

The 10 PRINCIPLES OF PLENEURETHICS**

by James F. Carroll

In Volume VII of the Pleneurethics books, Richard Collier begins with the following statement: “Life is not simple. Those things which deal effectively with life are also not simple. Pleneurethics is a way of creating a better life and once again, it is not simple.”

After studying Mr. Collier’s work for the past seven years and teaching Pleneurethics for five years, I would have to agree with its founder! Understanding and living the Pleneurethical life is not simple, but it is quite rewarding. I will attempt here to share some of the lessons that have come up for me many times as I read and studied the original eight volumes which make up the core of Pleneurethics.**

To capture the many important contributions of Pleneurethics in ten short principles would be impossible. Therefore, selection of these principles is simply a result of my own efforts to understand Pleneurethics, and it should not be seen as an attempt to create an all-inclusive or comprehensive list. With this disclaimer firmly in mind, let me begin an explanation of the ten principles of Pleneurethics.

Principle 1. “Pleneurethics endeavors to strengthen the neural system and preserve its integrity by preserving its resources.” Vol. II, Chapter 1, p.1.

The last decade has produced so much information dealing with the development and functioning of the human brain that it is often referred to as the “decade of the brain.” Laboratories around the world have mapped neurological functioning and charted neurological development to a degree of scientific precision that has never before occurred. It is my belief that of all the new discoveries which have been unearthed in these labs, the finding that “electrical activity of brain cells changes the physical structure of the brain is perhaps the most breathtaking” (Time, February 3, 1997). These findings form the foundation of the very core of Pleneurethics. Therefore, preserving the integrity of the brain system becomes the first principle of Pleneurethics. It seems to me that if we truly grasped the concept that our neurological energy is a limited, non-renewable resource it would affect our lives ranging in areas from personal health choices to broad social policy decisions. This will be discussed further in later principles.

Principle 2. “Pleneurethics is any corrective force applied to body or mind to restore neurological sufficiency.” Vol. II, Chapter 1, p.5.

In this principle, Collier again speaks to the importance of neurological sufficiency to the functioning of the organism. He points out that any corrective force that facilitates the appropriate functioning of the brain system could be viewed as a form of healing.

These corrective forces may be applied in any of the four quadrants described by Collier as the biophysical, biomental, biochemical and biocultural. Pleneurethics postulates that, by maintaining the environments of the brain system and preserving its resources, a person would naturally maintain optimum health and wellbeing. (see plate III, p. 45)

Principle 3. “Pleneurethics integrates the study of the human organism by relating the physical, intellectual, and ethical components of a human being through the concept of neurological sufficiency.” Vol. II, Chapter 1, p.7.

Pleneurethics pioneered the relationship of neurological sufficiency to ethical decision-making and behavior. We now know there is a time scale for brain development, and the first year seems to be the most important. Research at Baylor College of Medicine found that children who play very little or are rarely touched develop brains 20 to 30 percent smaller than normal for their age. This neurological insufficiency may indeed make it very difficult for these children to develop into socially well-adjusted adults. Pleneurethics has stated the importance of proper brain environments for years. But only now do we have the research to document the extent and importance of Collier’s observations.

Principle 4. “The brain is professed in Pleneurethics to be the central organic structure of man and as such it offers the best vantage from which all living affairs of man are most realistically evaluated.”

Vol. VII, Chapter XV, p.116.

We now know that a baby’s brain contains about 100 billion neurons, or roughly the same number as stars in our galaxy. Also in place at birth are about a trillion glial cells, which form a sort of honeycomb that protects and nourishes the neurons. At this point “what the brain has done is lay out circuits that are its best guess about what is required for vision, language, or whatever.” But the key thing that has been discovered is that from this point on it is the actual neural activity that begins to refine and define the neurological blueprint that each individual will follow. Thus, the level and types of stimulation it receives directly affect the structure of the brain. This emphasis on neurological structure is one of the defining and unique ideas of Pleneurethics.

Principle 5. “The energy output of the brain is not limitless, nor is it inexhaustible, nor are its patterns impervious to distortion.”

Vol. VII, Chapter XV, p.117.

In this principle, Collier presents a difficult issue to grasp. Although the brain appears almost limitless in its number of cells, over time the ability of the brain shows some deterioration in most people and significant loss of abilities in others. For example, Alzheimer’s patients or late-stage alcoholics show pronounced loss of cognitive abilities and brain mass. It seems that if given constant stress or abuse in one or more of the four environments, brain energy is then required to manage these chronic problems and tries to return the organism to maximum functioning. So, although the brain is very creative in its attempts to compensate for a deficiency in any given area, it remains a closed energy system that must borrow energy from one area to compensate for another. Collier believes that it is just this process that leads the individual into chronic illness and discomfort. He also postulates that by improving the brain environments and reducing sources of chronic and acute stress, the brain will make every effort to heal the individual.

Principle 6. “Neurochemical coaxiality considers the brain’s ability to direct digestion, assimilation and transportation of nutriment to itself and various other portions of the organism.” Vol. VIII, Chapter 5, p.14.

This principle is supported by the role that neurotransmitters and hormone levels play in regard to human behavior. As we learn more about the role of these neurochemicals it seems only logical to believe that we will some day learn how to manipulate brain chemistry in a positive way. Recent examples of this would include the marketing of DHEA and melatonin to the general public. These brain-altering drugs are available in any grocery or drug store and come with claims including increased energy, slowing of the aging process, and better sexual performance. It seems to me that as we begin to understand the chemical environment of the brain, we will continue to see new and improved attempts to manage and promote better brain functioning. This area also has made tremendous progress in the treatment of mental illnesses. The role of brain chemistry in mental illness is now readily recognized and medications have made great strides in treating many of these conditions.

Principle 7. “Neurophysical coaxiality considers the brain in relationship to its physical housing; more specifically the bioductory system and supporting mechanisms.” Vol. VIII, Chapter 5, p.14.

In this principle Collier focuses on the physical systems that support and protect the brain system. Maintaining and protecting the physical environment of the brain system is one of the most prevention-oriented means that we may employ to insure better health and wellbeing. For example, it is amazing that we have to pass seat belt and motorcycle helmet laws when the devastation of head injury is so obvious. Likewise, once we understand the need to protect the neurological resources of a talented individual will we really send them out to play football or take part in boxing? I believe that once the value of our brain system is truly appreciated, activities that risk frequent or likely damage to the brain system will be viewed from a different perspective.

Principle 8. “Neuromental coaxiality is concerned with the ability of the brain to transmit impressions with sufficient vigor to be impressed upon the mind and reciprocally with the structure of mentality which both incites the brain to meaningful activity and assists in interpreting brain sensations.” Vol. VIII, Chapter 3, p.16.

In this principle Collier emphasizes the role that appropriate thought plays in maintaining a healthy brain environment. Pleneurethics points out that chronic anxiety or depression creates stresses on the neurological resources that are then not available to maintain and enhance the functioning of the organism. Collier points out that the problem with lying is that it requires further lies to cover up the first and thus becomes horribly wasteful of our mental energy. A realistic and simple approach to our mentality is encouraged with periods of rest and meditation to balance the over-stimulation of modern society.

Principle 9. “Neurosocial coaxiality reveals a relationship between the brain and the civilization within which it must survive. Not only does the brain suffer at the hands of a hostile society which creates tensions in it and depresses it, society suffers because a brain has been allowed to deteriorate.” Vol. VIII, Chapter 4, p.18.

In this principle Collier examines the role of culture and its relationship to the functioning of the individual and the society at large. He espouses an ethical life as a means of conserving neurological energy and social integrity. He points out that many societal ills are a result of individuals challenged neurologically in one or more of the major quadrants. It also opens up the discussion of how a society uses its resources. Do we try to ensure the most stimulating and safe environment possible in the first years of an infant's life, or do we simply respond with confinement if the individual seems unable to handle our complex society? The Pleneurethical outlook would try to enhance and support maximum development of brain capacity in each of its members to insure a more capable contributor to that society.

Principle 10. “The intelligent man does not misuse his neural resources. The ethical man does not abuse the neural resources of others. The wise man, through his understanding, is both intelligent and ethical.” Vol. VIII, Chapter 5, p.19.

In these three sentences we find the wisdom of the philosophy of Pleneurethics. It is presented as friendly advice for the person who would journey down the Pleneurethic path. It supports the Pleneurethical premise that the secret to a productive and healthy lifestyle is the wise use and conservation of an individual's neurological resources.

As I have studied Pleneurethics, have practiced as a mental health therapist, and have followed the current trends in brain research, I continue to grow in respect and admiration for the dedication that Richard Collier put into this work. It is also amazing to me that so many of his theories have been supported and proven in the laboratories of the leading universities across the country. Keeping this in mind I hope that these selected principles have given the reader some introduction to the philosophy of Pleneurethics and maybe piqued the reader's interest enough to read more.

*James F. Carroll is the Director of the Pleneurethics Institute and is a member of The Pleneurethics Society Board of Directors. He is Program Coordinator of Tacoma Community College's Human Services Program. This article first appeared in the Journal of Pleneurethics, Volume 5, Number 1, 1997.