

# *Pathwork™ Steps*

## **Pleasure: The Full Pulsation of Life**

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 177

**Week 1: What is Legitimate Pleasure?**

**Week 2: Obstructions to Experiencing Pleasure**

**Week 3: Self-Barricades of Pride, Self-Will, and Fear**

**Week 4: Pleasure Has a Harmonious Rhythm**

**Week 1: What is Legitimate Pleasure?**

Tonight's lecture deals with the topic of pleasure, the meaning and significance of pleasure in the scheme of the universe as well as for the individual human entity.

The need for pleasure -- the legitimate need -- and its purpose for the human entity is not only *not* in opposition to true spiritual self-realization (as many people falsely believe). In fact, it is 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. And these apparently "two" experiences -- spiritual self-realization and the capacity for pleasure -- become one and the same. They are interactive and interdependent.

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. Therefore bliss seems very remote from the human experience. It appears to be something totally disembodied and obtainable only eons later. This kind of bliss appears so unreal to man and even so far away from what he considers truly desirable, that it remains, at best, a vague theory.

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.

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### **Law of Lack of Awareness**

It is one of the immutable spiritual laws that lack of awareness of one area in you prohibits awareness of another. This is why the purification process is above anything else a process of making things conscious. This awareness unifies you. It is the aim of this Path's approach to help towards a reunification of everything that has ever split off.

*[Basic Principles of Pathwork](#)* PL193

**Exercise 1a:** Consider this on a practical level; how might ignoring an element of your home impact your enjoyment or use of it over time? What about ignoring aspects of your career? The legitimate needs of a partner or friend?

Does the time required for a consequence to manifest, much less become noticeable, change your willingness to recognize and accept responsibility for your part in the cause?

**The Meaning of Pleasure on all levels of human existence**

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.

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.

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**Exercise 1b:** Bliss is actually a range of feelings. Some may be hard to identify. Begin to notice aspects of your life that flow harmoniously, needing little or no 'maintenance'. Notice relaxed moments, such as having a meal, talking with friends, or becoming engrossed in an activity, where you realize time has flown by without your noticing it.

[Self Liking as a Condition for State of Universal Bliss](#) PL 150 includes [22min video](#)

**Daily Review 2.0 PL 28**

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

Track your daily experiences of disharmonies. After keeping logs for several weeks, see if you can find a common denominator.

Daily Review				
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

Graphic created by Shakila F.

## **Week 2: Obstructions to Experiencing Pleasure**

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.

### **Obstructions barricade us from the deep experience of Pleasure Supreme**

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. PL 177

### **The Vicious Circle of Fear of Pleasure**

Offhand, you all want pleasure and long for it. Partially you really strive for it. You believe you want it, but you ignore the fact that you also do not want it; that, in fact, you desperately fear it. You are often terrified of pleasure -- perhaps even more than of negative feelings within themselves or coming to them from others.

I have elsewhere pointed out the connection between the fear of negative feelings of yourself, of others, and the fear of pleasure within you. For only as you fear pleasure do you then inadvertently, and logically, want the opposite -- the unpleasure. Thus you fear the result of your negative desire, for deep inside of you, you know what you want will be so. And the less conscious you are of what you want, the more you must fear the result. Hence, fear of death always connotes an unconscious death wish. PL 177

**Exercise 2a:** Fear of Pleasure is paradoxical; the mind may reject this idea. Create a way to feel each energetic movement described above; draw a *Vicious Circle* PL 50, make a step-by-step list of the sequence, or allow your body to feel the push-pull of each sentence above.

### **Law of Cause and Effect**

The primary result on this Path is the understanding of your own cause and effect and the sense of strength, self-reliance, and justice that this gives to an individual.

*Meeting the Pain of Destructive Patterns* PL100

One of the first obstructions to look for is the dichotomy, arising from an unconscious rejection of the desired result (whether pleasure or anything else, for that matter). Otherwise your battle against your own fear of pleasure will consciously manifest in

1. an excessive striving for pleasure

2. an anxiety about not being able to realize it'
3. a pessimism or even hopelessness about it, which makes you fluctuate between two damaging extremes: from resignation to compulsive, blind, and consequently inappropriate overactivity. This obstructs the attainment of pleasure to a considerable degree.

Hence, unawareness of being afraid of pleasure must be transformed into acute and direct awareness of it. This is not easy, but it is certainly possible on this path. Anyone who seriously desires it can obtain this awareness of his unconscious.

Meditate and commit yourself to wanting to be aware of it.

Conversely, pleasure is made possible when the state of mind and emotions is quietly confident, calmly expectant and receptive, patient and unanxious, unhurried and unworried.

PL 177

**Exercise 2b:** Are any of the 3 symptoms of fear of pleasure familiar to you?

Keep a [Daily Review](#) PL 28 log for 1 week, focusing on only these 3 feelings.

### **Pleasure = Experiencing the Pulsation of Your life Force**

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.

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**Exercise 2c:** Review (or repeat) your work in 1b on bliss. Notice what coincides with the description of pleasure, above. Notice what differs from the experiences collected in 2b.

## Law of Cause and Effect

It is more difficult to see the same relationship between thoughts and subtle attitudes. The more developed person can perceive cause and effect on these less obvious levels

[Cause and Effect on Various Levels of Consciousness](#) PL245

Only when you are acutely conscious of how you fear and deny your pleasure will you stop making others responsible for your deprivation, which makes you keenly suffer.

A deep inner burden will dissolve, the burden of being puzzled and hopeless of not attaining what you deeply yearn for. This burden is subtle and unpronounced. Once you can ascertain in full consciousness, "*I am afraid of pleasure,*" hopelessness will disappear. You will feel the two forces within yourself: one pulling you toward pleasure, the other away from it. You will feel these two forces on all levels of your being -- in your mind, in your feelings.

When the battle goes on unbeknownst to your conscious mind, it is extremely painful. When you know of its existence, you can begin to settle the conflict. Once the struggle is conscious, it can be met. It can never be met when it is unconscious. This is why the making conscious of any condition is about the most important undertaking for any human being.

You can never free yourself of the vague anxiety and the feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy, which are the result of your not knowing that you deny what you want -- which you wish, on the one hand, and fear on the other. As it is impossible to overcome your destructiveness, your negativity, without knowing that you want to be negative, so it is impossible to settle this struggle and fight within you unless you know and feel and experience that this fight goes on within you.

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.

[Negative pleasure](#) PL 140 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: [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 if pride, self-will, and fear are not abandoned.

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**Exercise 2d:** Body-psychotherapy is a way of understanding feelings by being able to read the language of the body, and activate unconscious feelings by simulating how they are most often expressed. Practice smiling, then frowning. Notice which is easier, or more familiar.

Perform some daily activities while feeling 1) distorted Pride, as superiority, arrogance, disdain; 2) Self-Will, as 'my way or the highway!'; and 3) Fear. Which are most familiar?

### Week 3: Self-Barricades; Pride, Self-Will, and Fear

In [\*Pride, Self-Will, and Fear\*](#) PL 30 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.

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QUESTION: The other day I heard that somebody was rejecting me in a group; immediately I felt a devastating kind of tiredness that I felt before. The feeling was, I don't want to feel any more. Is my reluctance to get started in the morning related to this not wanting to feel?

ANSWER: Yes, very much so. The tiredness is a manifestation of this: *"I do not wish to feel because if I feel, I may be hurt."*

The rejection, pain and hurt could not create tiredness, lack of vitality, numbness, deadness. Yet the deadness of feelings brings so much greater pain and personal insecurity and frustration and unfulfillment than any hurt that another person can inflict upon you.

Also, this hurt from the other person is really an illusion that will reveal itself only when you have the courage to honestly experience the feeling that really is there. For there is no such thing that another person can hurt you.

If the pain is not exaggerated and no game is being played with it, it very soon ceases to be unbearable or frightening. The decision rests with you. It is your decision, your commitment to a new decision deep within you that counts, that shifts the balance, that creates a new state of being.

PL 180QA, Following *The Spiritual Significance of Relationship* PL 180

**Exercise 3a:** Reflect upon occasions when you felt emotionally 'hurt' by another's words or actions. What was 'injured'? What part of you felt threatened?

Pride says, *"I am better than you."* This means separateness, it means one-upmanship, it means everything that is opposed to a state of love. By the same token, pride may also manifest as, *"I am worse than others, I am worthless, I have no value. But I must hide this fact, so I must pretend that I am more."*

Of course, these thoughts are not articulate, but they may not be altogether unconscious. This distorted pride (as opposed to healthy dignity) is always comparing and measuring the self with others, and is thus perpetually in illusion. For no true evaluation can ever come from this. It is a hopeless and endless chase for an illusory goal that leaves the personality not only exhausted, but also more and more frustrated. The chasm between the self and others widens forever more, love becomes less possible, and hence pleasure further removed.

It does not matter whether you actually think you are more than others or only pretend in order to hide your feelings of worthlessness. It is all the same. This cannot produce love, and how can true pleasure ever be realized in a loveless state?

Love is not a command that is supposed to deprive you. It is the most selfish of all attitudes, for it brings the greatest of all pleasures, bodily as well as mental and emotional pleasure. It simply feels good in yourself. It opens you up; you flow and pulsate in a state of peace, security, vibrancy, excitement, stimulation, and utter confidence. Your innermost being and your outer limbs feel sweet and fulfilled when you love.

But when you are in an ego state of pride, you must be tense, anxious, contracted. You cannot pretend while being in a relaxed state. And pride always leads to and requires pretense of some sort.

A relaxed, struggleless, and unpretending state is the absolute prerequisite to pleasure.

Fear, needless to say, is a total contraction. It cannot trust anyone, or the self, or the universe. Therefore the self that is in fear cannot let go of itself.

Pleasure is unrealizable when the personality is bound to the ego, bound in self-will, pride, and fear, bound in the negative creations, bound in the struggle within itself that denies its own negativity and hence does not know it exists. Hence, it does not know of the nature of its own suffering. The self is bound in the struggle of wanting and fearing the same end.

Unawareness of this struggle leads to frustration and discontent, as well as to rendering others responsible for the lack, which in turn elicits resentments, bitterness, anger, defiance. The resulting confusion is torment for the soul.

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**Exercise 3b:** Even if your current relationships are based upon genuine love, we have all attempted to command love! Look at one of those past or current connections. Feel into some of the interactions. Notice if either of the Pride statements, above are familiar. Notice any demands from Self-Will. Notice contraction, where Fear anticipates loss .

## The Importance of 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 3c:** Spend some time with the 7 questions in the text below. The Disney song in a 1964 movie, *'A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down'* was inspired by how polio vaccine was given to children in the 1960s, on sugar cubes. Notice how you and others intermix pleasure with duty.

- 1- How can you shoulder mature self-responsibility?
- 2- 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?
- 3- How can you be asked to deal and cope with the frustrations that come your way?
- 4- 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?
- 5- How can you truly commit yourself to integrity, truth, deepest honesty, and a positive approach to yourself and life?
- 6- How can you wish to abandon negative pleasure? the pseudo-satisfactions of your pretenses, your role-playing, your defenses?
- 7- 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

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.

Accepting reality and mature self-responsibility seem an insurmountable hardship if the realization of pleasure is not a simultaneous by-product. You will want selfhood, autonomy, in the truest sense of the word, however hard it may first seem to attain it, if you will know that your own fear of pleasure will disappear proportionately to your self-purification. To the degree you assume the apparent hardship, at first of adulthood with all its ramifications, something in you will ease up and feel less and less threatened. Instead, you will become open to pleasure in its deepest and fullest meaning.

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## Week 4: Pleasure Has a Harmonious Rhythm

The realization of pleasure, that you all deeply long, for comes from letting go of all of these destructive attitudes.

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 distortions, but 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.

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**Exercise 4a:** All humans enjoy life, to some degree. Allow yourself to become more conscious of 'little' pleasures, aspects of life that whisper rather than shout, coo rather than croak.

Notice what you may need to put down / step back from in order to feel such moments.

### Balancing Pleasure with Life's Realities

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.

But in different ways, you will experience this state in all you do, in the way you live, move, and have your being in the universal consciousness, in all your undertakings, and in your very being.

Wherever you are at any given moment, you can transcend this one instant no matter how unpleasurable it is. If you go sufficiently deeply into yourself to fully explore the you in this moment, in this situation; if you do not escape from it, this very moment of unpleasure must turn into its ultimate nature: pleasure supreme.

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## **Law of Brotherhood**

No matter how hard one works, how intelligently he reads or studies, no matter how much self-honesty one tries to have, if you are alone, you become locked up in a certain vacuum that bars a complete understanding and evaluation which flows automatically if aired to another soul. By remaining alone, you violate the Law Of Brotherhood in some subtle way.

*Finding Your Faults* PL26

As long as you keep things hidden within you, it puts everything out of proportion (you exaggerate or underestimate.) The moment you open up to another person, this indicates an act of humility, at least towards that one person. You do not want to appear more perfect than you are at that moment with that person. Thus you show yourself as you are. And you feel better all of a sudden when you are able to see things differently.

*Shame* PL 31 includes 1h22min [YouTube Video](#)

### **Love must be extended to ourselves as well as to others**

It is not easy to do this when you are so separate in your perception of yourself, even after you have experienced some of these truths and states I mentioned.

In such a state of disconnectedness, it requires your probing and groping to find the right measure of self-discipline, self-facing, of summoning your good will to see the truth and change the destructiveness, on the one hand, and patient letting go and waiting, trusting expectancy, on the other. You have to find the right answers and attitudes, of struggling and not struggling, both in the right way and the right measure.

Memory of a former similar state in your mind will be of little help. *The truth must be recaptured each time anew.* Memory will only help you to know that the truth can be attained and is not an illusion.

It is not easy to transcend your now and get into your inner cosmic rhythm within yourself. But the more often you attempt it, the more often it will become possible until this eventually becomes your normal state, and disconnectedness the exception.

I think you begin more and more to realize that such a path is not to be dreaded as a difficulty or a chore. Every particle about it is the most joyful thing in itself, not only because it brings ultimately liberation, but even while you are struggling, and each time you win over a struggle, it brings you bliss in varying degrees. The degree depends on your ability to overcome resistance to do so -- exactly to that degree, my friends.

Be in the state of bliss that is your birthright, that is your ultimate destiny for all of you. Realize the truth that there is nothing to fear. Be blessed

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