

Spiritual Metamorphosis



The nature of pleasure

It is generally accepted that pleasure is integral to a fulfilled life, a satisfying life. It is therefore an interest for those who explore their spiritual potential. But although this is agreed, pleasure is not a subject that is explored in any depth in most personal development philosophies at this time. This is partly because there is an understanding that pleasure is not something you can argue someone into. You cannot say to someone, "This will give you pleasure," and guarantee that it will. Pleasures are unique to the person; if something does not give pleasure, then there is no point in arguing that it should.

Well, you might say, surely a person can persuade another to do something that is claimed to be pleasurable? Is that not what a great deal of advertising is about? Yes that is true. But the power of persuasion remains only as long as it takes the person to experience that recommendation. If you go to a recommended movie, you will soon find out if it is going to give you pleasure. That is why advertisers often use sexual images to sell products. They are well aware, for example, that a dishwasher does not generally bring to mind a sense of bodily pleasure, but the pretty woman beside it may. Advertisers look for images that remind people of pleasure – nature, pets, charming children. But it is not the image that is effective, *but the memory of pleasure experienced in the body*. Laughter is found to be a very good persuasive technique because it provides the body with pleasure.

And what about the pleasure of something that is an intellectual pursuit – say, playing chess? Surely this is simply a mental activity, but also gives pleasure? On the surface, that may appear to be true. However, it is not the game that provides the pleasure but the exercise of the mind in a particular way. Again if you do not have the bodily (brain) capacity to become fully engaged in that particular field of thought, then you cannot be persuaded to find pleasure in it, because the bio-chemicals that induce a sense of pleasure are not being triggered

We are emphasising the point that pleasure is internally generated, because, in the search for pleasure, do not look to things, including people, outside yourself. Rather *cultivate the capacity for pleasure within the self*. Pleasure is a natural second chakra function in which you receive from life its joy and wonder. It is life-giving and life-supporting; when you are ready to accept this notion, you can find it anywhere you look. Pleasure can then be the foundation of your whole experience of living.

How might you do this?

If you wish to increase pleasure in your life, you need to be able to identify how precisely you experience pleasure, how your connection to certain people, things, situations, provides pleasure. You will need to recognise how that colour blue, for example, gives relaxation

within the body, while that shade of green does not. How being those people gives a sense of warmth while being with others does not. Once this ability to be aware of pleasure is natural to you, then you will be surprised by how easily you will be able to connect to pleasure in everyday life.

However, to maintain pleasure, you will also need to expand your awareness of when something pleasurable loses its appeal – when enough is enough. This is because, pleasure is in the moment, and if you do not flow with the rhythm of how your body responds to what it is offered, then something initially pleasurable will quickly lose its appeal. It will be one candy bar too many. Your body-mind is always seeking pleasure so if you allow it to leave the candy bar in favour of something it now can enjoy, you can circumvent the tendency for pleasure to be fleeting.

The writer and her friend have been looking to find what gives them pleasure as part of an exercise in self-development. And we can say that the one who is more experienced in life, is more able to identify what gives her pleasure and what does not. This is because she has a better relationship to new experience in that she is less afraid of it. Fear of the unknown reduces the capacity for pleasure.

How does this occur? Many find that pleasure is induced by holidays and novelty: new experiences. Of course new experience can put you into a state of contraction, of defensiveness, or a feeling of a need to protect. But the problem is generally not the experience itself, but the fear of the unknown or unfamiliarity. Once fear dissolves, the new experience has the possibility to create pleasure. A lack of safety and pleasure cannot co-exist. The more fearless you are, the more pleasure you may be able to gather from experience. As you examine what gives you pleasure you will find that it is almost always associated with a state of ease and freedom.

As a person grows into the freedom of being able to release fear very quickly, and is able to take reasonable steps to ensure their protection from untoward events, then that person may well find that their life has a quality of almost continuous pleasure. Where you are finding least pleasure in your life, or where you wish to gain more, that is where you need to observe and work with the fears you hold around the unknown and unfamiliar. Those who can adventure fearlessly find more pleasure.

So to summarise we would say that pleasure is the result of an individual's unique capacity to find ease and freedom and bodily joy in certain stimuli. Because pleasure is a product of fearless experience, then the more a person reduces fear and opens up to the newness of possibility – the adventure and play of life - then the more pleasure they will have. This is why if you determine to make your life activities a playground, and adventure, rather than a schoolroom, you will expand more easily, learn more and find more pleasure.

Exercises

1. Draw a Wheel of Life on a sheet of paper. Invite your higher self to help you with the next step. Throw a single dice to indicate what level of pleasure you receive from each aspect of your wheel. 1 will be the lowest, 6 the highest possible score. Once you have a result for each spoke of the wheel, you will have a pleasure rating for your life. Now reflect on what causes you to experience pleasure in the most highly rated aspect. This will provide you with a mental understanding of what you are in search of.

2. Extend your appreciation of pleasure by taking time out to actively identify moments of pleasure as they occur in specific situations: with friends, in nature, with your favourite pastimes, your pets, family, at rest and so on. What are the qualities that create pleasure for you? Notice how your body feels when you are experiencing pleasure.

3. Finally, now that you have a mental, emotional and physical appreciation of pleasure, visualize as you experience pleasure that pleasure is an energy of love that you are able to breathe in. As you take an in-breath, imagine that this energy is sinking deep into your body, right down the spine and into the legs. Hold this energy a moment. As you exhale, let this energy penetrate your whole body and mind and heart.