

The Vicious Circle of the Idealized Self Image

By Jan Rigsby

“The idealised self masks the real self. It pretends to be something you are not.”

Pathwork Guide Lecture 83

Draw a simple clock face and write in the numbers 1-12 in a standard pattern. Add 2 curved lines, connecting 3 back to 12 and 8 back to 6. As you go through this exercise, use the examples as inspiration to find a Vicious Circle issue in your own life. Except where noted, quotes are from Pgl 83.

0/12 = The starting point. We are inspired by our Higher Self and our connection to the Divine. This place is never specific, because the Higher Self is not attached to how things manifest. *Challenge any statement here that feels as if it is already ‘in motion’ or which may harbor an agenda or hold onto fixed idea.* Example: “I want to be good, generous, kind and loving in my interactions.

1= We attempt to manifest this HS desire. This may be somewhat specific, but it does not have a forcing current or agenda yet. The destructive element here is engaging in dualistic thinking, thinking in terms of ‘or’ instead of ‘and’. “My friend could use some help” contains “or unhappiness will result”.

“When man knows and senses that there is only good, freedom, right, beauty, love, truth, life without a threatening opposite, and when he tries to apply this on the dualistic plane, he will immediately be plunged into the very conflict of opposites he needs to avoid. He then fights for one of the dualistic aspects and against the other. Such a fight makes the transcendence impossible.” Unity and Duality, Pgl 143

2= We experience some resistance. In a Benign Circle, we might re-examine our inspiration and how it started to manifest, adjust based upon feedback, and try again. In a Vicious Circle, we decide to push forward without challenging our premise. “I wasn’t able to help this time, but I can figure something out!”

“practically everything man encounters, every human problem and predicament, is determined by this dualistic way of perceiving life.” Pgl 143

3= There is a growing sense that something has gone wrong. Depending upon our personality type and history, we start to question ourselves or others. “I am failing” “I can’t do this” “He/She doesn’t like / understand me” This is a primary exit point for the Vicious Circle, before we have become invested or attached and before feelings have become strengthened into emotions.

“Unhappiness and lack of belief in oneself are interconnected. Hence, the creation of the idealized self-image serves the purpose of obtaining the missing self-confidence.”

4= A decision is made to push forward. We assume that the fundamentals behind both our inspiration and our methods – the Ideals that make up our Image – are valid. “If I only...” “I can’t quit now” “Maybe another way will work...”

“And when you try to hide your reactions to your own “failure,” you take to special means in order not to become aware of your “failure.” Pgl 143

5= Discomfort increases / resolve hardens. We feel forced to choose: give up, or commit further.

“You knew perfectly well that you were not as good and as perfect as the world seemed to expect you to be. This truth had to be hidden as a guilty secret, and you started to build up a false self. This, you thought, was your protection and your means of attaining what you desperately want -- life, happiness, security, self-confidence. For, whenever you fall short, as you are bound to, you feel so impatient, so irritated that such impatience and irritation can snowball into fury and wrath at yourself.”

6= The Idealized Self Image is now in charge. The seduction of the ISI is that it represents our ideals. We have no argument against it – it is ‘good’. Any protest must be ‘bad’.

Since the standards and dictates of the idealized self are impossible to realize, yet never giving up the attempt, you keep and cultivate within yourself an inner tyranny of the worst order. The original insecurity, supposed to be whisked away by the establishment of the idealized self, steadily increases. It snowballs,

and becomes worse and worse. The more insecure you feel, the more stringent the demands of the superstructure, the idealized self, the less are you able to live up to it, and the more insecure do you feel.”

7= We sense the pretense. It is here that negativity’s most attractive aspect – that we do not have to feel uncomfortable or unpleasant feelings – is revealed as a lie. We cannot remain in stasis or contraction. Eventually, some expansion will occur. This process may take days, weeks, years or lifetimes, but it is inevitable and uncontrollable. Living is a verb; life is defined by movement.

“Sense of failure, frustration, and compulsion, as well as guilt and shame, are the most outstanding indications of your idealised self being at work. These are the consciously felt emotions of all that lies hidden underneath. Thereby, further vicious circles come into existence. ...the more you take out of that live-center in order to invest into the robot you have created, the more estranged you become from the real self, and the more you weaken and impoverish it.”

This is another place where we can exit the vicious circle, by becoming more conscious of what is really going on. Going forward from this place by simply expanding our efforts continue the circle.

“You will gain an objective view of yourself in this respect, and this view will liberate you. You will fully assume responsibility for the faulty attitude, being willing to take the consequences upon yourself.”

8= Our imperfections and mistakes are used against us – by ourselves. Under the tyranny of the ISI, we may succumb to its apparent perfection.

“Thereby, further vicious circles come into existence. ...the more you take out of that live-center in order to invest into the robot you have created, the more estranged you become from the real self, and the more you weaken and impoverish it.” Pgl 83

9= We feel the need to choose ‘good’ over ‘bad’, plunging further into dualistic thinking and energizing the choices we have made.

“The more you try to identify with your idealized self-image, the harder is the disillusionment whenever life brings you into a position when this masquerade can no longer be maintained.”

10 and 11 = We move forward within a forcing current, moving past the point on the circle where our original intention came in, remembering our longing but blinded by our ISI’s version of how we should manifest it.

“Needless to say, you also have to recognize most particularly and in detail what your specific demands and standards are; and further, you have to see their unreasonableness, their impossibility.”

Based upon the specifics of the situation or circumstances, a decision is made, blame is assigned, fault is determined and our resolve is hardened.

“First will come changes in your reactions to life, to incidents, to yourself and others. This changed reaction will be quite astounding enough. But little by little, outer things are also bound to change. Your different attitude will cause new effects.

You cannot approach this most important part of your inner work by a general concept. As usual, your most insignificant daily reactions, considered from this viewpoint, will yield the necessary result. So continue your self-search out of these new considerations, and do not be impatient if it takes time and relaxed effort.

The difference between the real and the idealized self is often not a question of quantity (as regards the goodness or badness of a trend) but rather one of quality.

Another important consideration is the time element between these two selves. The idealized self wants to be perfect (according to its specific demands) right now. The real self knows this cannot be and does not suffer from this fact.

Then you will truly experience the following words. The more egocentric you are, the less can you have of self-confidence. The idealized self believes just the opposite. Its claims for perfection are motivated by sheerly egocentric reasons. And this very egocentricity makes self-confidence impossible.” Pgl 83

What is the Idealized Self Image?

By Kim Rosen

Based upon Pathwork Guide Lecture 83 and the research of Bert and Moira Shaw

ISI is a false self designed to insure happiness, security, and self-confidence.

ISI can hide OR glorify negativities – or both.

ISI can be aloof, invulnerable, and/or ‘good’.

ISI makes tyrannical demands that we believe our lives depend upon fulfilling.

Causes feelings of failure, frustration, compulsion, false guilt, false shame, false needs.

Dissolving the Idealized Self-Image

1. Recognize in detail the ISI’s demands.
2. Understand what it was designed to insure – your particular type of happiness:

<u>Reason Type</u> *	<u>Will Type</u>	<u>Emotion Type</u>
Being accepted	Being seen	Being loved
Being aloof	Being powerful	Being in harmony
Being in control	Being invulnerable	Being “good”

Understand what it was designed to avoid – your particular type of Unhappiness:

<u>Reason Type</u>	<u>Will Type</u>	<u>Emotion Type</u>
Being rejected	Being dismissed	Being unloved
Feeling pain	Feeling helplessness	Feeling rage
Experiencing chaos	Experiencing defeat	Experiencing badness

3. Recognize in detail the damage it’s done: that is creates exactly the experience it is designed to avoid.
4. Welcome opportunities to let False Self die; opportunities to let go of being aloof, invulnerable, “good”.
5. Risk feeling all feelings especially your own particular unhappiness:

<u>Reason Type</u>	<u>Will Type</u>	<u>Emotion Type</u>
Pain of rejection	Defeat and helplessness	Rage and badness
Hurt / chaos	Being dismissed, unseen	Having negative feelings, being unloved