

Pathwork™ Steps

Chain Reactions in the Dynamics of Creative Life Substance

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 179

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Week 1: We Experience Life as We Perceive it to Be

Week 2: Attitude, Self-Possession, Self-Alienation

Week 3: Balancing Frustration with Being True to Yourself

Week 4: Reframing Problems as Challenges

Week 1: We Experience Life as We Perceive it to Be

The very fact that life can manifest to the exact degree of man's expectation and concept is a proof of its limitless power and generosity. This must include, by necessity, man's limited negative consciousness. In other words, when man's mind, as an intrinsic part of life itself, is geared in a way alien to life's essence, then this very alienness must be experienced. PL 179

Summary of a very specific chain reaction

Both in its natural, unhampered, and therefore in its positive manifestation, and in its distortion:

Link 1 - Perception; we experience life based upon how we perceive it to be.

Link 2 - Attitude; an expectation of abundance vs defensiveness

Link 3 - Self-Possession vs Self-Alienation;

Aspect 1: Learning to deal with frustration

Aspect 2: Being true to yourself

In its positive, natural version, the particular links of this chain are the following:

- life's basic characteristic experienced for what it is, as abundance, generosity, overwhelming givingness;
- man's similar and hence compatible attitude of abundance;
- self-possession; the ability to deal realistically and constructively with frustration; being true to the issue, the self, the moment.

The links in the negative chain reaction are

- life's limitation and enmity against man;
- man's defensive pettiness of spirit;
- self-alienation; false, destructive reaction to frustration; living for the sake of approval and impressing others and/or (often simultaneously) living for the sake of rebelling so as to prove independence of spirit.

Every one of these links has been amply discussed by us and, in many cases, worked through on your path. But we have never seen the importance of these links as a continuum. It is therefore necessary that we talk about this at length. *Summarized from PL 179*

Exercise 1a: Find examples of each of these elements – in its positive and its negative aspect – in your life experiences. Notice how one link leads to / contributes to the following link.

Link 1. We Experience Life as We Perceive It

One of life's most outstanding characteristics, its very essence, is its fertility, its givingness. It is truly limitless in this feature. It sprouts forth forever new and more varied experiences of

bliss, self-expression, fascination. It is everything, literally everything, that mind can conceive of. This includes, of course, limited, negative manifestations.

If man's mind is geared to perceive and conceive life as a priori hostile and mean, this is exactly the way it will manifest to him. If he ignores life's versatility and richness and the fact that it can manifest as anything he truly believes and desires, then he is caught in a trap from which he can escape only when he recognizes it as such. He will not escape until he challenges his silent assumption -- which had seemed so natural to him that he did not stop to even notice it before, -- the assumption that life is limited and negative. Then he will recognize that another possibility also exists, one that might indeed bring forth a different kind of manifestation. PL 179

Human Reality is Subjective. Wherever there are inner problems, there must be a negative outlook on life, distrust, pettiness, ungenerous attitudes toward life and, respectively, toward others. All the roles and games which we have amply discussed and which we are working on display these characteristics. PL 179

Exercise 1b: What are your beliefs about life? Do you awake every morning eager to engage, or do you dread the day? Explore the details of your life like you would examine your wardrobe or your home during a spring cleaning. Do they still fit? Do they express who you are today? Do they support where you want to be tomorrow? Are they well-past their use-by date?

One's life does not lie.

It expresses exactly what you really, inwardly believe. You may consciously claim that you are a loving person and indeed believe in love. But if you suffer from a loveless life, it testifies clearly that *somewhere* inside of you, you do not believe in love, do not want to love, and have your "reasons" (i.e., misconceptions) for not loving. Misconceptions can be:

- **quite conscious**; yet you do not necessarily know they are misconceptions. Therefore your conscious beliefs must be tested and investigated.
- **vaguely conscious**, in a nebulous way. Your actions (and reactions) will testify that you are governed by misconceptions, but you have not concisely specified what these are -- or, what their consequences are.
- **unconscious**. In that case, your Pathwork process must deal with making them conscious. This can only be done by examining the life manifestations of suffering, frustration, and unfulfilled longings.

[Resume of Basic Principles of the Pathwork: Its Aims and Processes](#) PL 193

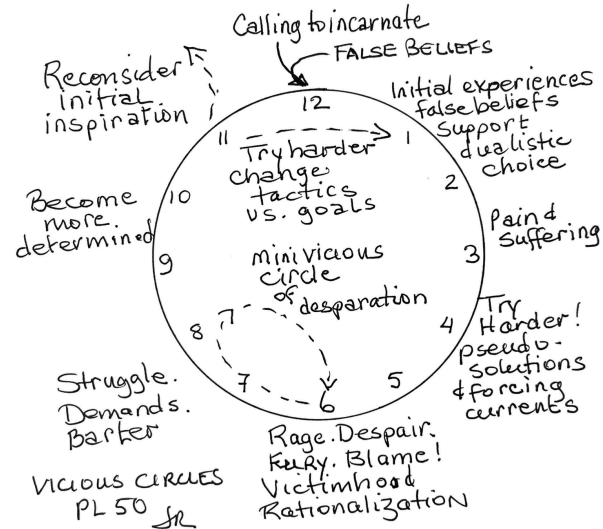
Exercise 1c: A useful technique for understanding paradoxes (or complex PL teachings!): Assume a life situation that you are not happy about expresses an unconscious belief that is contrary to your conscious desires or thought processes. Verbalize a belief that would be happy about that life situation. For instance, if you are single/lonely, you may believe that intimacy would reveal you as unworthy; so being alone is safer = good. Or, if you are poor, you may believe that money attracts temptation, false friendships, or would allow your greed to flourish. The more irrational, unadmirable, or selfish these are, the more you will resist seeing them. Your life, however, will manifest according to ALL your beliefs, not just the ones you enjoy and admire!

Week 2: Attitude, Self-Alienation, and Self-Possession

The second link in the chain is man's attitude. Man's mind, his consciousness, his concept about life, his expectation of it – all have a direct influence on how life can manifest. When he is aware of life's essence, of its richness and its generosity, man's entire attitude will be totally different from an attitude that stems from a conviction that life is his enemy.

When a negative conviction exists, distrustfulness is natural. Distrustfulness creates ungenerous impulses and attitudes. The suspicious, ungenerous attitude creates further negative, limiting aspects, for example, fear and greed. Both fear and greed stem from blindness and thus breed further blindness.

Greed wishes to amass selfishly, when this is not necessary in the least. It creates a closed-up, tight, and very negative energy and an atmosphere that truly excludes the person from life. Thus he must experience lack, want, frustration, rejection, etc. He builds defenses against these eventualities. PL 179



Ref: [Vicious Circles](#) PL 50

Exercise 2a: Draw a vicious circle that illustrates the dynamic of how negativity generates mistrust, which invites fear and greed. Then, find examples of these dynamics in life or in stories.

If man, on the other hand, knows that life's essence is generous, he will be open, trustful, and generous himself -- generous in his trust in life, generous in his being, for there is no need to hold in, to hold back, to keep the self held together in a tight package of ungiving. All feelings will stream forth generously, fearlessly, and consequently more of life's gifts will come to the individual who has understood the nature of life and acts accordingly.

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Exercise 2b: In your drawing of a vicious circle, notice how a change in attitude – at any point – would dissolve the need to repeat the cycle. Or, if the circle would become benign.

I recapitulate: man's compatibility with life lies in knowing that it is unlimited and must bring forth exactly according to expectation, attitude, and concept, therefore trusting it and building on this trust. The firmer this conviction has become, as a result of repeatedly experiencing this truth because the focus has been adjusted, the more trustful, relaxed, positive, creative, generous, giving the person must become. There will be none of the petty defenses, pseudo-protections, and pretenses which he who distrusts life inevitably adopts. When you look closer at those defenses, those protective roles, you will see that underneath them life's essential benignness is being doubted.

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Exercise 2c: List the attitudes and justifications that power your examples of vicious circles. List the defenses you use, in your own words. What pretenses must be adopted, either in order to 'keep fighting / never surrender' or to justify the cost or sacrifice that will be required to attain the goal?

Link 3: Self-Possession vs. Self-Alienation

The next step in the chain reaction is self-possession versus self-alienation. If it is true that man must be as generously squandering of himself, as life is squandering itself on all created beings (provided it is allowed to do so), then the individual must first possess itself before it can give itself away. Only he who fully owns himself can give himself safely and thus find self-renewal in this giving of the self. PL 178

Exercise 2d: Explore what ‘giving yourself’ means to you. If you feel any resistance, remember that this is an exercise that you can stop at any time; *you are in charge*. Recall any early experiences of being forced, by parents or authority figures, to ‘give something up’ before you were ready to do so, or being coerced to ‘give in’ to the beliefs, values, or demands of others.

When the mask and lower self, the negative intentionality, the dishonest games are being identified, real feelings can be felt and honestly experienced. Pain need no longer be denied. This is so because the energy that is no longer being invested into denying what is, will bring you what is. And when you can truly feel your feelings, you can then identify with the spiritual self. The ego makes the identification, but gives itself up voluntarily so that it is integrated into the spiritual self. *Identification of the Spiritual Self to Overcome Negative Intentionality* PL 195

Exercise 2e: Explore again, on a feeling level, what ‘giving yourself’ means to you. If you feel any fear, such as the fear of being rejected, notice if that would actually happen today, or if you are remembering early childhood experiences. Even if the fear is relevant today, ask yourself why you need to recall these while doing a simple exercise on your own. Listen for the answer!

If you are threatening yourself, ask why? Listen for the answer.

Practice this exercise until you feel comfortable simply giving yourself to yourself.

Attitudes toward Giving

Each step of giving seems to involve the risk of losing. It is always first an apparent abyss into which you trustingly throw yourself, only to find that all risk is illusory and the giving of self to life is the safest, most realistic attitude conceivable. But this reality must be discovered by the taking of the illusory risk. Only he who owns himself can take such a risk, never he who is not in full possession of himself.

If you do not own yourself, you have nothing to give. You are poor. For the richness of life is also in you, within you. When you ignore this fact and build yourself, your values, your foundation, outside yourself, you become more and more impoverished and hence cannot give anything away. On the contrary, you must strive to amass more. You must attempt to cheat life by manipulating circumstances in such a way that you gain as much and give as little as possible.

Of course, I do not discuss outer, material things here although one's attitude in this respect may also be colored by one's emotional attitude. However, this is not always exactly parallel. What I am primarily concerned with is the more subtle level of feelings.

The attitude to giving of his feelings, as opposed to receiving good feelings from others, is the criterion according to which we can determine in what way this chain reaction manifests in any given aspect of a man's life. PL 179

The state of self-alienation -- that of not being one's real self -- is so predominant, so general that its symptoms do not stand out. There are many symptoms which pass you by unnoticed simply because they are so general that they are assumed to be "normal."

Self Alienation; The Way Back to the Real Self PL 95

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Cheating of life occurs most frequently in the realm of emotions. Most human beings, in one respect or another, to a greater or lesser degree, wish to receive all the love possible but are really not willing to give any although they try to convince themselves that they would also love if only they were loved first, and that it is some dreadful danger or unfairness to love without the reassurance that it be returned a tit for a tat in the exact manner as their limited consciousness figures it out.

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Exercise 2f: Where / when / how / why do you cheat in the realm of emotions? Where do you carefully barter for love, dispensing love 'tokens' based upon what benefits can be obtained?

Elements that determine Self-Possession

There are several, and we cannot go into them all at once. But I will select, for this lecture, two specific aspects which were also discussed previously, although not in this context.

These two aspects are far-reaching and cover a great deal of ground. I would say that they are key points, so that self-possession undoubtedly exists when these two aspects are established.

Aspect 1: the ability to deal with frustration, with disappointment, with life apparently saying no to you.

It is one thing to know theoretically that, in the last analysis, every no you experience in life, no matter from where it comes to you and how undeserved it appears to be, is your own doing; and it is quite another thing to experience this truth.

In order to do so, a great willingness for such experience must be summoned, which is not easy. It means overcoming the often strong temptation to indulge in feelings of self-pity and resentments, in complaining and accusing -- overtly or covertly, by your emotional reactions and expressions. The latter course often seems at first quite justified and inviting. The former implies the willingness to accept our premise even though you cannot see it yet and may have to search for a while until the true cause reveals itself to you. Until such time, the frustration must be borne in a productive way.

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Aspect 2: Being true to yourself. Blind rebellion, thus a closed mind, means that the self is as bound as the apparently too open self that wants or believes needs to please everyone. In both instances, selfhood is lost because the truth of the matter is lost under the rubble of false compliance or false rebellion.

The truth of the moment can be found when both these false alternatives are dispensed with.

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Week 3: Balancing Frustration with Being True to Yourself

If these two aspects are observed -- the handling of frustration and being true to the ultimate reality of the self and the situation --

- You will be a functioning, creative being.
- You will do away with the roles and pretenses.
- You will allow yourself to fully feel and pulsate, for that must be the truth of being.
- You will accept your own temporary state, not with despair but with hope because the hope will be justified in view of the positiveness and the realism with which you approach yourself.

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These are not empty promises, but facts -- facts of life. You will find yourself in forever new ways, in excitement and serenity as you lose the negative attitudes, the defensive games. In this attitude, you cannot fail to discover the generosity of life, a life that bestows and again bestows upon you its goodness far more than your wildest dreams could think of. Life will come to you as a reflection of your own soul in an unending series of new self-expressions, new forms of pleasure and depths of unifying relationships, new challenges mastered, new fascinations and deeper well-being and peace.

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Exercise 3a: The life the Guide promises can be gained if you address your underlying negative attitudes. What would that be worth to you? How much time are you willing to invest? Make a list of some steps you could take, based on the Chain of Reactions listed in Week 1 / page 1.

Aspect 1. Learn to Manage Frustration

There is a right, productive way and a wrong, destructive way to both accepting and rejecting a frustration in life. The right kind of acceptance automatically also brings the right kind of rejecting frustration. Right acceptance is awareness and willingness to see that each miscondition is self-produced and voluntarily pushed out of sight. Hence, the result must be borne with courage and without self-indulgence. The attitude then exists that mistakes must be paid for, and that this payment is not an unfair demand of life.

This is never a negative, hopeless attitude but rather leads to the right kind of rejection of suffering. In effect, the person expresses this attitude into life: "There is no need to suffer for the rest of my life. I am willing, with all my heart and with my best investment of myself, to find the cause and to change it.

Exercise 3b: Say this phrase once a day for a week: "*Therefore I know that life will yield the fulfillment that I desire and deserve all the more since I act as an adult who does not claim any special dispensations for his ignorance and destructiveness.*" This attitude conciliates right acceptance with the right rejection of frustration. PL 179

Wrong acceptance of frustration leads to wrong rejection of it, and vice versa.

When frustration is being dramatized into annihilation, as "*the end of one's world,*" it soon becomes so convincing that the mood indeed feels as though it were really that, and reasons can be drummed up that make it appear that way. All the while, the personality says underneath, in effect: "*I refuse to suffer any disappointment. I must have what I want at all times, instantly, and*

in exactly my way, else I feel persecuted." This denial of self-responsibility leads to a false acceptance, i.e., hopelessness, resignation, doom.

When the small, momentary frustration or difficulty or disappointment is being dramatized into a tragedy, and induces the person to have a negative outlook on life per se, then a destructive "acceptance" exists. If a disagreeable occurrence is being made into a catastrophe (often only in one's emotional reactions, which may not necessarily be openly expressed), then rigid self-will, stiff insistence on it, arrogance (in that the person demands special treatment from life), and the exaggerated distortion that the difficulty is unsurmountable and hopeless -- in short, **self-will, pride, and fear** -- create a dark climate in the soul and a dissension within it. They disunify and make the dualistic split wider. It is always easy to get lost in two opposites, which are both wrong when they appear as real opposites. PL 179

Exercise 3c: Notice where you create dualistic alternatives. What do you gain by doing that?

Acceptance and refutation of frustration are not opposites, but can be a beautiful oneness.

The attitude that comes into being from this unity expresses everything that is compatible with life's nature. It creates a relaxed, confident, trustful state. It negates unfair special treatment. It has humility and is generous in the sense of dispensing with the temptation to play the same old game of feeling victimized and accusatory.

In this way, you become active and, at the same time, receptive so that the creative substance can begin to sprout forth for you. Life's limitation for you will be overcome. When this right blend exists of the right way of accepting and refuting a frustration of life, you possess yourself. You truly own yourself. And conversely, when you get involved with the wrong blend of acceptance and refutation of a frustration in life, you become alienated from yourself. You become decentralized, for your own innermost, best forces are automatically inactivated by the wrong blend. The negativity thus generated paralyzes all that in you which is essential for true selfhood. PL 179

Aspect 2. Being True to Yourself

The second aspect, which is a prerequisite for self-possession, is being true to yourself. This may mean many things. It means

- living for the sake of the truth of the issue, that momentarily is problematic;
- being true to your feelings, opinions, innermost expressions rather than those of others;
- being true to the truth of the moment, which may be so disguised, so covered up by complicated twists in the minds of everyone involved that, again.
- it requires wanting to see a reality beyond the apparent one.

In any problematic situation, people suffer most because they cannot disentangle the many pros and cons, the if's and the but's. This is always so when self-alienation exists, and the central point has been lost.

Self-possession can only be regained when the utter willingness is expressed to see the deeper truth, which always conciliates apparent outer conflicts, whether within the person or between the person and others.

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This inner reality reveals itself when the self is willing to sacrifice **self-will, pride, and fear** (defenses) for the sake of truth, for the sake of that which is most positive under the circumstances. Again, this often requires, at first, a great amount of will power to reject the line of least resistance, which is to insist on viewing the issue only according to one's personal case against life with all the complaints, the victimization, the accusation. PL 179

Exercise 3d: I suggest a meditation that reaches deep into the self and says: *"I do want to see where I possibly violate some spiritual law, where I am wrong in the usual sense of the word. And I would also like to know where I am weak and confused and, because of it, negative emotions come into existence. Where is it that I am perhaps not aware of my values and, because of this lack of awareness, I fight in the wrong way? I would like to see these elements and straighten them out.."* *Positivity and Negativity: One Energy Current* PL 148

How Reason, Will, and Emotion Personality Types Relate to this Process

Being true to oneself must dispense with the tendency to submit, conform, and appease others, which is done solely for the sake of receiving their approval. This leads to nothing but sharp resentments and further feelings of injustice. *[a common defense of Emotion-based personalities, who **fear** conflict because it brings unpleasure, so seems to destroy love]*

Man must also dispense with the prideful desire to prove himself better than others and impress the world around him. *[Reason-based personalities withdraw behind what can be proven, and see their defenses as superior (**pride**) to brute force or emotional neediness]*

However, he must also dispense with the equally damaging tendency to prove his independence by sheer blind and meaningless rebellion. The latter leads to no more selfhood than the submission to other people's standards, although it is often falsely assumed that it means strength and true independence. *[Will personalities defend with aggressive **self-will**].*

In reality, a self is just as weak when it blindly closes itself up to other people as the self who repeats other people's values like a parrot. Again we have two apparent opposites. PL 179

Exercise 3e: The right kind of self-assertion, including the risk to be criticized, leads to an openness of mind that can afford to truly listen to and weigh what others have to say, in an honest way, asking for but one thing, *"Is this a truth? Could it be my truth?"*

When the answer is affirmative, it ceases to be someone else's value. It becomes indeed one's own value and truth. PL 179

When man is involved in the negative manifestation of this chain reaction, the limited, bleak nature of life he experiences seems the reality, and words such as these seem wishful thinking. The longer one dwells in the destructive defenses of accusing and self-victimizing, the more real this temporary, limited, and false life becomes, the tighter the prison doors close although those doors have been self-erected.

They are nevertheless prison doors, and must be opened by the self.

The false reality, the apparent reality, draws in the self that has created it, deeper and deeper, so that it seems almost impossible to ever get out of it. For there seems nothing outside; there is no outside for him who has tricked himself in that way. PL 179

Week 4: Reframing Problems as Challenges

Man must find his way back in his long, long journey to the truth of the nature of life. He must see the trick his mind has played on him, by focusing only on negative views of life, thereby developing negative attitudes, and therefore experiencing life in the exact way he is perceiving it. At the same time, there may be, and probably is, another area in you in which conditions are totally different.

The average human being is involved in this trick of the mind in some areas. These are then referred to as "his problems." But he is by no means negatively involved in all areas of his life. So it would be a mistake to ascertain either the positive or the negative chain reaction in you as the only truth of your condition. You will find that you have both. In some individuals, the positive is stronger, in some the negative.

This is not so because life has been good to you. It is the other way round. Having confidence in the richness of life in this respect, you are relaxed, unfearful, trusting. You are not easily threatened or frightened. You maintain a positive attitude even if there are occasional difficulties and disappointments which you more or less master whenever they come up. Thus the good that life gives you becomes more and more effortless and self-perpetuating. Look closely; you will see that, at least in this particular area, you can afford to be yourself; you are not strained or anxious and not particularly worried about what others think about you in this respect. You possess yourself; thus you can afford to be generous and give of yourself. You are neither submissive nor rebellious. Ideas or advice from others are considered for what they are and either accepted and made your own or rejected without fear of displeasing. PL 179

Link 1 - Perception; we experience life based upon how we perceive it to be.

Link 2 - Attitude; an expectation of abundance vs defensiveness

Link 3 - Self-Possession vs Self-Alienation;

Aspect 1: Learning to deal with frustration

Aspect 2: Being true to yourself

Exercise 4a: Look at the area of your life where you find yourself fulfilled and happy. You will undoubtedly see that your concept and expectation of life in this area is very positive. Then look at an area in your life that feel unfulfilled, where you are unhappy with how things are. What is your concept of life here? What are your expectations?

What if everything seems to follow the Negative chain reaction?

Human beings who have only the positive chain reactions or only the negative ones are the exception. The former is a self-realized person; the latter cannot function at all in reality. He is not within society and is perhaps in jail, or he is a mentally ill human being. Most human beings are somewhere in the middle. They have some positive and some negative chain reactions working within them. Their path of growth must lie in the discovery of the latter so that they can be transformed into the former. The more this process takes place, the nearer self-realization comes.

If you approach yourself from this particular point of view and really work through these chain reactions, you will see, my friends, that the battle is at first enormous. To make the click from the negative to the positive chain seems impossible. In this battle, you have to take into

consideration that there is another reality beyond the one you experience. This will be easier to do when you have first established a connection with, and an awareness of, a positive chain reaction within yourself. You have then an excellent basis of comparison on every point we have raised here. However, this must not be done in a superficial way. If you do this in depth and with a felt experience of all the links under discussion, you have a very good key to understand yourself and your problems.

When you actually come to the full recognition of the negative belief about a specific area of fulfillment in your life, and when you go deeply enough (always with the help of meditation), you will see, first only in ever so subtle and concealed a way, that it is tempting to believe in the negative. After a while, you will see that this attitude is actually quite strong and obvious and not so subtle at all. The temptation consists of a variety of feelings and attitudes. PL179

Exercise 4b: Explore an area of your life where you hold on to negativity or are unhappy. Notice:

-- For instance, it seems secure to expect the worst, one cannot be disappointed. This is particularly important because of the inability to cope with frustration.

-- There is also an element of spite in this negative attitude and expectation of life, as if the individual wanted to accuse life of meanness.

These are perhaps the most important aspects of the fascination and attraction to hold on to a negative outlook. If this satisfaction cannot be relinquished, there is no hope to come out of the cycle of doom. The false doom must be challenged, *and only you can do this*. PL 179

How to Challenge the feelings of false doom

The more often you express the desire -- and the firm intention to see another reality behind the one you are used to -- in the particular area in question, the more infallibly this will happen. First, gradually, and with interruptions --as a vague outline of a new landscape appearing on the horizon, a new vista. But it will feel more real than anything you have ever known, even though it is tenuous at first. It must be recaptured again and again, for the old fascination with the negative belief is ingrained, and the habit must be broken over and over.

This is another important point, not to be misled by limited expectations of possible alternatives. This is why it is so very important to let the mind be flexible and wide open, not to close doors with preconceived notions but let life present its own manifold possibilities, which you cannot even perceive when you are totally geared to only one or two ways. You have to make yourself wide open for other possibilities than the ones conceived of.

When the ability exists to take no for an answer, this flexibility will also be there. You will see how very often the no turns into a yes once it is thoroughly understood.

Every one of you who follows this intensive pathwork should use this key. Although every link in the chain reaction is, in itself, not a new discovery, their connection and continuity is of great importance. You will see something about yourself that needs clarification so that "switching tracks," so to speak, will become easier. This way you can make a new reality unfold for you. PL 179

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