

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION

FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

LETTER OF JANUARY 15, 2003

Dear Reader,

A relative has brought to my attention a book by Eugene Linden, *The Parrot's Lament*, which relates many interesting stories that demonstrate animal intelligence. Among the most intriguing are a number of accounts about orangutans in captivity. Especially notable is their talent for escaping their confines. They watch and listen as their keepers come and go, devise a method, plan ahead, create tools for the purpose, hide their progress when their work would give away their intent, and ultimately achieve their goal. Once free, they sometimes behave as their visitors do, wandering the grounds and visiting other exhibits; but most often, they simply loll about in front of the enclosures from which they have escaped. They appear to enjoy the challenge of outwitting their keepers, and it is speculated that they appreciate mastering a problem, just as we do.

All animals appear to need stimulation. Even an amoeba will die if its environment is unchanging. A stimulus is a change, any kind of change. For each individual, comfort is maintained when there is an optimal level of positively toned stimuli, and we all seek sufficient stimulation to maintain that level.

The confines of a zoo provide much less stimulation than the wilds of a jungle; hence its occupants must find additional stimuli however they can. The process of escape serves this purpose well, as it provides many kinds of stimuli: the challenge of finding the means, the prospect of exploring new territory, but most of all, foiling the keeper, because a human being interacts physically, cognitively and emotionally with greater complexity than almost any other source of stimulation.

Of all animals, we human beings have access to the greatest variety of possible new stimuli because of our interaction with each other, the richness of our environment, and

our mobility. Whether it be attending a concert, calling a friend, traveling abroad, or climbing a mountain, we seek the stimuli that we need. One of the most efficient stimuli, for the purpose of maintaining the optimal level, is a problem; because until it is solved, it remains an ongoing stimulus. Does this mean that we welcome problems? That depends. The discomfort caused by significant hunger is best solved as soon as possible; but the disequilibrium caused by a crossword puzzle can be quite enjoyable. Among the most pleasurable stimuli of all are our major achievements, because these, too, our creations and our capabilities, become a source of ongoing positive stimulation.

Whenever a person is presented with a problem, his mental apparatus, out of awareness, identifies a solution. Sometimes he becomes aware of the solution; other times he never does. An Inner Guide has the ability to bring all solutions into awareness. Some problems are solved quickly; the ones that are most novel are the ones that take more time.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION:

The Parrot's Lament by Eugene Linden, Plume/Penguin Putnam, New York, 1999

This book is recommended, not for speedreading, but strictly for pleasure. (Speedreading is useful for registering large quantities of information in one's memory bank, for use by the Inner Guide.) Linden, who has written on nature and the environment for various publications, describes the many ways that we can see evidence of intelligence in a variety of animals. One of my favorite stories relates the way that Willy B., a gorilla, behaved on his twentieth birthday. "As part of the fun, the keepers organized a tug-of-war with the gorilla at one end of the rope and about twenty people pulling on the other...he dropped the rope, causing the humans to fall down laughing." The descriptions of animals' behavior include not only games but cooperation, barter, tool creation and use, empathy and heroism. Linden concludes with a description of his trip into a jungle so remote that its animals had never seen humans before. He relates his concerns about the many ways that destruction of the natural environment is occurring, and wonders whether humankind's "superior" intelligence may be our undoing.

QUESTION:

L. M. asks, "Can the Inner Guide help develop faster reading on a direct access basis?"

Yes. All of our conflicts and disequibrations interfere with an optimal reading speed, creating "static," so to speak. The Inner guide, by causing our conflicts and disequibrations to abate (gradually over time), clears our minds of the static, and we become able to fully focus on what we read, increasing both speed and comprehension. We will never be able to read as quickly as our Inner Guides do, however, because the mental activity that takes place out of awareness is voluminous in quantity and happens extremely rapidly. We would be unable to process it in awareness.

I welcome your questions and comments, and will publish as many of them as possible. I look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,

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