

Pathwork™ Steps

The Importance of Experiencing All Feelings & The Dynamic State of Laziness

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PL 190 Part 1/2
Full text of this plus all other lectures may be downloaded from www.pathwork.org

Week 1: The Double Illusion of Self-Illusion

Week 2: Laziness as a Dynamic State of Being

Week 3: Laziness as a Symptom of Self-Alienation

Week 4: The Gateway Prayer

Week 1: The Double Illusion of Self-Illusion

We all know, my friends, how important, how essential it is to face and accept those aspects, feelings, convictions, and attitudes in you which are either not at all conscious or not sufficiently so. Unless this awareness is cultivated it is impossible to free the innermost center of your being, the nucleus from which all life springs. As far as it is possible to generalize, many of you are in a position to

- 1) acknowledge your destructive, negative, cruel, hostile, and selfish feelings and attitudes.
- 2) see the mechanisms of your defenses to some extent -- [even if not to the fullest extent].

Even this partial awareness makes so much difference! It shifts your entire position toward yourself. You no longer required to defend your defenses, to pretend to be so perfect that everything in you ought to be "right." The capacity to own up to being fallible, human, vulnerable, irrational, wrong, needy, defenseless, weak, and unhappy must by necessity increase your capacity to be strong, truly right (not self-righteous), truly independent and fulfilled.

The admission of heretofore apparently inadmissible feelings is the bridge to inner unity and fulfilling self-expression of life.

The acceptance of your hate will make you more loving, the acceptance of your weakness more strong, the acceptance of your pain more blissful.

These apparent paradoxes have often been pointed out by me, but I believe that many of you have actually begun to experience their truth. To whatever degree you have accomplished this shedding of defenses and have thus become that much more real, you have gained significant ground. It will make the further steps in that direction easier, for the beginning is always the most difficult -- in any given phase and in every respect. To remove self-illusions seems at first insurmountably difficult, for all human beings vaguely believe that the underlying truth is unacceptable and makes them unacceptable.

Thus a double illusion must be removed -- the underlying belief in question, as well as the cover of it. This is always the most arduous part of the pathwork. It cannot be accomplished in one swoop. It proceeds in stages and sections.

Exercise 1: Acknowledge Your Progress

1. Notice what negative feelings you are better able to acknowledge today, that you have avoided feeling in the past. Has this willingness encouraged self-hatred or self-love?
2. See if you can identify a moment that inspired you to stay conscious about your spiritual path. While we have many experiences of spiritual awakening throughout our lives, these are often followed by years or even decades of disconnection. Identify an insight / epiphany / experience that most directly led to the spiritual work that you are continuing today.
3. Reflect upon the progress you have made since you have been on your journey of self-discovery and self-understanding. Only consider the progress, without judging it as too little, too slow, too late, etc. Give yourself credit for work done (vs. work you imagined was possible).
4. If you were able to acknowledge any faults, negativities, and / or selfish attitudes, did that acknowledgement help or hinder your progress? Did admitting them facilitate making any changes?
5. Are you able to see some mechanisms of your defense system? Symptoms of being in defense are so well known that every culture has idioms to describe them:
 - Physical feelings of tension (freezing up, preparing for a fight or flight decision)
 - Sudden emotional shifts. Emotional explosions can 'blow people away' by overwhelming, confusing or frightening them.. Besides rage, intense grief, fear, or submission (such as pleading or begging) can be consciously or unconsciously used as defenses.
 - We can also 'go cold' or 'harden our heart' when we feel vulnerable.
 - Searching for excuses or justifications, where the mind races around 'like a rat in a trap' 'looking for a way out'.

If the answers to these questions are not easy to find in the moment, use them as the focus of your Daily Review for a week. By reviewing minor disharmonies on a regular basis, we are able to see behavior patterns that have not yet resulted in negative consequences or prompted feedback from others.

Daily Review PL 28

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

Exercise: Keep a record of incidents that disturb you. Focusing upon subtleties may help us from becoming distracted by exaggerating or over-dramatizing a situation. Notice feelings of discomfort, where you suspect you may be uninformed, ignorant, unprepared, or unaware.

Each week, see if you can relate with the sub-topic.

All you need is a ½ page of lined paper per day. Create 4 columns. At some point during each day, jot down brief notes about each incident (limit: 10 per day). Eventually, this can become a thought process. The Guide refers to Daily Review as 'spiritual hygiene'.

1. Two to three words to identify each incident (no details)
2. What feelings or emotional reactions came up
3. The judgments or conclusions you came to at the time

At the end of each week, read through your entries and complete the last column:

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

Week 2: Laziness as a Dynamic State of Being

All that is evil, destructive, negative in human nature is a result of defending against experiencing painful, undesirable feelings. This stagnates energy.

When feelings stagnate, energy stagnates. And if energy stagnates, you cannot move.

As you know and have heard me say many times: feelings are moving energy currents. They transform constantly from one set or type of feelings into another if the energy flows freely.

The lack of experiencing feelings stops the movement, and therefore stops living energy.

When the natural energy flow is halted within your soul substance, you find yourself in the position of "laziness"; that is, movement is possible only when it is forced by the outer will, so that it is painful -- hence the hankering that exists in so many people for an inactive life, which seems most desirable.

Natural movement is a spontaneous expression of the inner energy flow, that is never experienced as arduous or painful nor as tiring or undesirable in any other way.

So, my friends, when you find yourself in the position of stagnancy, laziness, passivity, inertia and when you desire nothing more than to do nothing (which is often confused with the spiritual state of being), you have a good *gauge* that there are feelings in you which have created psychic toxicity, because you were loath to experience and acknowledge them.

The stagnation of energy matter traps not only feelings, but concepts as well.

Single occurrences are generalized and held on to. It is rare that stagnant feelings do not also include stagnant conceptualizations of life. These may exist in the deepest recesses of the soul, totally hidden from consciousness. This is what I called years ago the "images" that are held within the psyche. I helped you find these images, and you saw how you were compelled to reexperience misconceptions and stagnant feelings.

Over and over again you are entrapped in the cycle of reproducing the past -- in one way or another -- until you summon the courage of living through *now* what was *not* lived through before.

You cannot come out of these cycles, no matter how good your intentions are and how much effort you use in other ways (and as a substitute for experiencing your feelings), unless you really fully do so.

You must cross the threshold behind which you still harbor deep feelings, so tucked away that you are not at all aware of them -- and therefore can still delude yourself that present unhappinesses and bad moods just befall you out of nowhere, out of bad luck.

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Exercise 2a: Consider this explanation of how feelings facilitate movement, like air circulation keeps a room from becoming stuffy. List the reasons people might prefer such stuffy, stagnant air! See if you can understand laziness from this perspective -- as a defense against free movement.

The Dynamic State of Laziness

There is an intimate connection between the problem of laziness and feelings that have not been fully lived through, felt through. Laziness must not be looked upon as an attitude that can be given up at will if only the person finally comes around to being reasonable and constructive. It is not a moralistic issue at all.

Laziness is a manifestation of apathy, stagnation, paralysis. All of this is a result of stagnant energy in the soul substance. And stagnant soul substance is, in truth, the result of feelings that have not been fully experienced, expressed and are not totally understood as to their meaning, significance, and true origin in this life. When feelings are not thus experienced, understood, and expressed, they accumulate, they create a stoppage in the flow of life force.

It is not enough to know and to deduce that you must have certain feelings from your past, adding up logically to the present circumstances, but such knowing and deducing is often the necessary opening in allowing yourself the deeper experience. It permits you to make room for the possibility, as it were, which then lets the existent fact emerge as emotional experience. However, the knowing can be a barricade. When you replace the feeling with knowing, the unity of these two functions is interrupted in the same way as when you feel and do not know what the feelings mean, why and how they came about, nor how they direct your life now.

This, too, is not new, for I often pointed out to you that feeling and knowing are not really two separate functions, but tail ends of the same phenomenon. Thus knowing can be as much a defense against feeling as not knowing, denying the knowledge of the feeling can be. This is a good example to show why rules cannot be made about these things. You will always have to look into yourself to see how you use a given approach.

There still exist many defenses against the full experience of accumulated feelings in you, my friends, in spite of so much progress. Knowing this will help you to focus your attention and awareness upon it so that you can overcome it more and more. You can systematically lower the threshold of defending against deep experiences that have accumulated in you and become poisonous if they are not released. And they cannot be released if they are not felt, known, expressed, lived through -- lived through as fully as possible.

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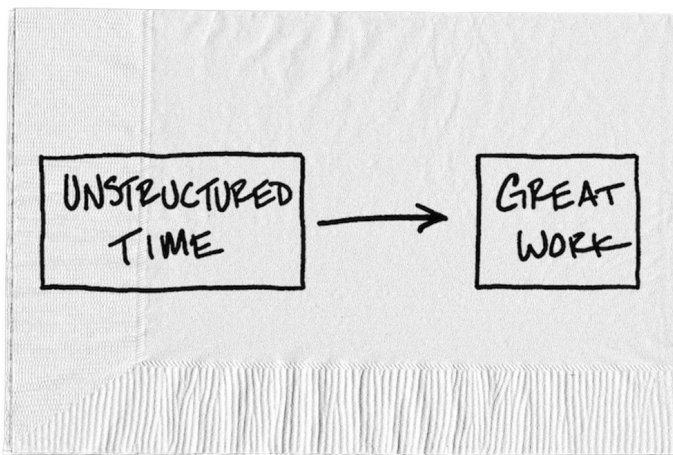


Image by Carl Richards, as The Sketch Guy for The NY Times

Exercise 2b: Consider the illustration indicating that unstructured time (notice - no details or instructions on what that would look like!) can lead to great work. Have you ever found this to be true?

Notice if you resist taking time off, or how you feel when you have an urge to relax and take a break. Do you feel others will judge you? Do you judge yourself? Are you honestly productive by 'staying busy' all the time, or is that a paradoxical form of laziness, by not exploring what you need?

Laziness Prohibits Spiritual Growth

The violation of spiritual law within the psychic organism simply creates a climate ill equipped to "endure" blissful, joyous feelings. Also, ignoring the truth, being oblivious of what you are and do and the ramifications of your attitudes, the fact that you are not in possession of the awareness of the power at your disposal that is contained in your mere thinking and feeling process, all this ignorance creates the obstruction.

For example, if you do not believe it is possible to be truly happy, it becomes indeed impossible. So the problem has to be solved in this respect by cultivating this inner knowledge. And this in turn is only feasible by losing the fear of self-responsibility and facing the entire truth about who you are at this moment.

[Fear of Bliss vs. Longing for It](#) PL 170

Do not hold on in stubbornness. Do not believe that this means to "give in" or that it may mean to show "lack of character," my friends. What an immature notion this is! This is not the question here at all! The question remains always, what is true?

For God is truth, as well as wisdom and love. And if you deny truth for any silly, stubborn, and childish notion, you thus deny God, at least in one aspect of your personality. And this is the only question that counts. Nothing else ever does, and can only be part of man's lower self even if clothed with apparently high sounding motives and coatings.

Jesus Christ PL 19

Stage 1, Question 4 asks members who wished to join the community:

Do you commit yourself to allow for any eventuality as far as the reality of Creation is concerned? You do not have to believe anything, but you need to remove a tight no in you that may barricade experience.

Are you willing to let yourself experience, without preconceived ideas, whatever is real?

[Stages of Commitment to the Pathwork](#) AD 6

Stage 2, Question 5 is about giving up collusion. It ends with:

This means giving up a momentary gratification and relief, a negative pleasure, and this would be your sacrifice for God, for the larger cause of which you have become a part.

[Stages of Commitment to the Pathwork](#) AD 6

Exercise 2c: There are a number of cultural practices and rituals that include 'giving something up' for a period of time; sweets during Christian Lent preceding Easter; meat on Fridays, for Catholics; fasting on Yom Kippur for Jews, or fasting during daytime hours for the entire month of Ramadan for Muslims. There are also lifetime prohibitions in many cultures and religions -- against various foods (Buddhists do not eat animal products), or against specific actions.

Consider your habits and leisure time activities. Are there any that you sense are counter-productive to your desire for spiritual growth? Consider how you might curb, limit, or eliminate just one of these. Would you be willing to give up one of these 'momentary gratifications or reliefs' in order to advance your spiritual process?

Whether you say Yes or No, notice any cause and effect from this commitment / refusal.

Week 3: Laziness as a Symptom of Self-Alienation

So many people are held back from living by a feeling of tiredness and even apathy. This can make you feel angry and guilty about what you would commonly call laziness. It, too, is a symptom, one of the many effects of self-alienation.

It is generally assumed that laziness is simply a fault. This is a very superficial evaluation, however. Laziness is not a fault, to be commanded away by sheer will.

For if you are truly anchored in the center of your being, you will not be lazy. You will not feel apathetic. You will not desire to remain idle. You will enjoy your periods of rest and relaxation, but this has nothing to do with laziness or apathy. You will enter the full flow of life, approaching each day and each activity with zest. The less you are alienated from yourself, the more you will participate in and experience life in its fullness. The necessary energies will constantly regenerate and replenish themselves.

Laziness as a Symptom of Self-Alienation PL 96 Q&A

Most human beings create an agitated mind, an over-activity of the thinking processes, of inner and outer over-activity because they are basically frightened of the possibility that they may be empty, that there may be nothing there from within to sustain them. This thought is rarely conscious. And then the first reaction is very often, *"I do not even want to acknowledge that I am afraid of this. I'd rather continue busying my mind in order not to face this terror that I am nothing inside, that I am but a shell that needs the sustenance from without and that needs to deny this fearful knowledge."*

It is of utmost importance that you face this fear and deal with it openly. You need to create an atmosphere and a climate within yourself in which you allow this emptiness to exist. If you cannot let yourself be empty, you can never be filled. Out of the emptiness, a new fullness will arise; yet you cannot disregard and deny and step over that fear of your emptiness. It must, like everything else, be gone through. My advice here is that you challenge that belief and at the same time welcome the emptiness as the doorway to your divinity.

Creative Emptiness PL 224

Exercise 3a: Repeat the reaction above (in italics) several times over a day or two. Does it feel familiar? Explore your terror about being nothing – notice the logical absurdity of that belief!

Finding Time for Personal Work

Whenever you are on the defensive, your primary aim cannot be truth. Defensiveness is not truth-producing. It does not give truth and reality breathing space. Wherever there is this defensive wall, concern at that moment must be with warding off an accusation which you believe might bring rejection, frustration, hurt.

In this moment, it subtly becomes more important for you to prove that the accusation is unjustified, even if it contains elements of truth, rather than to find the elements of truth it contains. Thus you run away from truth, therefore from yourself, and therefore from life. Pretense and self-deception, self-alienation and isolation must be the result. In defensiveness, you not only damage your physical body, but you limit your thoughts, your range of emotions, your concepts, your creativity, your spiritual life, your ability to relate to others, your inner freedom, your concern with truth as such, and therefore your ability to love and respect yourself and others.

All this is due to a completely erroneous concept of perfectionism in which you believe your value and acceptability to be at stake because of your imperfections.

[*The Defense*](#) PL 101

You will always realize that a **grain of truth** is even in two apparently contradictory concepts. In order to really understand what I say -- it is so difficult to press these concepts into your language -- it is of utmost necessity that you do not cling to the exact wording and to the "logical" exactness, if I may say so, but that you let your feelings generously dwell on it and connect your knowledge and your feelings. Then the recognition, which cannot be replaced by words, will grow in you.

[*Reality – Reflected Image*](#) PL 10

Notice how often you are convinced you lack the energy and/or time to go into the depths of your feelings, while you spend a lot of energy on other activities, that you convince yourself are a priority. But no matter how vitally important they are, they cannot ever be more important than this, for this is your reason for living, your task as well as the key to productive living right now.

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Exercise 3b: Ask: *Is my spiritual progress a priority for me? If not now, when?*

Then ask yourself the tough, practical question: *How can I start this process?*

Be willing to take small first steps vs. looking for perfection.

The Dualistic Split

The human predicament is the dualistic split, which is nothing but a delusion of perception. This delusion has many facets.

-- **One is a split in man's consciousness of himself.** He may feel one thing, believe another, and act without knowing how both these functions govern him.

-- **Lack of awareness** of what man feels, and what he really believes, creates another facet of the split. When you unify knowing and feeling, you work towards mending and integration, which manifests as a wonderful new awakening and sense of wholeness.

-- **When feelings are not experienced** in their full intensity and reality, the inner life flow must become stagnant. The person will consequently find himself inexplicably paralyzed. His actions become ineffectual; life seems to obstruct all his goals and desires. He finds closed doors to realizing his talents, his needs, himself. So-called laziness may be one manifestation.

-- **A lack of creativity is another.**

-- **A feeling of general despair**, without being able to pinpoint it, may be another. (In this latter instance, the person may often "use" a current event or difficulty to explain away his inner state.) A sense of futility and confusion about life and his role in it must envelop man when he resists living through the feelings he harbors and goes on harboring because he deludes himself into the assumption that avoiding the feelings will hurt him less than exposing them.

There are many other manifestations which I have discussed many times. The inability to feel pleasure, to fully experience life, is one of the most widespread, general effects. And there is no other way to become alive than the course I suggest again and again.

Pl 190

Exercise 3c: Which of these delusions have you experienced?

Week 4: The Gateway Prayer

The realization of your spiritual self with all its joy, safety, and peace is right "behind" the sadness and pain. It cannot be activated by a direct act of will nor by practices and actions that leave out what I try to convey to you again and again. But the realization of your spiritual center manifests inexorably as a by-product and as the indirect act of will to go through your denied and not experienced feelings.

I will terminate this lecture by telling you that the fear is not real. It is truly an illusion, but you must go through it by feeling it.

Through the gateway of feeling your weakness lies your strength;
Through the gateway of feeling your pain lies your pleasure and joy;
Through the gateway of feeling your fear lies your security and safety;
Through the gateway of feeling your loneliness
lies your capacity to have fulfillment, love, and companionship;
Through the gateway of feeling your hate lies your capacity to love;
Through the gateway of feeling your hopelessness
lies true and justified hope;
Through the gateway of accepting the lacks of your childhood
lies your fulfillment now.
Through these gateways you will find true life.

When you experience all these feelings and states, it is essential that you do not delude yourself into believing they are caused by anything you experience or fail to experience now. Whatever the now brings forth, it does so only because the past still resides in your system.

All the many temptations that beckon you to follow paths which imply that it is possible to find the spiritual reality of yourself without going through these gateways are wishful thinking.

There is no way around what has accumulated in you and has poisoned your whole system -- your spiritual, your psychological, and often also your physical system. This poison can be eliminated only by feeling what you hoped you could avoid feeling.

Then a new energy influx comes in ever greater measure. The self-punishment for hatred and spite, for cruelty and greed, for selfishness and one-sided demands upon others must be transcended into the terror of your fear, your shame, your pain. When you stop fighting this, you will become real, open, and alive.

PL 190

Exercise 4a: Please spend some time with the Gateway Prayer, to see if you are willing to believe in its promises. The process of experiencing all feelings may act as an accelerant to your spiritual process; seriously consider if you are ready to absorb and integrate these fulfillments.