

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION

FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

LETTER OF MARCH 12 , 2003

Dear Reader,

Some of the Letter's readers are entrepreneurs, and some have begun to work for themselves quite recently. You are not alone. Ellen Rudnick, Clinical Professor of Entrepreneurship at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business has told me that in recent times, two-thirds of new jobs in our economy are the result of entrepreneurial activity. It seems that more people either want to work for themselves, or have been forced to after having been laid off.

At a recent conference on entrepreneurship, those participants who are working for themselves said that they prefer this to a salaried position. Some had found, to their shock, that there is no longer any protection or stability in working for a large company; they were laid off at a moment's notice! They have found that there is actually more safety in working for themselves; they can see trouble coming sooner and react accordingly. But in addition to protecting themselves, they found that they *enjoyed* working for themselves more. This might seem self-evident, but why?

When you are working for yourself, you have much more control of your stimulus level. You have more freedom to do the various tasks that make up your job on *your* timetable. When you need a break, you can take one; and when you seek a higher level of stimulation, you can apply yourself to your work as intensely as you wish.

Another reason why you can be more comfortable working for yourself is that when you have a boss, no matter how nice he or she might be, the reality of his or her authority evokes the subliminal memory pathways of past authority figures who have been the source of discomfort. During an individual's upbringing, there are many times when the authorities (parents, teachers and others) have forced a child to do something (or refrain

from doing something) in a way or at a time that didn't match that child's need for stimulation. At those times, the child experiences the authority's expectation or action as a noxious intrusion, causing an uncomfortable disequilibrium. For example, in a typical school classroom, the teacher's pace will cause some children to be overstimulated and traumatized (those who have learning disabilities, for instance), while the brightest students will be understimulated and bored. I am sure that you can all remember past encounters with your parents that you found distressing. Our minds retain the memories of all of these disequilibriations that were imposed on us by authority figures. Because a current authority figure, a boss, evokes these old memories (for the most part subliminally), they create disequilibrium in the present. This is typically experienced as a feeling of constraint, and is often so taken for granted that it is not identified as a problem. Yet it is a significant cause of discomfort.

But the most important reason why working for oneself is enjoyable is that it is creative. Whether writing a novel, performing an experiment or bringing a business into existence, the mind is making new connections among its mental pathways. This is a source of positive stimulation. Moments of not knowing, which cause disequilibrium, are followed by feelings of excitement and satisfaction, as the disequilibrium is resolved. Creativity is health promoting, because the expansion of mental pathways provides the stimulation that contributes to the optimal stimulus level, just as the exercise discussed in a previous Letter promotes bodily vigor.

Your Inner Guide will expand your creativity because it will eliminate the sources of distress that create mental blocks, and because, with its access to your entire memory bank, it is able to find novel solutions for problems.

For those who are not yet self-employed but who wish to be, take heart. Your Inner Guide will help you get there.

QUESTION:

My friend is afraid to try self-hypnosis. Should I encourage her to try?

No. There are a number of possible reasons why a person may not wish to try self-hypnosis. Some people feel that they have no problems (they are unaware of the extent to which unrecognized problems impact their life). Others, who like to be very self-sufficient, expect that an Inner Guide may control them (but because an Inner Guide wishes to provide emotional comfort, it will not force an individual to think, feel or do anything that is not wanted). There are certain people, however, who should not try self-hypnosis outside the context of a therapeutic situation, because for them, it would be too destabilizing. Fortunately, such people feel an aversion to it, which provides built-in protection.

I welcome your questions and comments, and will publish as many of them as possible. I look forward to hearing from you, either by post or at info@davis-foundation.org. If you would like to be anonymous, just let me know.

Cordially,

Judith M. Davis

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The Davis Foundation for Providing Emotional Comfort
Suite 1125 30 North Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60602
Tel: 312-230-0114 E-mail: info@davis-foundation.org Fax: 312-230-0168
Internet Address: www.davis-foundation.org

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