

## STRUGGLE: HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY

Greetings, my dearest friends. God's blessings for each and every one of you. Love and strength are pouring forth. Open your hearts so that you may tune in to this force.

Not one of you ever has to encounter a difficulty that you are not strong enough to surmount. Do not doubt the resources of strength that exist in your soul. Reach for these inner resources. They will give you more strength than depending on help from an outside source. Blessings and divine help are possible only through the strength that already exists within you, but lies dormant. This force that flows from within, never from the outside.

Learn to depend on this inner strength, which you have the power to liberate. You reach so often for outside intervention instead of realizing that nothing can come to you from life when you do not have the inner equipment to use it and become thereby stronger and wiser. When you depend on your inner resources, your self-confidence and self-respect will, indeed, be strengthened. Outside help might be momentarily pleasant, but it will not increase your self-confidence, your self-reliance, your independence, and your self-respect. So reach inside. Realize that the universal laws work in such a way that nothing whatever could possibly be beyond your capacity. If it sometimes seems so, it is only because you doubt or ignore the resources that exist within you.

People often say that life is difficult and painful, that it is a confusing and puzzling ordeal, that there is no meaning to it. They believe that they are separate from life, but they are not! Regardless of how your life appears, it is an exact facsimile of how you experience yourself. Your personal life, as it manifests for you, is a conglomeration of all your attitudes and traits. It is the greatest error possible, and one of the most fundamental, to believe that you are one thing and the life you are put into is another. This is not so. When these words have an inner meaning and reality for you, you will have reached a stage of development where you no longer have to fear, where you no longer feel like a helpless straw in the wind. As long as you separate yourself from your life, you are not only in illusion, but you are in fear and in disharmony. Whatever confidence you have in yourself, in your capacities and potentials, you can have in life. The joy in your heart and your ability to experience that joy will be your life. As you experience your capacity to cope with setbacks and disappointments, to relinquish your will if need be, the possibility that life will frighten you will decrease. Once you examine yourself and your life from this point of view, you will have taken a further step toward the integration of yourself and your life that is our goal.

Life, of course, is also struggle. But there is healthy and constructive as well as unhealthy and destructive struggle. Various philosophies and religions ask that you "give up struggling." This is a true teaching, but it is often understood as meaning giving up or giving in, not asserting your rights. You feel you must become passive and apathetic and no longer try to fulfill yourself and your goals.

This leads to indifference and sloth, to stagnation and even masochism. It leads to the cruelty of not caring to better conditions that can be bettered -- in yourself and in the world around you.

Healthy struggle never exhausts your energies. It is never futile, though it does not always directly reap success. Healthy struggle is characterized by relaxed activity and the ability to accept defeat, by well-defined aims with healthy underlying motivations, by being concerned with an issue itself rather than with using an issue to cover up hidden psychological deviations. In healthy struggle you never fight against yourself. Overcoming impurities and immaturity does not mean struggling against yourself, but rather allowing these aspects reach your awareness so that you can understand and come to terms with them. This is the way to overcome what is disturbing and destructive, not by struggling against it.

Healthy struggle will always make you stronger. You will not swim against the stream, so the struggle will not consume you and leave you depleted. No effort is required to allow what is in you to surface. In fact, you waste a great deal of energy preventing this inner material from coming up and then you wonder why you are so tired. After having reached a certain age, one no longer possesses sufficient energy to cope with life, but if this energy-current were reversed, life would become very different. You fight with all your might against awareness of what is in you and constantly block the flow of your emotions. This is unhealthy struggle. If only you would give it up, you could easily put the energy where it is useful, meaningful, and productive. Whenever energy is used in its proper channel, it replenishes itself automatically. But when it is used in a channel not designed for it, it does not. So there is not enough energy left to defend yourself against being taken advantage of, to develop your potentials, or to work toward your aims. The ability to take care of all this will come as a natural byproduct of ceasing the futile struggle to keep your hidden negative attitudes from surfacing, in the false belief that they can be eliminated by ignoring them.

In healthy struggle there is no anxiety, no fear, no uncertainty, no doubt. Whenever you struggle for an apparently healthy aim but register negative emotions, you will know that an unhealthy struggle must also be going on. In some hidden way you must be struggling against yourself -- perhaps against a doubt or against selfishness or some attitude that hides a lack of integrity -- for otherwise these negative, depleting emotions could not be there. When you feel them it is time to stop struggling and allow your hidden emotions to reach the surface.

All human attitudes and feelings can be compared to streams. They move in a cycle in which inside and outside forces influence one another. But the controlling factor always lies within the self. When one is trying to shift the control to outer circumstances in the hope that the damage can be repaired from the outside, and expects help to readjust the disharmonious flow of the self and life, one prevents the free flow that brings awareness. The outer focus separates one more and more from the real control one has at one's disposal -- the only meaningful control: complete awareness of the self.

When you do not like, or even fear, certain feelings and attitudes in yourself, you block awareness of them. This amounts to obstructing the stream of feelings that should flow freely. Use the analogy of the stream, though it is not new of course, as a fresh approach, so that you can visualize the damage done by repression. You need a new impetus in order to be inspired to remove the barricades. So, my friends, try to visualize each emotion, each attitude and response as a stream. If you barricade a stream, what happens? It is possible to dam up a river. The water will flow to the

dam and will then be stopped. But the more water accumulates behind the dam, the greater the energy of the accumulating water will become until it bursts the dam, overflows, and destroys not only the dam itself, but all the natural and healthy vegetation and structures alongside. Destroying the barricade in such a violent way is not necessary. The dam in your soul never needed to be erected, but since you chose to build it, it has to go. You can make gradually and systematically remove it by your own efforts: this is the conscious process of self-confrontation. Waiting until nature takes its course means that the barricade will be swept away by the force of the waters. When life handles you roughly, when the accumulated destructive attitudes whose origins lie behind the barricade finally break loose, you experience crises and breakdowns of different kinds and degrees.

By not damming up the river, you let the dirt and residue float freely to the surface to be eliminated. The ever-regenerating water in its purity and freshness will finally sweep the river free of the debris. Is this not a fact in nature? The same applies to your soul-currents. By fearing and not looking at the debris of your past hurts and their subsequent destructive tendencies, you accumulate them behind the barricade, and they are bound to swamp you one day when you cannot control what happens. But there is nothing to fear when you allow the debris to reach the surface. When you begin to remove your blocks you will start to experience negative emotions unlike any you have felt before. The temptation is then to put the lid on again. Beware of this temptation. The warm, positive, generous, loving, unselfish feelings must follow eventually, and the negative feelings will no longer be detrimental to you. Not wanting to see the negative does not eliminate its existence.

When you struggle against your insecurity, denying its existence, it rises up behind the dam, like swelling waters. As long as the dam holds, you will feel a vague discomfort. You will feel inhibited without understanding why, and you will sense that some of your best potentials are under-utilized. You will not have a grasp of the situation, nor will you feel the full force of the insecurity that becomes stronger as it builds up behind the barricade. One day certain outer events will swamp you with all the despair of helplessness and insecurity you had never dared to face. So by struggling to repress your insecurity, you actually increase it. By denying its existence, you make it bigger and stronger than it otherwise would be. The same holds true for any other emotion or attitude -- fear, doubt, hostility, or whatever -- the principle is the same. The natural laws apply to all created forces, whether they be actual rivers or the rivers and streams of feeling.

Is it not much wiser to remove the barricade? Waiting until nature breaks it down will render you helpless. The feelings will swamp you and you will not understand their meaning because their accumulated momentum has become too strong. Do not wait until such times. All too often one waits for a crisis before one is willing to take stock of oneself.

It is our aim in this work to avoid futile struggle. For this purpose we have to remove the barricade before it removes itself, allow the flow to bring out what is inherent in it, and face those feelings that you would rather evade -- doubts, aggression, jealousy, possessiveness, self-centeredness, and self-importance -- in short, everything in you that belongs to the hurt child in you.

Why do people resist becoming aware of these emotions? Let us be very clear about what resistance really means. It does not merely indicate that you do not want to do this work. You would not mind the work if it did not require your removing whatever barricades the stream. There is not just one stream in you. Since you consist of many attitudes and feelings, there are many streams. A few of them, fortunately, are not barricaded; they create a healthy and constructive

attitude toward yourself and toward your life. There are other streams where the barricade is not too strong and the resistance is not too difficult to overcome. But there are a number of streams that you have deliberately closed off because you thought that doing so would protect you.

When you start the work, the conscious self does not realize that this "forbidden area" has to be touched, because its existence has been totally ignored. Only when your work approaches these areas, without your even realizing what they are, will the resistance manifest. This happens with some people at the beginning of their self-search. With others, the work may have progressed for some time and minor barricades may have been eliminated, freeing some streams, before the forbidden areas can be touched.

The areas you do not want to look at are not necessarily ugly or wicked. In the final analysis, arrested growth is always life-defeating and self-centered, but the emphasis may not be on selfishness, but rather on false self-preservation. Putting it differently, the resistance is a defense against exposure, hurt, and vulnerability.

It is of the utmost importance to become aware of your resistance. If you look at certain past stages of your development from this point of view, you will recall that every major liberation was always preceded by a resistance to looking into yourself. No matter what form the resistance may have taken, you always had to overcome it, summoning your will to look at yourself in truth. This had to be the strongest, the most important aim, otherwise you could not have succeeded. But do not for a moment believe that because of these past efforts you will not have to go through the same struggle again. This is the healthy struggle to overcome the unhealthy struggle against self-awareness.

Learn to discover the signs of your resistance to removing the barricade. The signs may be manifold, but once you focus your attention on them you will not miss them. You will learn to take seemingly legitimate excuses with a grain of salt.

Resistance exists not only because your idea of yourself does not correspond to the reality you find beyond the barricade; nor is it sufficient to say that the barricade serves as a supposed defense against the hurts of life. This is too general. One hidden reason for maintaining the barricade is that deep in one's soul one hopes against hope that it is possible to remain a child. Children seem to have the advantage of being given what they need to be happy and secure. They can avoid the effort of obtaining it themselves. The illusion is very tempting: to be entitled to receive without having to stand on one's own feet. The recollection of this advantage of childhood combines with the fear of touching the afflicted areas where the past hurts are. Because the psychic forces have tended toward deliberate helplessness, the ego has remained weak and therefore now it cannot trust itself. This in turn furnishes an excuse for depending upon others for one's needs. One does not want to give up the belief that happiness, fulfillment, and security can come from others, so one clings to this hope. This is a main reason for resisting removal of the barrier.

Once you remove it you will know that you have been clinging to an unjustified hope, and that you did not wish to acknowledge this. You will know that you did not want to go through all the effort of becoming responsible for your life, and that up to now you did not want to shoulder the burden of having failed in this respect.

Depending on others for one's needs may take many forms and apply to many different aspects of outer and inner attitudes. You have to find out how this applies to you.

As a child is helpless, so is an invalid. Both depend on others. The resisting psyche is therefore not only the child that has not yet grown up, but is also a deliberate invalid.

On the one hand, you are afraid of your helplessness and do not give yourself the chance not to be helpless, nor to test whether or not your helplessness is real. On the other, you are afraid of the opposite: that you indeed have many more resources than you would like to admit. Admitting them would demand certain obligations and the assumption of self-responsibility, but you would rather take on false responsibilities because that seems an easier way to get approval. This, too, can be verified only in subtle, hidden areas that are not easy to find unless you have gained considerable self-knowledge.

To summarize: The prohibition against allowing the flow of all feelings into your conscious mind is due to, first, fear of imperfection; second, fear of having to shed attitudes that supposedly protect one from hurts; and, third, insistence on remaining a child because then others are responsible for your needs, your happiness, and your safety. Again I have to admonish you that identifying these prohibitions is not easy, even though many emotions may have reached surface awareness already. If you persevere, you will find your fear of helplessness, since you also fear knowing that you need not be helpless if you do not wish to be. You further fear having to give up your childish desire for instant gratification of all your wishes.

These resistances cut you off from your life-stream, even if this stream brings in its wake some debris to begin with. But is it not much better to let the debris float freely where you can see it? Seeing it affords you the means of removing it; otherwise it will build up behind the barricade as the water mounts.

Recognize the signs of resistance, my friends! Observe yourself. See how you are always tempted to shove an unpleasant feeling aside in the hope that it will "go away." Observe how you try to find easy explanations that do not really satisfy you. Observe how you make excuses for not looking at these disturbances, and how everything else seems more important. Beware of the easy rationalizations, for they are most dangerous. Preposterous rationalizations -- which exist even in the sanest people -- are much easier to cope with because they require less effort for the truth to penetrate. But the seemingly valid rationalizations pose the real dangers: they require sincere effort and the cultivation of truthfulness.

Each one of you concerned with spiritual development and inner growth may pose the following questions: "What is most important for me in order to reach the maximum possible self-honesty? Which of my activities can help me most in this? Do I deceive myself when I wish to believe that any activity other than self-recognition can bring me spiritual development? Is growth possible without it? Are my efforts sufficient, or could I do more? If I could do more, why do I permit this reticence? Could it be that I cultivate self-finding only in those areas that do not hurt, that do not create anxiety in me? If this is so, then I must consider the likelihood that I resist knowing what is in me. What is my attitude toward myself in this admission? If I want to persist in my resistance, is it not better that at least I know that I lack the courage to look at myself, rather than pretend the opposite? Do I have the courage for this admission? Can I acknowledge that there

are certain areas of my being where I am courageous and utterly willing to look truthfully at myself, while other areas may exist where the opposite holds true?" Ask yourself all these questions and then listen carefully. Pray that you do not deceive yourself with the answers. If you do this, my friends, it will mean more than you can possibly imagine at this time. Once these questions are truthfully answered, you will experience the difference between healthy and unhealthy struggle.

If there is doubt in you, and you do not want to doubt, you may struggle against the doubt by denying its existence, but you do not remove it. This is exactly what your resistance, your barricade, does. It is a pretense of not doubting, it is not the reality. Doubt is only one of many emotions. There are clusters of negative emotions combined in certain attitudes that you resist recognizing. Stop the resistance. Let the negative emotions float freely to the surface, and then you have nothing to fear from them.

Unhealthy struggle is resistance, and it is futile because you fight to make yourself believe something that does not correspond to reality. It is as simple as that, and must be recognized in these terms.

Understandably, you tend to forget this, my friends, and it is my task to see that you are reminded of it at appropriate times and to furnish you with the equipment you need, including strong examples that approach the problem from a new angle.

So do not struggle against what is inside, regardless of what it is, for you consume your energies in the denial. You perpetuate self-deception, and you do not achieve the result you wish. Learn to accept that you are only human and are not despicable because you harbor the same weaknesses as all your fellow human beings. Thus you will be kinder toward yourself and this will enable you to face all that is in you. Harsh unkindness with oneself is not a virtue, my friends, as you may believe. It is quite the opposite, because it is proud, arrogant, and breeds self-deception and untruthfulness.

I also want to remind you that whenever you feel inner discomfort, it is not sufficient to look for the deeper meaning. You also need to examine the times when you felt similarly as a child. Then synchronize these two feelings. But it is necessary to have made some progress on this path before this approach becomes meaningful and liberating. Otherwise it will merely be an empty, although perhaps interesting, speculation. Do not ever forget the childhood hurts that you have not yet come to terms with maturely make you barricade the stream, to resist, to be untruthful toward yourself, to live in destructive patterns, inner fear, and insecurity. These hurts cause you to struggle in the wrong direction, which puts you in disharmony with life's flow. Only if you understand this can you enter the stream, flow with the tide of time, space, and movement in harmony with the universal forces.

Those who have never found and consciously acknowledged a resistance in themselves still have much to learn. They are way behind those who can freely admit, and thus cope with, their resistance.

If there are spontaneous questions referring to this lecture, please ask them now.

QUESTION: If someone has repressed fear and then has come to realize it, and this realization makes the fear overflow -- you discussed today how whenever there is an overflow, there is a struggle -- how can he cope with it?

ANSWER: It is an error to believe that allowing yourself to become aware of the fear will cause an overflow you cannot cope with. It is not the awareness that causes the difficulty, but the attitude toward the fear and what underlies it. The wrong attitude is the unhealthy struggle against the fear. Struggling in the sense of telling yourself that "I should not be afraid, I do not want to feel fear because it is unpleasant," fights against the part of yourself that happens to be in fear now. The feeling of being flooded by fear comes from bracing yourself against the wave of fear. Your defenses against recognizing that you are in fear still operate.

You have partly removed the barricade because you realized that it prevents development, but another part of you bargains to have the fear removed before it is fully out of hiding, with all its ramifications. If you stop struggling against the fear, if you can say, "I, a human being like many others, am now in fear," you will finally float and rise on the wave of fear, rather than being immersed in it. You will swim in the fear rather than drowning in it. This will eliminate the feeling of danger. Although the fear will still be present, it will be experienced in a very different way. Immersion is due to struggling against the wave. The fear of drowning prevents people from swimming, even though they have capacity to swim. Only when you swim can you see what is behind the fear.

Nagging, persisting fears are unrealistic fears you do not cope with properly, regardless of what the issue may be. Underneath these, you will always find other "streams of emotions" that are blocked and thus prevented from flowing. These other emotions may be manifold: hostility, humiliation, pride and shame, hurt, arrogance, self-importance, self-pity, insistence on unreasonable demands, and many more. You struggle against these feelings just as you struggle against the fear. Very often, the first layer underneath the fear consists of strong hostilities, which are particularly taboo. If they are allowed into the fresh air of consciousness, the fear will automatically cease. I promise this will be so, and this has often been corroborated by friends who have already gone through this phase.

QUESTION: And if it is not a psychological fear, but a physical one?

ANSWER: Your attitude toward a physical predicament does not preclude psychological deviations. A realistic fear will be coped with in the best and most reasonable way possible. If the unpleasant result one fears is not eliminated, then acceptance of the unpleasantness must finally come, if it is coped with maturely and realistically. But acceptance is impossible as long as one struggles. The mind is divided. Part of it says, "I should accept what cannot be altered," and another part says, "I do not want to accept it." Situations result in nagging fears whenever this division exists goes unrecognized. Moreover, the underlying negative emotions are still kept in hiding; they simply make themselves known in connection with a now real outer reason. But the existence of the outer reason does not eliminate their presence. The inevitable difficulties of life can be met only if the psychological deviations are recognized. If a real outer fear overwhelms you, then you struggle against a part of yourself in life. And here we come around full circle to the beginning of this lecture.

Ask yourselves, my friends, if you are afraid of certain happenings in life. Are you not doubtful of your strength and resourcefulness to go through them? Tackle it from there. A final word regarding this: The doubt about your own resources has to do with your childish insistence on having to have your way, and your inability to relinquish it. The more you must have, the more you will be in fear, and the more you will struggle against the knowledge of this fear and of your childish insistence. The emotional maturity we seek is the ability to tolerate frustration, and to accept that everything does not always go one's own way. That acceptance will finally enable you to master yourself and life because you will float with the wave, instead of stemming against it. That alone will give you self-confidence.

If you can accept not having whatever you want, that will give you the trust in yourself you truly deserve. If you must have what you want without being able to provide it for yourself, you will remain helpless and dependent and insecure. If you can accept frustration, you will have the confidence of knowing that you can cope with life.

My dearest friends, meditate deeply on these last two sentences. You will then come to see that the event you fear is much less frightening than your helpless dependency on having to have what you want, while denying your own and life's limitations.

My dearest friends, be blessed, all of you! May the love that is pouring forth fill you with courage and the knowledge that you have within yourself all you need to master any situation. May this love also give you strength and wisdom, as well as the inner willingness to really understand what I have said tonight. For this would mean such a liberation for you! It would mean the difference between living and only half-living. You cannot do enough pondering over this lecture. Try to make it a lived knowledge; apply it to yourself personally, rather than merely understanding it intellectually. Receive our love and blessings. You have nothing to fear.

Pursue this work and you will become forever stronger, more creative, and more harmonious with yourself and with your life. You will become more alive than you ever thought possible. Be in peace. Be in God!

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