



Path Management

In Path Management there are two principles: The first is to continually ask yourself the question, "What is the best, most loving use of my time right now?" And then do it!

To answer this question, you might use your intuition and gut, you might go with your feelings and highest desire, or you might think through your options rationally. Personally, I lean toward gut intuition with a brief rational assessment of options. Sometimes, however, the gut answer to, "What is the best, most loving use of my time right now?" might be to sit down and assess further, or to methodically generate a list of things to do, and evaluate their impacts, or to do nothing until your feelings or mood is stabilized. At other times, the gut answer will require courage and risk. Here is where you walk new ground. Here is where you go all out.

Personally, I cannot do Path Management for long periods of time. I'm usually 'tempted' to drop from doing the best thing, to doing something that's generally considered either a good action or a neutral action because there is some short-term pleasure or mental stimulation in it for me. Yet I find that periodically asking myself the question, and then *doing* it, leads me to a much higher quality life.

By the way, if you're serious about the spiritual walk, the question becomes, "God (or the equivalent for you), what's the best, most loving use of my time right now?"

The second principle to Path Management is: "Make efforts, and make efforts within your efforts." For instance, if one morning you ask yourself the question and the answer comes back to take time to listen to your little brother who is going through a tough time. Then you should not listen and go on "autopilot," just sitting there passively daydreaming as he talks, but at different points you can improve the *quality* by periodically asking yourself what is the best, most loving things to say or do at this point in the conversation. Whenever you have a situation where you don't have enough motivation to do the best, most loving thing, or you're tempted to do something else, here are some strategies:

- Ask a friend to support and nudge you to do the best thing.

- Visualize the positive consequences of doing the best thing. *Emotionally* imagine yourself doing the best thing. Build up the desire into a bonfire.
- Give into a fairly tempting lesser temptation that will cost you less in time, energy, integrity, or whatever you prize.
- Remove the temptation or reminders of the temptation to lessen chances of a next occurrence.

One way to think of Path Management is as a decision process of how to best alternate between different forms of loves, listed below. But it also means avoiding going off the path into one of the forms of 'sleep' or distractions, also listed below.

Three tips to stay "awake" that is, on the path of love:

1. Constantly develop new reminders because you stop responding to the old ones.
2. Don't overconsume stimulation. (Just as overeating makes you sleepy, satisfying all your desires makes you sluggish.)
3. After you've gone off the path, and are ready to get back on, try to figure out what derailed you, so that you're less likely to go off the next time.

Forms of Love

'Love' here is being defined as being on your path. It's also defined as whatever is the best, most loving use of your time. Here are some possible forms:

- Loving what you love: [your greatest personal fulfillment, mission, vision, happiness]
- Facing and grappling with any obstacle to loving what you love.
- Maintaining yourself and infrastructure so you can continue to love [work, home, food, exercise, checkups, etc.]
- Building your capacity to love (time, money, energy, communication skills, etc.)
- Observing yourself and life. Being aware. Taking inventory (part of building capacity) "Listening" to life, including real conversation.
- Planning for love in the future.
- True rest and recharging yourself. Giving yourself time to heal or mourn loss.
- Helping others along their path of love.

- Getting help when you've lost the path.
- Exploring for higher love, something more central to your path, or the next thing on your path.
- Learning how to love, (learning how to overcome a particular obstacle, build your capacity, maintain your infrastructure, etc.)
- Learning techniques to avoid or decrease "sleeping."
- Deciding which of the above to switch to. (Transitioning, Path Management.)

Sleeps

'Sleeps' are activities that interfere with loving as much as you can.

Note: some things can be sleep for one person and love for another, something could help one person recharge and another become dull and restless. Planning and looking ahead can become living in the future.

- Low grade entertainment [often TV, video games, pulp fiction, solitaire on the computer, gossip]
- Daydreaming (past, future, fantasy, worrying), automatic thinking
- Self-satisfaction and pride
- Being stuck in negative emotions (anger, worrying, anxiety, envy, fear, beating on yourself)
- Overindulgence, in food, sex, information or anything.
- Addictions
- Desire for trivial wants, consumption, impulse buying, shopping
- The quest for perfect comfort: latest computer, furniture, fanciest foods, and appliances.
- Amassing wealth, material goods, information
- Letting someone control you
- Trying to control others

- Playing a role, acting
- Fake conversation (one-way reporting when you're speaking, and judging when you're listening are two examples.)
- Going after symbols: a big house as a symbol of emotional security, a sports car as a symbol of youth, expensive clothes for acceptance, promotion as a symbol of being respected and admired.
- The half-sleep of wrong assumptions and beliefs. (For instance, someone who loves music or singing might assume they need to be famous or make money to be a success, when perhaps all they need to do is be creative, or perhaps please themselves and others to fulfill their mission.)

Note:

The same thing can be love, and then sleep. (The first two slices of pizza could be love, but the last six could be sleep.)

Something that's love for one person can be sleep for another.

Something that was love at one stage of your life could be sleep when it's time to move to the next stage.

Facing the Wall

On the path, from time to time, you run into obstacles. This is when you not only are blocked physically or intellectually, but you often become negative or drained of motivation. Some people start beating up on themselves.

Good things to do:

- See this situation as a learning experience.
- Get calm and objective again by writing about your feelings in your journal or by talking out your feelings with a friend.
- Observe yourself and consider briefly the root of what you're feeling or thinking.
- Ask yourself how you've solved a similar problem in the past.
- Try to imagine how someone famous (Einstein, Gandhi, etc.) would approach the wall.

- Ask yourself if this can be reframed as a different kind of obstacle. For instance, a money problem might be reframed as a time management problem if you're spending money paying late fines, or paying others to do what you could do yourself.
- Think of someone who might know how to help *you* get past the wall.
- Ask for help (if you've earned the right to ask, by giving help to others.)
- Are you making any assumptions that you shouldn't? Test your assumptions. Think creatively. For example, is there another path to your goal? Try to think another way around or through the wall.
- Remember that some walls are paper thin.
- Remember that most other walls can be taken down brick by brick and that you don't have to take down every brick to get past this thing.
- Accept a reasonable amount of pain to get through certain obstacles. This is being mature.
- If all else fails, this might be an indication that you've chosen the wrong path or the wrong time to pursue this path.

Path Management Exercise

Path Management is to be on the path of greatest fulfillment, by asking yourself the question, "What is the best, most loving use of my time?" Start by consulting your intellect, feelings and intuition and, if it helps, briefly write out your three answers. Then choose which seems to be the best answer and do it. If you get bogged down by analysis, use your feelings or intuition. As an exercise, try to stay on the path for an hour, and notice when you go off the path and what pulls you off.

For example, if I asked myself what the best, most loving use of my time is right now, my three answers would be: Logic and Rational Mind: Continue working on this program because it has such a great potential to be of help to people. Feelings: I'm feeling like a break would be good soon. Intuition: It might be good to think of people who I haven't talked to lately. I have a friend in Florida I've been thinking about. My choice: To take a break and then call my friend in Florida.