

Pathwork on
Dealing with Defeats, Large and Small

This quote from Pathwork Lecture 85 *Distortions of the Instincts of Self-Preservation and Procreation*, offers a practical way of facing and growing through inevitable defeats in life. It states the importance of identifying areas of defeat in one's life, especially the small day-to-day defeats, which are often missed, and then the importance of facing these daily defeats with maturity. Steady growth is the result.

23	<p>Both soul currents, being utterly self-centered, prohibit you from experiencing and dealing with defeat. From the findings you have made in connection with your idealized self-image, you know that its nature is very proud. This pride cannot admit defeat. Since defeat is occasionally inevitable, when it does come, it threatens the very ground you stand on, the precarious pseudo-safety of your idealized self-image. The healthy personality can take defeat. You all have to take it. No one can escape it. But how do you take defeat? That is the question! It is possible that your outer behavior in defeat leaves nothing to be desired. But we are not concerned with appearances. We are not even concerned with your thoughts. We are concerned with the inner truth, with the inner experience, with what you really feel. And that is not so easy to bring into awareness. It takes considerable willpower, self-honesty, and patience to become aware of how you really feel.</p>
24	<p>It is sometimes easy for a person successfully to experience a big defeat in an important issue in life. But the small daily rejections and failures threaten your security and belief in yourself. They cause shame or humiliation that has to be hidden from others so that your defeat will not be exposed. Test yourself on how you embellish a situation to your friends; how you hide by subtly coloring that which seems painful and humiliating for you; how you belittle others who are supposedly responsible for your defeat to save face. All these reactions, and many more, indicate the truth about what your attitude really is to defeat. Test how you fear exposure of certain reactions and incidents and how you avoid them. Examining these ingrained reactions which have truly become second nature is more difficult than finding deeply hidden, important new insights. Here you have to deal with what is quite on the surface. But you have become so accustomed to examining the deeper reactions that it hardly occurs to you to examine the surface reactions and behavior patterns.</p>
25	<p>To experience defeat in a healthy, mature way presupposes true humility, not a false superimposed one. It presupposes a certain generosity of feeling, a certain greatness in that you can admit defeat without loss of dignity. This very attitude actually brings dignity. The child in you believes that the less defeat you suffer, the greater you are. Nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is that you are great to the degree that you cope with defeat honestly, humbly, with dignity and poise; without embellishment, projection, humiliation, or pretense.</p>

26	<p>The pretense can go in either of two opposite directions, again according to your personality structure and chosen pseudo-solution. If your pseudo-solution is the quest for power, then your reaction to defeat will be extreme humiliation that has to be hidden at any cost. This very process of concealment takes a heavy toll on your life-force. It induces such a deep guilt and fear of exposure that its effects are too numerous to be discussed at this point. You may or may not succeed in keeping the truth from yourself. Usually you half-see the deception and pretense, and remain half unaware of the extent to which you deceive others as well as yourself.</p>
27	<p>One way of dealing with a defeat that cannot be hidden is to belittle others by making them seem responsible, so that your defeat becomes theirs. This creates additional guilt in you. The hostility flows in two directions, toward others and yourself.</p>
28	<p>If your pseudo-solution is the quest for serenity, you will deny the very existence of defeat as long as possible. There is in this course a dangerous self-deception; the lack of awareness of what you really feel, why you act in certain ways as a result.</p>
29	<p>Even if a person predominantly uses only one of these pseudo-solutions, one or both of the other tendencies still exist. It is possible to deal with one defeat in one way and differently with another defeat. All this has to be individually found and applied.</p>
30	<p>My advice is to ask yourself, "How do I really take defeat?" Not how it appears, but how you feel about it, deep inside. Think back to recent happenings or into the past. When did something occur that was a defeat for you? What is or is not a defeat may vary with each person. What to one would seem a major personal disaster, a loss of face, another will not experience as such. A professional setback may not be a defeat if your attitude is relatively mature in this area. You may regret or dislike any material disadvantage resulting from the setback, but you will not feel as though your value as a human being, your dignity, is at stake. However, you may have an overly strong reaction to little incidents, such as a person being unfriendly or unpleasant one day. Not being greeted may seem like a defeat. Though you may not think of it in these terms, your emotional reaction may amount to just that.</p>
31	<p>So when I invite you to question your attitude toward defeat, do not only think about what is generally recognized as such. You have to find what you experience as defeat, humiliation, failure. Search in this direction, my friends. For once you recognize this, a great wave of inner strength will come, as it always does from any healthy self-recognition and insight. Merely by observing your reactions, you will weaken the defeat's negative impact. Beware of superimposing the ideal reaction that you are not yet ready for over your actual</p>

	emotions.
32	<p>Just observe, and little by little you will grow into true dignity. You will lose your sense of shame, which, after all, is nothing but the reverse side of the inordinate pride of the idealized self-image that cannot allow for any semblance of defeat. As your idealized self-image weakens, you will no longer command yourself to be victorious at all times, so you will not feel exposed and humiliated when you suffer defeat. You will thus gain the true dignity that will set you free. You no longer have to fight against impossible odds. You no longer have to keep up a pretense. You no longer have to exhaust yourself senselessly to grab at victory that cannot be yours at all times. You no longer have to exhaust yourself at proving something. We have often discussed this "proving current." Some of you have detected its existence. Some of you realize how much energy it takes.</p>
33	<p>At first all this is difficult to find, even though it is partly on the surface. You look away from it because it is so subtle and so easily camouflaged. The less you are aware of it, the greater is the obstruction to freedom and strength; to happiness, inner health, and peace.</p>