

Pathwork on
Stages of Intimacy in Couplehood

This quote from Pathwork Lecture 80 *Cooperation, Communication, Union*, describes the development of intimacy in our primary relationship as we go through various overlapping stages from immature-independence (isolation), through co-dependence (immature-interdependency), true independence, true interdependency, and finally Union. Our life in couplehood flows and dances within these stages. In Union qualities in all preceding stages can be accepted – but Union requires a great deal of personal growth work in both parties. This growing experience of deeper and deeper intimacy is the beauty of couplehood, the dance of the “Path within the Path,” the Spice of Life.

04	The highest and most desirable state in the whole plan of evolution is union. Union on this earth plane does not exist. Some people have a vague idea of union, and in isolated moments they sense or feel the significance of that state of being. But then the moment passes. Since union simply <u>is</u> , it exists outside the law of cause and effect. Therefore there is no point in my discussing it. You could not possibly comprehend me and I could not find appropriate words in the human language to convey what it is.
05	I will, however, discuss two preliminary stages in the evolution toward union. These two stages do exist on your plane of existence and consciousness. They are, at the lower level, cooperation, and, at a higher level, communication. No living creature can exist without cooperation and communication. Even on the material level humanity could not survive without them. ...

08	All universal laws tend to work freely when the human entity is in harmony with them. However, if the human being is in disharmony with these laws, because of ignorance or lack of development, then the laws become broken, twisted, and distorted, and communication cannot take place. Thus the path to ultimate union is blocked until the harmonious laws are restored within the entity.
09	If you review earlier lectures on the manifold problems of the human soul, it should be easy to see how you break these laws. If you are overeager or overanxious, if your desire for communication is exaggerated into a craving, the soul forces will automatically become harsh, pointed, and rigid. Their movement will be sudden, and their impact on the other person's soul center, -- from which he or she in turn responds, often quite unconsciously -- will be too strong. The whole universe is based on balance, and whenever balance is upset, the universal forces work toward reestablishing it. This is often a painful process. For instance, the effect of aggressive communication must be that the other soul withdraws, because the corresponding inner forces restrict, and seem to reject, the overeager attempt at communication.

10	<p>In your everyday observations you can easily see this, especially in the work of self-search. You may be quite unaware of your hidden craving and exaggerated need; you may have covered it with a layer manifesting quite the opposite. Nevertheless, that which is really in you is what matters. And when you discover your exaggerated craving, you will understand that this hitherto unconscious current causes the door to close in the other person. You will then no longer interpret it as a personal rejection, but will understand that his or her unconscious soul forces must respond according to the law that reestablishes balance.</p>
11	<p>To better understand this process we have to be clear as to the meaning of overeagerness. You may think it is merely a strong positive quality, and as such it cannot or should not upset the natural balance. But this is not so. You will now understand that such overeagerness is a distortion, because the urgency of your need is not in truth. It is imaginary and, as the word implies, comes out of your images, conflicts, and distortions. In your unconscious you believe you <u>must</u> have love, affection, and attention. It is not a question of desiring them in healthy mutuality; there is in you a one-sided childish demand as though your very life were at stake. It is so forceful that the balancing forces cause the other person to withdraw from the exaggerated motion of your demand. If the person has inner unresolved conflicts and problems, the motivation for such withdrawal will be unconscious and negative. In the relatively healthy person, the response will be similar, but it will come from motives that are positive and conscious.</p>
12	<p>Try to visualize this strong, forward-surg-ing motion, with all the impact of the forcing current, and you will fully understand the inevitable response. Visualize the soul forces, and then remember incidents in which you were involved on either end. On some occasions the exaggerated need surged out of you and was repulsed; at other times, such forces were directed at you, and in spite of your desire for love and communication, you could not help but repulse it. Such observations will broaden your understanding and will prove very beneficial for you.</p>
13	<p>In the past, before you really penetrated the hidden regions and motivations of your soul forces, all these inner actions and reactions were unconscious. At best, you were faintly aware that something like this was happening. But now, as you continually progress on your path of self search, you have become much more aware. If you combine this awareness with knowledge of the laws of communication and balance, you will gain even deeper insights. They will guard you from drawing the wrong conclusion that your "love" is rejected and that, as a result, you are worth nothing. You will understand that your childish, exaggerated craving has nothing to do with healthy love, and that the former is actually the reason for the unhealthy impact and subsequent rejection.</p>
14	<p>Once you fully understand this, you will no longer need to protect yourself from hurt and disappointment when you do love, nor will you need to guard against loving. This pseudo-protection causes you to withdraw into isolation; you refuse to communicate. When you make no attempt to initiate contact, no</p>

	energy will be generated to seek out the other. Hence, nothing will happen. This is just as damaging as the other extreme of childish craving and forcing.
15	These are the two major distortions of the laws that govern communication, with many subdivisions and personal variants, which have to be found as they manifest in each individual. Only when you grow, and therefore become aware that the wrong reactions are due to wrong impressions, can you gradually change this state. Keep in mind, as you examine your inner reactions, that you constantly fluctuate between the extremes of over-eagerness coming from an exaggerated need, and withdrawal. Strange as this may sound, sometimes you pursue both alternatives simultaneously; at least you try to, just to be on the "safe side." No wonder your soul is torn in half and that your strength evaporates. No wonder you are in disharmony, unhappy, and hopeless. You seldom, if ever, realize for a moment that all the outer events you blame for the situation are the natural result of your inner state which you have brought about.
16	My friends, I say again that theoretical knowledge will avail you nothing. Only your personal work -- your personal search for these deviations, distortions, and errors -- will show you the truth of these laws. The truth is that outer events seemingly unrelated to your inner state are actually the very effects that you set in motion. The knowledge of such laws will liberate you and give you the strength and perseverance to learn gradually how to communicate without exaggerated need. As you know from my previous talks with you, this need comes, in one variation or another, from your childhood disappointments. You still have not come to terms with them and still try to overcome them by further exaggerating the need because you are driven by your unconscious reactions and motivations.
17	Once you fully see and understand what is happening in you and subsequently become able to let go of the exaggerated need, you will find that need to be an illusion. Once it ceases to be a question of life or death to satisfy the child's craving, you will not have to resort to the other extreme, which is to sabotage the very thing you want most, and which you should indeed have in a healthy way. You sabotage communication either by frightening the tentative feelers of the other soul back into withdrawal, or by insisting on your own isolation and refusing to risk your way out of it. You erect a wall around you, be it ever so subtle. If you let go of both extremes, out of your center of being, the soul forces will flow harmoniously and will have a favorable effect, even upon those who still have unsolved problems of this sort. This law always works. As you give out, so must it be returned unto you.
18	When people truly learn this, a change always occurs in their lives. They begin to communicate truly instead of merely subsisting on mutual dependency and need. In this state one fulfills the need of the other in order to get his or her own need fulfilled. This is now the interrelationship of most human beings. Whether it happens in your professional life or in your personal relationships, like marriage or friendship, makes no difference. Your world here on earth is, to a large degree, governed by dependency and need rather than by true

	<p>communication. Realize this, my friends, and as you look within yourself try to see how you prohibit or sabotage the attainment of the very thing you desire so much.</p>
19	<p>Many of you fail even to realize that you do want communication. Rejections have made you so cautious that you consciously believe you are genuinely and healthily detached, but your exaggerated need merely festers underground, covered by layers of false detachment, which is nothing but fear and withdrawal into isolation, protection against being hurt. The hurt of course would not be necessary if you unrolled and understood the entire process.</p>
20	<p>Once you have found, acknowledged, and experienced the underlying need, you can try to determine how much urgency or craving is there. The stronger the craving and the unhealthy exaggeration, the more likely it is that you are unaware of it. You may believe that the stronger the need, the more aware of it you must be, but this is not necessarily so. In fact the case may often be just the opposite. Something in you senses the exaggeration and is ashamed of it. You know that something is wrong about it. You also unconsciously feel humiliated by the constant nagging desire that can never be fulfilled, because it has been wildly exaggerated, and therefore you put it out of sight. You also dislike yourself for your dependency, which makes you feel helpless before those to whom you feel you must submit to get your need fulfilled. As a result, you may have an opposite outer reaction of extreme and ungentle "independence." Be on the lookout for this, my friends.</p>
21	<p>After you find the existence of the need, and its intensity, try to determine to what measures you have resorted in your attempts to deal with the need. I have discussed these previously, but I will show them to you now in a new light.</p>
22	<p>One such measure is the submissiveness -- sometimes very subtle -- with which you sell your soul in order to get love. When this tendency is on the surface, you may tell yourself that it is your ability to love, your readiness and willingness for it. You may believe that your submissiveness is true sacrifice and unselfishness. Only very close analysis and insight will show you that this craving has nothing to do with real love, and that, while you are using it, no real communication can be established.</p>
23	<p>Another such measure is aggression, to which you resort as a protection against the vulnerability of the underlying submissive aspect. I have also talked about how you artificially overdramatize your life, your emotions, and everything pertaining to your person.</p>
24	<p>You hope by all these measures either to gain what you want, or to protect yourself against the disappointment and frustration of not getting what you want. Since such false protection automatically precludes the fulfillment of your desire, you constantly vacillate between these various measures, never fully deciding for either, and simultaneously pursuing contradictory ones. It will now be clear to you that even one of these measures is bound to distort the law of communication</p>

	and therefore sabotage your heart's desire. But when you simultaneously pursue several mutually exclusive alternatives, you bring such disharmony into the universe of your own soul that disentangling these knots and reestablishing order will be much more difficult.
25	When you have found the false means you have tried to use, you will clear the way for true communication in all its beauty. You will understand what may have seemed contradictory in your belief that you are healthily interdependent with others. This healthy interdependence, however, can exist only if you <u>are</u> truly independent -- not of the other person, but of your own distorted need and urgency. Only on the basis of personal independence can you have healthy interdependence. However, both can be distorted, and that, unfortunately, is very often the trouble. Whoever withdraws into a shell of isolation, or who aggressively antagonizes people, shows an unhealthy, uncaring, false independence that comes from and also leads to more unhealthy dependence and need. Such inner behavior, no matter how camouflaged, never expresses a free choice for healthy independence and interdependence.
26	Now, my friends, are there any questions in connection with this subject? QUESTION: Did I understand correctly that the exaggerated need is a neurotic streak?
27	ANSWER: Of course. It is an illusion, because when you feel the need you believe your life is at stake. You may not consciously think so, but when you examine your feelings of disappointment or frustration, you will find their true intensity and significance. Then you discover the illusion and see that the intensity of your emotions bears no relation to the issue.
28	QUESTION: I was referring to something else. You spoke of two people needing each other in a wrong way. One fulfills the need of the other in order to get his own need fulfilled. Why is this unhealthy or wrong?
29	ANSWER: Such a relationship can exist for quite a while, and it can even work for a limited time. But it is not a relationship based on true interdependence, because the individual's own real need has not yet been established as the core of right communication. Such an unhealthy relationship is based on bargaining and the interplay of submissive and domineering attitudes. Either attitude can be dominant in one partner, or they may alternate in both at various phases of the relationship. Free interaction on the part of both partners is the mark of a healthy relationship.
30	QUESTION: There seems to be a very fine line separating healthy and unhealthy dependence, as well as healthy and unhealthy independence. How can we distinguish between the two?
31	ANSWER: The line is always fine. You cannot find the inner truth about such a subtle and elusive matter if you merely discuss it. There is no rule or

	<p>formula. You may develop the best theories and believe them with your mind, but your feelings may deviate completely. The only way you can discover the truth is through the work you do on this path, facing and examining your feelings and reactions, and understanding their significance by tracing them to their roots. Behind all negative, disturbing, and disharmonious feelings must be some original wish and its frustration. When you find this, you can determine how real or how illusory the wish is. Only after you are able to comprehend fully the immature and distorted emotions can you attain the healthy ones. You will be able to see where they may already exist to some extent, and therefore how they may be developed. You will then feel the difference between wanting something freely and needing it so much that the non-fulfillment really hurts.</p>
32	<p>COMMENT: May I add something here? I think we can understand it by seeing the degree of frustration and anxiety an unfulfillment creates in us.</p>
33	<p>ANSWER: Yes, that is right. But you should also be careful of the pseudo-calm harmony, the superimposed lack of need that is simply a withdrawing from life, love, and communication due to fear. That, too, is something to be carefully examined.</p>

43	<p>QUESTION: You spoke about the mutual need that may hold a relationship together, and that this need is unhealthy. But it seems to me that it is only fair and right that if I love a person, the person should also love me. Otherwise it would be much more unhealthy.</p>
44	<p>ANSWER: My dear friend, you are very much mistaken if you believe that I advocate one-sided love. In a healthy state, you will never have to worry about this, because if you free yourself of the exaggerated need, your innermost self -- your real self, or your intuitive self -- will cause you to direct your affection and love toward the person able to respond. Then the mutuality will come almost by itself. A lack of mutuality is only present in an unhealthy situation based on immature craving instead of free readiness to love and communicate. Since you are new in this group, it is understandable that you ask this question; however, if you were familiar with these teachings, you would fully understand that healthy mutuality is the essence and natural result that automatically comes when one frees the soul of its fetters. A one-sided love is its own proof of distortion and deviation. In order to avoid that, you do not have to worry, plan or direct your emotions, nor force your feelings to go in any specific direction. If you think you have to do that, it is a sign that there are levels of unconscious reactions that should become conscious in you so as to be handled properly. If you respond freely, mutuality must come about.</p>