater power within the body and soul.

PL 177

Exercise 4a: Notice where / when you resonate with the last paragraph. Claim where your little self fears expansion and prefers a tight, controllable reality. See where it holds you back from true pleasure.

Negativity vs. Negative Intentionality

The denial of your vulnerabilities, the shame of helplessness, and the feeling of being unlovable create evil and destructive attitudes and feelings. In other words, evil is a defense against suffering. Needless to say that this defense, as all defenses, create more suffering, as well as confusion, by dint of no longer being connected with the real feelings in the self.

The Importance of Experiencing All Feelings / Dynamic State of Laziness PL 190

The mere fact that you know it is you who wants isolation, loneliness, lovelessness, hate and spite, and not some fate that innocently befalls you, represents a major key, through which the next link in the chain of progressions and evolution can be established.

Identification and Intentionality:

Identification with the Spiritual Self to overcome Negative Intentionality PL 195

Negativity is a “protective” defense against pain.

“I won’t” may cover up the fear that “I can’t”. Paradoxically, being afraid to fail represents our desire to succeed, and fearing being exposed as not good enough. This is an extension of child consciousness, our imperfect childhood experiences with punishing authority figures, and our life/death struggle to individuate = leave the ‘nest’. It is based upon Positive Intentionality.

“*I can’t*” can be an honest cry for help, a realization that we cannot do this alone. We fear that being honest means annihilation, a human misinterpretation of spiritual surrender. Negativity covers up *our* lack of faith in *our* Positive Intentionality, and *our* doubts about the inevitability of the Positive Forces of Creation, Spiritual Law, Universal Truth, and God (however we envision an ultimate deity) – by blaming others, including God.

Negative Intentionality is the “deliberate will to be negative” and not contribute to life.

“*I can’t*” may cover up the Negative Intention of “*I won’t*” We deliberately pretend to be incapable, or to be victims, in order to avoid exposure of our Negative Intentionality -- because we want to act out our negativity without interference.

“*I won’t*” is more honest. It represents our *illusion* that we can single-handedly negate life. Negative Intentionality in Human Beings can never be 100% true, because there was a Positive Intentionality to transform, purify and transcend by *undergoing the incarnatory process*.

Decide! Asking for Help and Helping Others / Perfection, Bliss, Fear, Trouble PL 7

Exercise 4b: Allow yourself to see how, where, and when you use negativity as a defense. Notice where you say ‘*I can’t*’ and what the feelings are behind that. Practice saying ‘*I won’t*’ instead. Notice if this feels like it puts you ‘back in charge’ of your life.

Study Guide © Jan Rigsby: 2021
Guide Quotes © The Pathwork Foundation 1999
Full text of this plus all other lectures may be downloaded from www.pathwork.org