

Pathwork on
Desirelessness, Healthy and Unhealthy

Desirelessness can be very tricky, sometimes healthy and at other times life-and-love-denying, and hence unhealthy. This quote from Pathwork Lecture #39 *Image Finding* provides some helpful perspectives on this topic.

32	QUESTION: You wanted to talk tonight about the problem of desire versus renunciation.
33	ANSWER: On a previous occasion I said that desirelessness can be very easily misunderstood, especially if you happen to have an image which makes you afraid to live, afraid to feel, and afraid to love. The outer intellectual knowledge you may gain through spiritual teachings may support this very image and can be used as a rationalization for the pseudo-solution of withdrawal from life because the negative unconscious is constantly on the lookout to use such arguments to justify itself and its image.
34	With the knowledge you have gained since, you will now understand better why I said at the time that desirelessness has to be approached carefully, otherwise it will do more harm than good. People with this kind of image are very afraid to face the world, their feelings, and the unavoidable disappointments, so they withdraw and use desirelessness as a camouflage to fit their image. This is a very common phenomenon. Only those who have no such fear can understand the true meaning of desirelessness and renunciation.
35	Wherever fear of life is embedded in an image -- and many people have it to some degree -- the only way genuine desirelessness can be attained is by facing the fear of life and love. To risk the hurt and bear your fear that your desires will not be fulfilled, rather than trying to forcefully prevent yourself from going through this necessary stage of development, is important.
36	Only after having tasted voluntarily the hurts connected with desire will you be able to leave desire behind. You cannot do it by going around it, my dear friends. You cannot force yourself into a state of "desirelessness" you have not yet attained; this would amount to a lie and even to cheating. As long as you still have desires, you have to acknowledge them and go through them in order to honestly grow out of them. Gradually, in the organic growth that spiritual development always is, the hurts will become less, not because you fear and avoid them but because you are willing to face them. That is the only way renunciation and desirelessness can be obtained without error and self-deception. And only you, the individual, can be the judge of how useful it is to meditate about desirelessness at the moment.
37	Only if and when you are completely fearless of hurts and disappointments is the time ripe, my dear ones, and not before! If you have forced yourself into a

	<p>state of resignation, you have chosen with the unconscious motive of escaping what you fear. This is the only valid procedure: accepting that you still have desires and accepting their price. Because of the acceptance, your desires will differ from the desires of people who have no spiritual aims. Those people will let their self-will push ahead. Controlled by their desires, they will rebel against everything and everyone who stands in the way of the gratification of their desires.</p>
38	<p>But you who are on this path can evaluate these currents, viewing them from a distance and consciously controlling them, neither giving vent to them nor suppressing them. If you listen within yourself and interpret your feelings, you will be able to see where your self-will, pride, and ego claim gratification that your higher self deems wrong. Those who know that the purpose of life is not the gratification of self-will and that the sole purpose of life is not happiness, but that life is given to you to learn both from happiness and unhappiness, will not give in to the desires of the lower self. If you cannot help giving in to the lower self at times, you will learn an additional lesson from that. Only those who do not escape unhappiness can become happy. And only those who do not escape unhappiness can achieve true desirelessness, though perhaps only much later. So there lies the answer, my friends. And hearing these words, I hope you will not use the idea of desirelessness and renunciation to rationalize away your inner fears of life, of love, and of being hurt. ...</p>