

Pathwork on

Experiencing Pleasure In A Frustrating World

This is a quote from Pathwork Lecture 149 *Cosmic Pull Toward Union – Frustration*. I found that I could not summarize this quote adequately without diluting the message. If this topic attracts you, I encourage you to read this quote from time to time, and slowly so that the words sink deeply into your heart, mind, body and soul.

I find that this quote supports and is supported by the psychophysical therapy I get from Ed Gutfreund (<http://www.presencepractice.com/edprofile.html>) who has trained with, among others, Bill Bowen (founder of Psycho-Physical Therapy and author of *Somatic Resourcing – Psychotherapy Through the Body* - <http://www.psychophysicaltherapy.com>).

24	<p>Now I would like to discuss a feature of the human personality that seems relatively insignificant, merely psychological, yet it has a deep meaning and connection with the pull toward union, which I will point out later. The feature I want to talk about is frustration. Like all human attitudes, frustration can easily be distorted into two opposites, both equally destructive. Everyone knows that the inability to tolerate frustration constitutes a severe personality disturbance and impairs one's character. When frustration is not handled properly, it inflicts pain on the self and on others. The traits that impede coping with frustration are greed, self-centeredness, blindness, and fear. The person who believes himself enlightened without really being so, falsely postulates resignation, martyrdom, and abstinence in order to avoid revealing the negative traits. He thinks that in this way he can learn the great, important attitude of inner relaxation.</p>
25	<p>It is by no means true that the only alternatives are [intense insistence, rigid demands], or [renunciation of happiness and fulfillment]. Both extremes are equally erroneous, leading to very similar results and stemming from the same underlying problem. The wrong attitude about frustration is harmful for obvious reasons. It impairs relationships, self-respect, and inner peace.</p>
26	<p>I shall now discuss frustration as it relates to the pleasure principle. The infant, striving for its pleasure, is in its blindness incapable of tolerating frustration because it ignores future possibilities. When the psyche fails to mature, the same attitude continues, and an apparent contradiction ensues: the less one can endure <u>frustration</u>, the less one experiences the <u>pleasure</u>.</p> <p>Rigidly insistent people lose the pleasure they strive for, either because their very striving makes attainment impossible, or, even when they succeed, their inner state makes enjoyment impossible. Such people cannot win.</p>

	<p>For real pleasure to be felt, a relaxed inner state is necessary. A flexible inner climate must prevail, producing a life-affirming, positive, inclusive attitude.</p> <p>The person who, inwardly or outwardly, rebels against postponed gratification is angry, exclusive, negative, tense, and stubborn. All these traits defeat the life principle and the pleasure stream. It is human error to assume that what you want is more important and pleasure-producing than your state of mind.</p>
27	<p>When you misunderstand the importance of tolerating frustration, distorted responses, such as martyrdom, abstinence, and resignation are adopted in a so-called spiritual guise, and render pleasure impossible. Instead, feelings of hopelessness and waste set in.</p> <p>Since pleasure is a byproduct of the cosmic stream it cannot possibly be considered unimportant.</p> <p>But the other distorted response to frustration -- insistence and rigidity with a "do or die" attitude -- are equally erroneous.</p>
28	<p>Only when individuals learn to let go, to allow the self to postpone having its own way <u>right now</u> <i>without</i> renouncing fulfillment, then, and only then, is the necessary climate established to let the cosmic flow stream forth.</p> <p>In other words, everyone has to seek the inner experience of letting go and relaxing.</p> <p>This does not mean relinquishing forever, <u>but</u> relaxing into pleasure through the power of gentle letting go.</p> <p>My words will sound obscure or even contradictory if you have never experienced this feeling. But those of you who have occasionally had an inkling of it will grasp the power of what I am saying and will use this information consciously and deliberately.</p>
29	<p>Such a gentle letting go applies to <u>anything</u>, on <u>all</u> levels of existence. It may apply to any little or big wish, any fulfillment you desire.</p> <p>If you feel inwardly tense and are unwilling to relax into an attitude of wise, positive reasonableness and humility, <u>without ceasing</u> to seek complete fulfillment, you separate yourself from feeling good.</p> <p>But often the temptation to remain in the tense state is great, for anger and self-pity offer a substitute gratification.</p>

	<p>The ego must make its most constructive inner effort to let go of this. A tiny point of effort is often all you need. The rest follows by itself, and the ego is carried by the inner forces activated in the process.</p> <p>Once the tension is abandoned, pleasure follows. The flexibility of relaxing into what is, <u>even</u> if what is at the moment is not what you want, <u>must ultimately bring you what you want</u> –</p> <p>1) First, by giving you a good feeling about yourself and by putting you in harmony with the cosmic movement within your psyche.</p> <p>2) Later, the thing you want will also come; it <u>must</u> come, as a matter of course, according to the law of cause and effect.</p>
30	<p>This climate is essential to establish the inner knowledge that <u>all fulfillment is potentially yours</u> and can actually be yours through your knowing this.</p> <p>But only when you know this in an atmosphere of letting go, of relaxation, can your wishes materialize.</p> <p>When you are in a state of "I must have it," they cannot materialize. The tension itself is hostile to the necessary harmony that has the potential for fulfillment.</p>
31	<p>These ideas are not easy to grasp when you first hear them. They will require not only study but seeing how you yourself are <u>inwardly tense about not getting your way</u>. Or, perhaps, you have embraced the opposite extreme: <u>resignation</u>. It is simply the reverse of the same coin.</p> <p>When you see either or both of these attitudes fluctuating, then you can proceed to reach for the experience of letting go, relaxing into the <u>pleasure of letting go</u>. Little by little, you will remove the blocks that constrict you.</p>