

Constructive Attitudes in Self-Confrontation

Study Guide for Online Meetings on PRS 5 and PL 80

Full text of this plus all other lectures may be downloaded from www.pathwork.org

Week 1: Overview and Daily Review

Week 2: Co-operation, Communication, Union PL 80

Week 3: Recognizing inner Resistance; Collusion

Week 4: Constructive Steps: Managing Difficult Conversations

Week 1: Overview and Daily Review

Pathwork is a spiritual discipline, not a therapy. It is an inner commitment to self-transformation and self-purification, and a belief in a unitive state where our inner work becomes available to others, accelerating the Plan of Salvation through ever-deepening and cleansing our positive intent.

Disagreements, arguments, fights, wars, and even bloodshed between ourselves and other human beings is a result of bringing forward our negativity for the purpose of transformation.

This lecture is not just another system or technique about how to handle confrontation. The Guide is very emphatic about the reality of human nature and the purpose of our having manifested on this particular earth plane.

From this perspective, confrontation is simply one of many exercises that we can use to see more deeply into our inner motivations and demonstrate what plane of growth we have achieved.

The lecture focuses upon self-confrontation, looking deeply into the motivations of the only person we can ever truly know – ourselves.

Dictionary definition of confrontation is “To come face to face with, especially with defiance or hostility”

Three aspects of human nature emphasized in PRS5:

-- **Willingness** to see both negative and positive realities builds self-confidence (PL 77)
‘the inner permission to be happy’

-- **Scrupulous Honesty** is of the greatest value in the process of self-transformation
“Training oneself to scrupulously prevent such hiding will prove of immeasurable benefit.” PRS5

-- **Attitude** is what determines how things affect you. *The word ‘attitude’ appears*

almost 1900 times throughout the lectures. It is the only thing that you have absolute control over, and that no one else- human or spirit – can affect without your permission.

“The more constructive, realistic and reasonable your attitude to your negative emotions is, the less damage they will do. This proves that it is not so much these emotions themselves that are damaging, but your fearful, guilty, untruthful, exaggerating attitude about them! They have to be let out of your system. Covering them up is emotional toxic poison and ruins your psychic blood stream. This can only be done by taking stock and finding their origins... To follow through, it is very helpful to make up your mind , every day anew, impressing yourself with this constructive attitude. Be prepared that there is resistance to face unpleasantness, determine to get the better of it, to become aware of it -- and it will not prevent you from following through.” PRS5

Identifying three stages in our personal work:

-- **Recognizing resistance:** “By a feeling of anxiety when certain questions or points are raised; by impatience, boredom, lack of concentration; the consistent desire to do something else, often less important; by tiredness the moment the work is approached, by consistently forgetting.” PRS5

-- **Investing time:** “However, a certain amount of quantitative time is necessary, so we might say, as an average, and at the beginning of this path work, about twenty minutes to half an hour a day should be excellent. No one need be too rigid about it.” PRS5 *This time might include reading and studying the lectures, discussion with others, or simply 20 minutes of meditation.*

-- **Daily Review:** “one of the most important tools for this work. This daily review can be conducted any time of the day, most suitable to you. Just consistently register your reactions in a notebook -- every day, again and again. When you ponder over an accumulation of days, in which you took notice of your reactions, you will undoubtedly find a recurrent pattern.” PRS5

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Daily Review: Excerpts from PRS5

Primary lecture for Daily Review is PL 28

[The Daily Review is one of the most important tools for this work. ... It enlists the creative intelligence within yourself to help in affecting a harmonious growing process and the dissolution of blockages and resistances. jr]

Each day contains certain events or incidents calling forth reactions in you. To become aware of, comprehend, and note these reactions is of utmost importance. Review the day and determine which incidence or occurrence has caused unpleasant feelings. Look at them, instead of pushing them away, hoping that the negative feelings will pass.

You will begin to notice little disturbances, hurts and disappointments, things you habitually disregarded.

For the moment, it is not even important that you analyze these instances as to their deeper significance. Just consistently register your reactions in a notebook -- every day, again and again. Note 'felt anxious at such and such an opportunity. Do not know why', or 'registered anger at so and so because I was not put in the first place'.

When you ponder over an accumulation of days, in which you took notice of your reactions, you will undoubtedly find a recurrent pattern. ... Mental, emotional and spiritual 'hygiene' liken the daily review to a cleansing process of all personality levels. This cleansing process is just as important for the psyche as for the body. ... It prevents self-deception, pretense, repression -- with their tension and anxiety, their confusion and impaired life experience. It heightens awareness of self, therefore, later, of others and of all that comes to pass.

Even confusions should be concisely formulated so that it can be exactly pinpointed what the confusion is. This is one of the major steps towards eliminating the confusion.

When you begin your daily review, it might be a good idea, occasionally, to ask yourself what worries you generally in life, what problems do you feel are difficult or even impossible to cope with. Observe the situation, and your reactions, from day to day.

The work proceeds, the nature of the daily review changes -- you now observe different aspects, become concerned with other facets of yourself and your life. No life process remains static and this path is a very dynamic real life process.

It is very important to understand that the path follows a spiral movement. Without experiencing this, you might easily misunderstand and be discouraged, believing that you are going around in circles. But when you return to the original phase with deeper and new understanding, you will know that you were not in an unproductive circle, bringing you around to the same point, without having gained something essential. The same sequence will follow again and again, in forever narrowing circles, the same lesson learned on deeper levels of the personality, until the various phases converge into One Point, in which all things meet -- and find solution.

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Week 2: Cooperation, Communication, Union Excerpts from PL 80

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The highest, the most desirable state in the whole plan of evolution is union. Union on this earth plane does not exist. There are some who have a vague idea of union. In isolated moments, they sense there is something like it. But then this moment passes, and they no longer sense, or feel, the significance of the state of being which is union. Since union is, it is outside the law of cause and effect. Therefore there is no point in my discussing it. You could not possibly comprehend, and I could not find appropriate words in the human language to convey it.

But I will discuss **two preliminary stages** that finally lead to union. These two stages do exist on your plane of existence and consciousness. These states are, **at the lowest level, cooperation** and, **at a higher level, communication**. Without cooperation and communication, no living creature can exist. Food, drink, shelter, all that you need for your physical survival depend on cooperation and communication.

Understanding this will also show you that man's mental, emotional, spiritual subsistence must be just as dependent on cooperation and communication as is his physical subsistence.

Cooperation is simply a more superficial form of communication.

If man is overeager, overanxious, if his desire for communication is an exaggerated craving, these soul forces will automatically become harsh, pointed, and rigid. Their movement will be sudden, and their impact too strong. Then they will have a corresponding effect on the other person's soul center, out of which he in turn responds, often quite unconsciously. The whole universe is based on balance. Whenever balance is upset, the universal forces work towards reestablishing it. This is often a painful process wherein the effect in the other human soul must be a withdrawing. The corresponding inner forces restrict and seem to reject the overeager attempt.

Overeagerness is a distortion of reality in the sense that the urgency of your need is not according to truth. It is imaginary. As this word implies, it comes out of your images, conflicts, and distortions. In this unconscious frame of mind, you believe you must have love, affection, attention. It is a one-sided, childish demand in which your life seems to be at stake. This causes such a strong inner motion that the balancing forces cause the other person to withdraw from this exaggerated motion. In the person who has his own inner unsolved conflicts and problems, the motivation for such withdrawal will be unconscious and negative. In the relatively healthy person, the response will be similar, but out of motives that are positive and conscious.

Just try to visualize this strong forward surging motion with all the impact of the forcing current, and you will fully understand the inevitable response.

Only when you grow, realize, and become aware of the wrong reactions -- due to wrong impressions -- can you gradually set out to change this state.

My friends, again I say that **the theory of this knowledge** will avail you nothing. Only your personal works, your personal search for these deviations, distortions, and errors will show you the truth of these laws. It will also show you that the outer events which seem to have nothing to do with your inner state are actually the very effects that you set in motion. The liberation of this knowledge will give you the strength and perseverance to change and to

gradually learn to communicate without exaggerated need.

Once you fully see and understand this, and you subsequently succeed to let go of the exaggerated need, you will find it to be an illusion. Thus, out of your center of being, these soul forces will flow harmoniously and will have a favorable effect, even upon those who still have unsolved problems of this sort, because this law has to work. As you give out, so must it be returned unto you.

When people truly learn this, a change must occur in their lives. They will truly begin to communicate instead of merely subsisting on mutual dependency and need. One fulfills the need of the other in order to get his own need fulfilled. This is the interrelationship of most human beings. To a large degree, your world here on this earth is governed by dependency and need rather than by true communication

Many of you fail even to realize that you do want communication. Your disappointments because of rejection have made you so cautious that you consciously believe yourself to be genuinely and healthily detached. In reality, your exaggerated need merely festers underground, covered by layers of false detachment which is nothing but fear and withdrawal into isolation as protection against being hurt. You may think that the stronger this need, the more aware of it you must be. But this is not necessarily so. It may often be just the opposite. Something in you senses the exaggeration and is ashamed of it. You cover it up. You dislike yourself for the dependency on your need. It makes you feel helpless towards those to whom you are inclined to submit in order to get your need fulfilled.

Find the existence of the need and its intensity. And then as the next step, try to see to what measures you have resorted to. I have discussed your submissiveness, regardless how subtle, out of which you often sell your soul in order to get love. Only upon very close analysis and insight, will you see that this craving has nothing to do with real love, and therefore no real communication can be established.

I have discussed the aggressive aspect which you assume as a protective measure against the vulnerability of the underlying submissive aspect. I have discussed the withdrawal aspect, which is another, similar protection, only it manifests in a different way. I have discussed the artificiality with which you overdramatize your life, your emotions, and everything pertaining to your person.

All of these are measures by which you hope either to gain what you want or to protect yourself against the disappointment and frustration of not getting what you want.

Find all this, and you will set the way free for true communication in all its facets and in all its aspects. You will then realize and understand what may have seemed a contradiction in your belief that you are healthily interdependent on one another. This healthy interdependence, however, can exist only if you are independent, not of the other person but of your own distorted need and urgency.

Only on the basis of independence can you have healthy interdependence.

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Week 3: Recognizing inner Resistance; Collusion

Constructive Attitudes in Self-Confrontation

Excerpts from Path to the Real Self, Chapter 5

The discovery of destructive emotions, of faults one has ignored, is naturally upsetting. Hate, hostility, vindictiveness, envy, jealousy, cruel desires, fear -- these, and more, may exist in the best of human beings. Their effect is made worse by the belief that no one who is decent could possibly have such feelings, therefore they must remain a guilty secret one must expose under no circumstances. As time goes on, they become 'forgotten'. And this is not good. It does not further health, well being, and fulfillment.

Of course it is desirable to free oneself of undesirable trends, emotions, attitudes or thoughts. But keeping them hidden does not mean liberation from their tyranny. Knowing of their presence does not force you to act destructively, but not knowing makes you blind to the way you are governed by them. Their effect is indirect, the link between cause and effect obscure.

Feeling and perceiving emotions, as well acknowledging their existence, are not the same as acting them out. Awareness of negative trends in no way forces you to act accordingly. I stress this factor so emphatically because this is one of the most powerful reasons for resisting to face what is in the psyche -- the misconception that, the moment one becomes aware of destructive tendencies, one is no longer master over them. One may even feel that acting out is 'honest', otherwise one would be a hypocrite. The exact opposite is true, of course. Repression of childish, destructive feelings never eliminates them, not their effect. Awareness does. It is essential to deeply impress yourself with this truth, in order to counteract such possible misconceptions residing in you unconscious mind.

It is never, never an outer event, as such, responsible for happiness or unhappiness, no matter how much it may appear to be. In the last analysis, it is always the attitude to the event that determines its effect on you. An objectively favorable and even desired event may, by dint of your inner attitude and due to certain unrecognized concepts, be frightening and unwelcome. ... The same holds true for the opposite alternative. An objectively favorable event may be emotionally welcome and appear as a solution to a problem. Observation of this fact is very important.

Resistance

It cannot be stressed enough that your attitude to yourself is what counts. It will make this work easier and more successful in a shorter time if you learn to take yourself less seriously; with a sense of humor... He who has the courage to look himself squarely in the face, without flinching, but also without dramatizing his 'badness' is bound to like

himself much better. This increases self-confidence and the 'inner permission to be happy'.

The same applies to ... negative feelings ... and your reactions in connection with them. ... The more constructive, realistic and reasonable your attitude to your negative emotions is, the less damage they will do. This proves that it is not so much these emotions themselves that are damaging, but your fearful, guilty, untruthful, exaggerating attitude about them! They have to be let out of your system. covering them up is emotional toxic poison and ruins your psychic blood stream. this can only be done by taking stock and finding their origins...

One may also resist to see something undesirable in others -- people one needs, loves, feels close to and whom one wants to respect. This blindness can easily be rationalized by claiming it is the strength of one's love. But true love is not, and does not need to be, blind. Perhaps it is fear of not being able to love and respect an imperfect creature. Or perhaps, there is fear of having to act, make changes, or confront the other person with one's perception about him. Repression of such perceptions creates disunity, unrest, feeling uncomfortable and ill at ease. Calmly facing what one perceives and, in the clear light of consciousness, confronting the issue, can never hurt others, the self or a relationship.

Resistance to facing an unpleasant truth -- for whatever reason -- means 'I act as though it does not exist, that will make it do away'. This childish magic does not work and has often the gravest consequences. The personality pays a heavy price for this self-deception, a price that could so easily be avoided.

Overcoming resistance is one of the most important aspects on this path, and one of the most rewarding. Without it, there can be no recognitions, no insight into yourself. ... With each new block before every new insight, resistance comes up and has to be recognized. ...It is important to remember that the stronger the resistance, the more vital the finding, and the greater the subsequent relief and enlightenment.

How can resistance be recognized? By a feeling of anxiety when certain questions or points are raised; by impatience, boredom, lack of concentration; the consistent desire to do something else, often less important; by tiredness the moment the work is approached, by consistently forgetting.

When the intent is uttered into the deep recesses of the self, when the creative forces within and around the self are instructed to help explore what ought to be recognized at this time, if it is truly meant that one wished to face oneself in utter truthfulness, the path must be a dynamic and most rewarding experience.

The lower self contains an unreasonable child, ignorant of what the rest of the personality, which has grown up, knows. It is important to allow this child to grow up. ... The child within always wants something for nothing. It wishes the advantages of adulthood, with all its freedom and , simultaneously, it wants the advantages of childhood -- freedom from self-responsibility. Naturally, these unjustified demands are

hidden. ... But does this child want to grow up? Most certainly not. It somehow hopes against hope that its utopia is possible. Changing and fulfilling what seems like difficult demands life makes is unwelcome. Hence, resistance.

Resistance also exists because a cluster of destructive attitudes is thought to be a protection and is held on to for that reason. If change is enforced, anxiety becomes very great. ... Beware of the idea that you cannot possibly harbor such tendencies, merely because you are now unaware of them.

Pathwork™ Steps

Collusion

The Stages of Commitment (Additional Materials No.6) are used by Pathwork communities as a means for individuals to publicly declare their level of commitment as a member of a Pathwork community and to the greater community of spirit. There are several questions at each stage. The final question for Stage 2 can feel very challenging:

“**QUESTION 5.** Are you willing to foreswear all kinds of collusion, active as well as passive by commission or omission; against peers or authority figures? Are you willing to muster the courage to confront the other person if the collusion comes from them and, propose to go together to the third person who may possibly be maligned or gossiped about, to question with an open mind what the truth is? This means giving up a momentary gratification and relief, a negative pleasure, and this would be your sacrifice for God, for the larger cause of which you have become a part.” AD6

Dictionary definition: “organizations or individuals acting in concert against the interests of a third party. Secret agreement or cooperation, especially for a fraudulent, illegal or deceitful purpose.” As a general rule, it's hard to commit collusion by accident. The energy is of finding yourself in a private meeting with someone (or an organization) and being asked to cooperate with them without being open about such discussion or agreement to the other party. It can seem as innocent as friends getting together and choosing a movie before inviting another friend's input.

Sports: Collusion involves people cooperating or working together when they should be competing. For example, a pattern of draws when Soviet chess players faced each other is consistent with collusion, not competition: players acted as a cartel in international tournaments - intentionally drawing against one another in order to focus effort on non-Soviet opponents - to maximize the chance of some Soviet winning. What's the difference here between team strategy and collusion? It is the intent to use the presumption that individuals are playing independently and always giving their best in order to mask the real strategy and gain an advantage. It's the need to keep this

strategy secret in order for it to work that marks it as collusion.

Discrimination: Where there is collusion, there is intent to hide something in order to gain an advantage. Supporting such an intent is also a form of collusion, however passive it may seem. Thinking and acting in ways which directly or indirectly support systems of discrimination are also colluding, exchanging silence and obedience in order to gain some advantage. We collude when we agree to be passive participants or anonymous observers and allow our silence can be interpreted as support.

Domestic Violence: Collusion is any act that discounts, condones, or ignores any of the tactics that aggressors use to maintain unfair or illicit power and control over another. Collusion makes the aggressor more powerful by reinforcing their use of abusive and violent tactics, allowing them to enlist other people and systems to assist them. The result is the creation of more barriers and elimination of support, resources, and safe places battered spouses need to access to end the violence.

Online Gambling: There is one method of cheating that targets online Poker rooms, and that is collusion among players. The term refers to the practice of players sharing information about their hands in efforts to help each other to win, or to force other players to place more money in the pot.

Circumventing Outdated Laws: Collusion was often practiced by couples before no-fault divorce in order to make up a grounds for divorce (such as adultery). By fabricating a permitted reason for divorce, colluding couples hoped to trick a judge into granting their freedom from the marriage. But a spouse accused of wrongdoing who later changed his or her mind about the divorce could expose the collusion to prevent the divorce from going through.

Politics and Business: Government incompetence and "wicked collusion" between a ferry owner and a government agency resulted in the drowning of more than 1,000 people in the Red Sea in February 2006. The report crushed the government's earlier efforts to blame the captain alone for the sinking of the ferry.

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Week 4: Managing Difficult Conversations

Excerpted from **Difficult Conversations**
By Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen

Each difficult conversation is really 3 conversations:

The **‘What Happened?’** Conversation
The **Feelings** Conversation
The **Identity** Conversation

The **‘What Happened?’** Conversation

What happened / what **should have** happened / why **did it** happen? These questions about past actions and decisions, present circumstances, and future decisions can become jumbled – especially when it may be obvious that the ‘plan’ was flawed.

Most difficult conversations involve some level of disagreement about all three aspects. It can be difficult to ascertain facts or time sequences if we are simultaneously looking to assign (or dodge) blame.

We also tend to make a number of crippling assumptions, about the underlying truth and about our intentions and the intentions of others.

Truth Assumption: As we argue vociferously for our view, we often fail to question one critical assumption upon which our who stand in the conversation is built: I am right, you are wrong. This simple assumption causes endless grief.

Moving away from the truth assumption frees us to shift our purpose from proving we are right to understanding the perception, interpretations, and values of both sides. It allows us to move away from delivering messages and toward asking questions, exploring how each person is making sense of the world. It allows us to offer our views as perceptions, interpretations, and values – not as ‘the truth’.

Intention Invention: The second argument is over intentions – yours and mine. The truth is, intentions are invisible. We assume them from other people’s behavior. In other words, we make them up; we invent them. Because our view of others’ intentions (and their view of ours) is so important in difficult conversations, leaping to unfounded assumptions can be a disaster.

Blame Frame: Talking about fault is similar to talking about truth – it produces disagreement, denial, and little learning. It evokes fears of punishment and insists on an either/or answer.

The **Feelings** Conversation

Every difficult conversation also asks and answers questions about feelings. Even if feelings have been repressed, misidentified, or denied, they still exist.

Humans without feelings are like opera without music. Who would we be without our emotions? Understanding feelings, talking about feelings, managing feelings – these are among the greatest challenge of being human.

Talking about feelings is a skill that can be learned.

We also translate our feelings into rational statements. Find the feelings lurking under judgments, attributions, characterizations, and problem solving ('The answer is for you to...').

Don't treat feelings as gospel. Most of us assume that our feelings are static and nonnegotiable, and that if there are to be shared authentically, they must be shared "as is". Instead of venting, describe feelings carefully.

The **Identity** Conversation

Difficult conversations bring up what we think of ourselves and others.

Anytime a conversation feels difficult, it is in part precisely because it is about You, with a capitol Y. Something beyond the apparent substance of the conversation is at stake for you.

Am I competent? Am I a good person? Am I worthy of love? If I am no longer a hero, will people see me as a villain? Notice the 'all or nothing' syndrome.

Keeping your balance: As you begin to sense the implications of the conversation for your self-image, you may begin to lose your balance. Just knowing that the Identity Conversation is a component of difficult conversations can help. Like dealing with feelings, grappling with the Identity Conversation gets much easier with the development of certain skills.

Develop techniques to regain your balance if you lose it: let go or try to control their reaction, prepare for their response, imagine that it's three months or ten years from now. Take a break!

Moving towards a learning conversation: Despite what we sometimes pretend, our initial purpose for having a difficult conversation is often to prove a point, to give them a piece of our mind, or to get them to do or be what we want. In other words, to deliver a message.

Changing our stance means inviting the other person into the conversation with us, to help us figure things out. If we're going to achieve our purpose, we have lots we need to learn from them, and lots they need to learn from us. We need to have a **learning conversation** by:

- Stop arguing about who's right; explore each other's stories
- Moving from certainty to curiosity (don't assume they meant it; disentangle intent from impact, and understand that good intentions don't sanitize bad impact.
- Embracing both stories; adopt the 'And Stance'
- Abandon blame; distinguish blame from contribution. Find your 'fair share'.

Try role reversal – what would they say I am contributing? And take responsibility for your contribution early!

Two exceptions that really aren't

What if I am really right? That's not what the conversation is really about. It is probably a difficult conversation because you need their agreement or co-operation.

Breaking bad news. It will never be easy to bring bad news or disappoint expectations.

Prepared by Jan Rigsby www.janrigsby.com
Excerpts from **Difficult Conversations © 1998**
By Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen

Additional Suggestions

Excerpted from **Difficult Conversations**

The ‘And Stance’

The ‘And Stance’ is probably the most powerful place to stand when engaging in a difficult conversation that requires you to deliver or enforce bad news. ‘And’ helps you to be curious and clear.

Three kinds of conversations that don’t make sense

Is the real conflict inside you?

Is there a better way to address the issue than talking about it?

Do you have purposes that make sense?

Adopt some liberating assumptions

It’s not my responsibility to make things better;

It’s my responsibility to do my best.

They have limitations too.

This conflict is not who I am.

Letting go doesn’t mean I no longer care.

Listening transforms the conversation

Listening to them helps them listen to you.

Become aware of the commentator in your own head.

Three Skills: Inquiry, Paraphrasing, Acknowledgement

Inquire to learn. Don’t make statements disguised as questions. Don’t ask questions to cross examine. Ask open-ended questions. Ask for more concrete information. Ask questions about the three conversations! What is going on, how are you feeling, why is this important to you? Make it safe for someone **not** to answer. Ask how they see it differently – and why?

Paraphrase for clarity: Check your understanding, Show that you’ve heard, Ask them to paraphrase back

Acknowledge their feelings. Answer invisible questions. Acknowledge before problem solving. Acknowledgment is not agreement! Empathy is a journey, not a destination

Speak with clarity and power

Speak the heart of the matter

Start with what matters most

Say what you mean; don’t make them guess

Don’t make your story simplistic

Don’t present your conclusions as The Truth

Share where your conclusions came from

Don’t exaggerate with ‘Always’ and ‘Never’. Give them room to change.

Help them understand you.

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