

Pathwork on
Relationship With Mom

I include this quote from Pathwork Lecture 93 *The Link Between the Main Image, Repressed Needs, and Defenses* because it so vividly and directly applies to me. My main image is that **I have to be competent to be approved of and that being approved of is the same as being loved**. So much of my life has been governed by this main image, especially with certain authority figures in my life. Working with this image has been my life's work. It has been and continues to be so powerful for me to "get" this lesson and opportunity to grow.

16	<p>The repeated pattern not only proves the image right, but it also proves that your defenses against it do not work. This increases the original hurt of the experience which brought the image into existence. This is all the more confusing, because a part of the image works. The best way to explain this is by way of an example. Of course, the example can only be a simplified one, as we cannot include the many side effects and details that are relevant for an individual human personality. But the example may clarify a little better what I mean than a description in abstract terms could.</p>
17	<p>Let us suppose a male child has had a cruel mother, or maybe not even really cruel, but it seemed that way to the child, because she might have been inhibited, undemonstrative, or conflicted, and she therefore lacked understanding and imagination. In any case, the child experienced an acute lack of affection, warmth, and understanding and was therefore frustrated. In a situation like this, the image will form that women are ungiving, rejecting, and do not give love. Therefore the child feels apprehension and anxiety toward women when he becomes an adult. This may outwardly be denied, but if the emotions are examined, the mistrust will be found. But since the basic need for the opposite sex, and for warmth, love, and affection cannot really be torn out, he will seek a remedy against the image. As I said before, due to the unreal premise that all women are the way the mother was, the remedy must also be false and ineffective.</p>
18	<p>Let us further assume that this same mother was quite demanding as far as work in school was concerned. She expected a high standard from the child. And when the child was actually successful, she approved of him and was liberal with her praises. Thus, the child could experience some kind of gratification, provided he struggled hard enough to be successful. This situation will add to the image the following conclusion: "Although women do not give the love and comfort my soul really craves for, I may get the next best thing; I may have some importance by being successful in my work."</p>
19	<p>Needless to say, such thoughts are not really uttered, even unconsciously. For in the unconscious of the child there is no clear-cut distinction between</p>

	<p>receiving love and receiving approval. He has only a vague memory that something favorable came forth when he was ambitious, while nothing favorable happened otherwise. When the approval came, the boy was not consciously aware of something lacking. It was rather an inner climate telling him that what he yearned for he could have to some degree if he made efforts in certain directions. The real need for being loved was already repressed by the time the image came into existence.</p>
20	<p>The main image, in a case like this, would be: "I have to be successful in order to be loved." And: "Approval for my professional work is one and the same as being loved." Images of this sort are quite frequent. But let us now examine a little further, with our new understanding, what this means. Due to such an image -- if there is no strong second image counteracting the main image -- such a person will actually be very successful. He will be ambitious and will use all his resources to satisfy the image-claims to have success and receive approval. This image-claim will be granted. But the underlying claim, that approval is tantamount to love, cannot be granted, because here lies the wrong conclusion. Striving for success is not in itself wrong. It may be a waste of too much energy on one aspect of life at the expense of another, which might have been more important for happiness and peace. It may appear as an imbalance when the entire life and its needs are considered, but, in itself, it is not based on a wrong assumption. Therefore it will work out. The claim for success will be fulfilled and will bring approval. Whether or not the overemphasis brings an imbalance to the life of the person, in the claim for success itself there is no logical error.</p>
21	<p>However, the unconscious aim and claim for gaining love through success cannot be granted because approval and love are not the same. To believe so, consciously or unconsciously, is a logical error, a misconception, and therefore it cannot work. By gaining the one, you do not gain the other. If you do gain love and success, it is due to a logically correct attitude toward both. So this is where the image does not work. Therefore the constantly frustrated needs grow and are again and again repressed, because the personality is not willing to face either the longing and the pain of the unfulfillment, or the erroneous image-conclusion. The unfulfilled need for love, warmth, companionship, union, is contained in the unexpressed claim contained in the main image. Here you can clearly see one link between the main image and the repressed needs.</p>
22	<p>The repressed need for love is, in itself, a healthy and legitimate need. But the need for approval, at the expense of gaining love, is an unhealthy need. Now, why do I say "at the expense of?" Because, if you concentrate on being successful, on impressing others, on receiving admiration -- which all fall under the category of approval -- you are bound to pursue the very behavior pattern that will push love away from you. What you need most, but what you are unaware of, what originally caused you to produce your main image, you now reject because of the wrong conclusion you have formed. If the man in the example is</p>

	<p>loved anyway, a little investigation would prove that the loving person does not love him for the traits that are embedded in the image and that bring him success. She will love him because she senses another quality behind and apart from the traits that are meant to make the image work.</p>
23	<p>Now let us go on to the next step, continuing with the same example. Such a person may be aware of his drive for success. But he is unaware of why this is so important, where it stems from, and what the frustration and need behind it really mean. Therefore each time he reaps success without the unexpressed inner claim for love being met, it is not only a new frustration; it is the same hurt from childhood experienced all over again, but it increases his inner insecurity and inferiority. He originally deduced that if he had been more lovable, his mother would have given him more of what he needed. As a child, he could not evaluate that his mother might have been incapable of feeling or demonstrating love. Now he is incapable of deducing that he himself forfeits love, not because he is unworthy of it, but because his defense against being hurt is to be arrogant, rejecting, superior, and fearful. All these are traits which do not inspire love.</p>
24	<p>Only by unraveling this entire process can the painful inferiority feeling disappear. It is the feeling of being unlovable that the soul resists facing. He fears that what he will find will indeed be that he is unlovable, and so he represses. While doing so, he not only represses the painful fear, but he also represses the entire process of image-formation, the needs, false claims, destructive defense mechanisms, together with all the traits of the idealized self-image, and the various pseudo-solutions. Only by courageously going through this process will he find out that he is actually not at all unlovable, except as he makes himself so by his defense-mechanism. This realization is one of the most important on the path. It holds true for everyone, in some way, whatever the images are, whatever the idealized self-image is, and whatever the various pseudo-solutions are. Even if the pseudo-solution is submissiveness, which seems so opposite to the arrogance of the aggressive success-seeker who denies needs, underneath the submissiveness as much arrogance and superiority will be found as in the other pseudo-solutions. It is clothed in a seemingly more acceptable cloak, but it contains as hardened a defense structure as the extreme opposite. The defense structure is an invisible wall, unconsciously perceived by everyone, which prohibits love at the same time as it begs for it. Only upon close analysis of the various emotions and feelings will it become clear that the submitter rejects as much as the aggressor.</p>
25	<p>The struggle preceding this important breakthrough is very hard because the very means that are supposed to get love and acceptance actually do not bring it. Therefore the unconscious belief in one's own unworthiness increases, which is even more difficult to face. If you go through the pain of making the confusion and the belief in your unworthiness conscious, you will be relieved to find that it is not you who are unlovable, but the various devices you use for your protection. This recognition is of untold value and will give you incredible</p>

	strength.
26	<p>The search in this direction is not easy. There are so many factors, so many simultaneously contradictory aspects to unravel and to recognize. A moment's insight may only elude you again. Remembering a feeling will not recapture it. It is no longer meaningful. The experience of the insight has to be felt again, until its meaning makes a stronger impact on you. Only by repeatedly observing how your destructive defense feels in you, what it makes you do, feel, think, and how it makes you react, and how this affects others, will you see and truly understand. Only then will you gradually let go and become free of it, and only then will your true "undefended self" manifest. This real self may often act completely against your known outer rules, your principles, your established patterns that you have become so used to. It takes a great deal of struggle before you let your real self act, unhampered by your outer levels which are so unreliable, as your life has shown it to you in your troubles. Your innermost self, which knows so well, which will never lead you astray, cannot function as long as it is encased in the hardened, brittle structure of your defenses.</p>

48	<p>QUESTION: Would you also give an example of how to relinquish a need, as you indicated so clearly by the example of how to get the real needs fulfilled?</p>
49	<p>ANSWER: Let us take the case I used tonight. The real need of this person is to be loved and to love; to have a real, meaningful relationship. He is unaware of this need. The childhood experiences with their effect on this particular man have prohibited the unfoldment of the personality which would bring about fulfillment. He has repressed the knowledge of this need. Instead, he pursues success, approval, impressing others. This then has become a superimposed, false need, covering up the real need.</p>
50	<p>To begin with, he would not be fully aware of his need for approval. But let us assume such a person follows a path of this sort. He will first become conscious of the tremendous drive for success, surpassing his rational explanation for it. He will slowly realize that a stronger force urges him on and on. At first he will not understand it, but as he is more willing to examine his emotions, he will see that the need for approval exists. To stop at this point will not yield relief and liberation. It is only a part of the way. But by going on, he will ask himself why he needs success so badly. The answer will be that approval is very important for him. Why is it so important? By consulting his emotions very honestly, and without resistance, he will finally see that his need for love has been denied as a child, and that he has gone on denying it himself by way of the image, with all its byproducts.</p>
51	<p>The awareness of the real need, once it is truly felt and experienced in its</p>

	<p>full impact, will automatically diminish the drive for ambition, success, approval, impressing others, being glorious, special, and so on. He will do what he really wants and will distribute his forces and resources in a more harmonious way. This does not by any means imply that he will, all of a sudden, neglect a healthy interest in his work. But harmony will gradually establish itself, and the inner aim will be directed toward that which he had neglected for so long. He will come to see how he sabotaged the fulfillment of his real need by the pursuit of the false need. He will clearly see the behavior pattern caused by the false need and how it damaged the real need. Therefore he will begin to change in that respect.</p>
52	<p>This is relinquishing in the real sense. One grows into it by insight, by full understanding of all the angles. This leads to the awareness that one no longer has to hold on to the false needs and the destructive defenses. But the change can never happen by an act of will. If you find yourself beginning to recognize that similar trends exist in you, and try forcefully to relinquish the need, it will do you no good. You will either not succeed, or the anxiety may be so great that you produce other destructive trends and remain unaware of them. But if you go through the slow process just described, organic growth occurs and the relinquishing happens in a natural way.</p>