



Insight and Inspiration,
Innovation and Vision
For the Developing and
Evolving Self

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SELF DEVELOPMENT

Newsletter

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PLEASURE

In the April, May and June newsletters we considered the profound issue of Values. Exploring pleasure is as important, but is a bit light hearted in comparison. However, as we explore pleasure we cannot ignore pain.

DEFINITION

Pleasure is a fundamental positive/desirable sensation that we experience in our bodies, while pain is a fundamental negative/undesirable experience. Pleasure and pain are feelings. Our feelings are two things. They are our experience of life, and contain messages/information for us about our life. Pleasure tells us that something is “good” —desirable, that we want more of this. Pain tells us that something is “bad” —undesirable, that we want less of this.

THE FUNCTION OF PLEASURE

Pleasure:

- Gives us an experience of the good in life
- Is nourishing and rejuvenating when we feel tired and depleted
- Gives us motivation to keep living and growing
- Is the base ingredient of happiness, joy, bliss, and ecstasy. (It is like using chicken stock (a liquid) to start making a soup. The chicken stock is a basic ingredient, but the soup is much more than the basic ingredient.)

Point of Empowerment: *If you don't allow yourself to have pleasure you won't allow yourself to have these other emotional states—happiness, joy, bliss or ecstasy.*

Practice: *Seek to feel good all the time. Of course, we cannot feel good all the time. Rather, as we seek to feel good all the time, we are constantly moving away from pain and toward pleasure.*

Point of Empowerment: *Seeking to feel good all the time counteracts our tendency to sit passively with pain and negativity, feeling like a helpless victim.*

ABILITY OF THE MONTH

The ability of the month is the ability: to know what pleasure is, to feel pleasure, and to use pleasure to enhance our life.

PAIN AND FEELINGS

Along with pleasure, pain is a crucial part of life, but we are afraid of pain and want to avoid it. However, pain grabs our attention and alerts us to physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual danger. (Spiritual danger occurs when the wellbeing of our human spirit is threatened. For example: when we are being abused or exploited and don't, or can't, act to stop it; when we are powerless.)

Our experience of feelings (pleasure and pain) is all or nothing. We can't say that we will experience only pleasure, but not pain. It is pleasure and pain. If we tense up against pain, if we defend against it, we unintentionally diminish our ability to experience pleasure. This is also true about happiness/sadness, like/dislike, comfort/discomfort, satisfaction/dissatisfaction, frustration/fulfillment, and all the “opposites”

July Newsletter: Pleasure

Definition

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Pain

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that comprise our emotional life. We need to have the willingness and ability to experience, to tolerate, and to cope with, all our feelings. If we cannot experience the negative we will not experience the positive. We have within us a space (like a psychological room) for our emotions. That space contains both pleasurable and painful feelings. The larger the space, the more pleasure we can contain and experience.

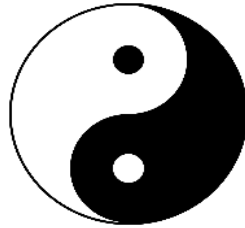
Point of Empowerment: *In our life, we can have much more pleasure than pain, we just need to have the willingness and ability to deal with the pain that presents itself to us.*

The yin yang symbol can help us understand this further.

THE YIN YANG SYMBOL: PLEASURE AND PAIN

The yin yang symbol is an ancient and profound symbol.

This side (white) represents pleasure. equal size representing for us the *that we should have equal amounts illustrates the point that we need to to cope with both.* The smaller circles turn into pain and pain can turn into choose to shift into pleasure, and if we are in pleasure we may (without consciously choosing) find ourselves in pain. The outer circle represents the space (our psychological room) which contains/holds our feelings.



This side (black) represents pain. Both sides are of necessity to experience both. *It does not mean of pleasure and pain in our life, but rather have the willingness and ability to experience and on each side represent the idea that pleasure can pleasure. Also, when we are in pain we can choose to shift into pleasure, and if we are in pleasure we may (without consciously choosing) find ourselves in pain. The outer circle represents the space (our psychological room) which contains/holds our feelings.*

Point of Empowerment: *The yin yang symbol applies to all the opposite feelings of life. Part of the art and science of living involves mastering the complex skill of being able to shift back and forth from one side to the other.*

Practice: *Practice shifting from side to side by: changing your thinking, changing your focus of attention, or by allowing your feelings to flow through you without trying to change them—observing how they change on their own.*

Another meaning for the outside circle is “wholeness”. Within the wholeness are complementary (not opposite) aspects of the whole. From this point of view, pleasure and pain are not opposites, both are necessary in life, and emerge appropriately according to the situations we face. For example, consider acceptance and rejection. You are interested in going out on a date with another person. You ask and she/he accepts because there is mutual attraction and interest. If she/he says no, there is a painful rejection. But in the absence of mutual attraction and interest, the rejection saves a person from a greater hurt that could occur in the future.

HOW TO EXPERIENCE AND ENJOY PLEASURE

Point of Empowerment: *To experience and enjoy pleasure we need to value pleasure.*

Practice: *Chose to value pleasure by deciding that pleasure is important and matters. Spend time creating and focusing on pleasure.*

Since pleasure is life enhancing, *it is natural, (automatic and easy), to feel pleasure.* We experience pleasure through our internal and external senses. When we pay attention to what is happening inside our bodies we are using our internal senses. Our external senses feel pleasure through sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. If we are registering the experience of pleasure through our senses we are being sensuous. Can you become fully focused on your senses? In this focusing we are not thinking. This is challenging.

To experience sensuality, we need to be paying attention to what is happening with our body. We need to like and be comfortable with our body, and believe that our bodily experience is important and matters, valuing what is happening with our body. Often, we are ignoring our bodily experience focusing our attention on our thoughts and our environment. We may be scanning our environment for some sort of danger.

Practice: Notice when you are not paying attention to what is happening with your body. Spend some time each day paying more attention to your body by focusing on your breath then shifting your attention to whatever else you might be registering in your body.

Practice: You can practice sensuality with mindful eating (aware pleasurable eating). Take a bite. Put the fork down. Chew slowly and focus (with intention and intensity) on the taste of the food, enjoying the pleasure that can be there.

Point of Empowerment: Sensuality opens you up to experiencing beauty—an exquisite form of pleasure. It also increases the pleasure of your sexuality.



Surrounded by a sea of negativity, you may find yourself the only one pursuing pleasure and happiness. Take heart and proceed with courage.

BLOCKAGES AND RESISTANCE TO PLEASURE

There are blockages and resistances (things that get in the way), to experiencing pleasure. These are attitudes and beliefs, (which give rise to behaviors), that limit the amount of pleasure that we bring into our lives. The behaviors (like avoidance by not paying attention) limit our internal and external sensing of pleasure.

Here is a partial list of attitudes and beliefs which limit and destroy pleasure. Included are ideas about changing attitudes, beliefs and behaviors.

- Pleasure is frivolous, and therefore is a waste of time, or a “sin.” Challenge these beliefs with questions: “Is this true? Isn’t pleasure an essential and natural aspect of living?”
- You know that pleasure is fun, but you need the permission of a parental authority figure to have fun, and therefore to feel pleasure. Give yourself permission with the affirmation, “I now give myself permission to have more fun and pleasure in my life.”
- No pain, no gain. We limit ourselves to pain as the motivator that pushes us forward. Why not grow and accomplish things for the pleasure of it?
- There is nobility and virtue in suffering; to be noble and virtuous we need to suffer. Challenge this belief, “Is pain and suffering the only way to be noble and virtuous?” In addition to asking this question, answer it. Write down your answer.
- Guilt about other people’s suffering: “How can I feel pleasure when other people are suffering?” Challenging this belief can be difficult—if you suffer will others feel better? But “misery loves company.” We commiserate: co—with another person; “miserate”—be miserable together. This may create temporary bonding between people, but it does not eliminate long term suffering. Yes, but self-sacrifice is good, is noble. Really, is that what you choose to believe?
- We live our life, “Waiting for the other shoe to drop.” So, the happier you are, the more happiness you have to lose when things go badly—which is inevitable. Yes, life has its ups and downs, but by denying yourself happiness and pleasure you are diminishing your life. With a diminished life, the pain of “bad” things is actually worse. Also, learn to cope more effectively with the pain that life brings.

- “Happiness can't last, so I will destroy my happiness before it is taken away from me. At least I have control over my life.” Do you want to sacrifice happiness for the illusion of control?
- Love is sacrifice and self-sacrifice. Since self-sacrifice is painful, we conclude that “love is painful.” This belief sets us up with an ambivalence about love. We want love and don't want love, at the same time. Ambivalence is painful, not love.
- But, you can lose love. Yes, loving involves the risk of losing that love, but by not loving, you drastically diminish your life. Do you want to diminish your life in order to avoid the risk of losing love?
- If we get “too” happy and have “too much” pleasure, we may initiate self-sabotaging behaviors to inflict pain on ourselves. (Most human beings do this at one time or another.) These behaviors may be: injuring yourself physically (like stubbing your toe or banging into a wall); picking fights with others, (“I knew I should not have said that but I could not help myself.”); or loosing things. So, since I don't want to inflict pain on myself, I will avoid “too much” happiness and pleasure. NO! Face your blockages to expand your capacity to be happy and to experience pleasure!

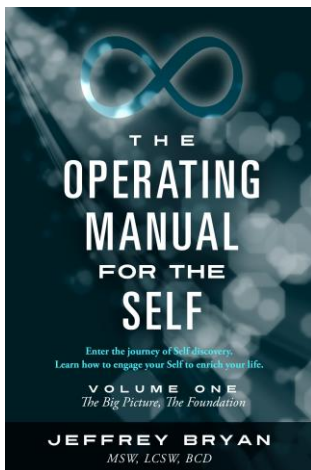
Practice: *Identify and change the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that limit the amount of pleasure and happiness in your life.*

MISUSE AND ABUSE OF PLEASURE, ADDICTION TO PLEASURE

We can engage in excessive pleasure-seeking actives in order to avoid dealing with the pain life brings us. This is a misuse of pleasure. If this approach to coping with pain becomes a way of life, we are abusing pleasure. This abuse can lead to an addiction where we seek pleasure compulsively, and our behavior is out of control.

Next month we will use a new *Analytical Matrix* to give us further insight into the process of use, misuse and abuse of pleasure.

Practice: *Live with awareness. Consciously create pleasure and allow it into your life. Notice when pleasure is absent, and enjoy pleasure when it is present.*



Change your identity and image to a person who consistently and frequently experiences pleasure and happiness.

Consult The Operating Manual for the Self to learn about identity and image.

Manualfortheself.com

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