

THE  
DAVIS FOUNDATION  
FOR PROVIDING  
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

**Letter of April 9, 2003**

Dear Reader,

When my Inner Guide became able to communicate with me, after I had been doing self-hypnosis for a couple of months, the first thing she wrote was how very happy she was that she had been brought into existence. She also said that it felt very good to feel “real.” During self-hypnosis, our Inner Guides feel “real” because the strongest stimuli during that time are those that evoke their response rather than ours. (Responding to stimuli creates a feeling of reality and a sense of identity.)

To enter self-hypnosis, we sit quietly and focus on a spot in order to minimize external stimuli (perceptions) and internal stimuli (our thoughts and feelings). As the spot loses its capacity to stimulate us, because it is unchanging, our wish for an Inner Guide becomes the strongest stimulus. This is why the Inner Guide is then evoked. As we continue to sit quietly, we are stimulated only by our thoughts and feelings. If they become insufficient to maintain our awareness, we “go deep,” a state that seems like sleep. (The reason we are not asleep is because the Inner Guide is still aware.) When a stimulus occurs that requires action on our part (for example, a doorbell, or the knowledge that it is dinnertime), its strength over-rides the thoughts and feelings that we and the Inner Guide have been experiencing, and the self-hypnotic session ends.

Our Inner Guide, evoked when our wish for it becomes the strongest stimulus in the mind at that moment, responds by attending to that stimulus, and therefore gains awareness. It is then able to perceive our thoughts, our feelings, and also our physical perceptions (the sights, sounds, and other physical sensations that we experience). It doesn't experience the physical sensations themselves, merely our perceptions of them. It remains comfortable even when we aren't. (It is composed only of all our experiences of comfort, its wish to help us, and its sense of its own identity.)

The reason why an Inner Guide is so happy to come into existence is that, perceiving our discomforts, it knows that it can solve them. All that is required of us is the patience to wait and the persistence to continue doing self-hypnosis regularly until the Inner Guide has strengthened to the point where it can solve our problems. According to learning theory, a behavior that is not reinforced will decline and cease; so if you find that this is happening with you, don't blame yourself. You are simply following the laws of nature. This is why anyone doing self-hypnosis needs periodic reinforcement of one sort or another in order to continue. One purpose of this Letter is to provide that kind of support.

Perhaps you can devise additional reinforcements for yourself. For example, you might talk with a relative or friend about this experience. Talking is a stronger, more reinforcing stimulus than thinking, because an act provides stimuli of sensation in addition to those of thought and feeling.

Another way to provide reinforcement for yourself is to link self-hypnosis with another activity. One example: several readers of the Letter are involved with creative writing. Some years ago, I took a one-semester creative writing course at the University of Chicago extension program, taught by Molly Daniels, a prize-winning author of both fiction and non-fiction. She called her system the “Clothesline School” of writing, because she conceptualized that a story was a series of images hung together, as on a clothesline. As the class sat around a large table, with pen and paper in hand, we were instructed to go into a meditative state and to write about the first image that appeared to us. The richness of the samples attested to the effectiveness of this method. Writers who wish to use this means to enhance their creativity can simply think the thought, as they are going into the meditative (self-hypnotic) state, “I want my Inner Guide to grow and strengthen.” That will activate the Inner Guide. The individual can then proceed to wait for an image to occur. The Inner Guide, in its pathway, will be strengthening itself while, simultaneously, the writer will be accessing an image to write about. (In time, the Inner Guide will actually assist in the appearance of the best possible images.) This linking is unusually close, as one is actually doing self-hypnosis for two purposes.

It would be interesting to learn what types of reinforcement you who are doing self-hypnosis have devised for yourselves. Your information would be most appreciated, and helpful to other readers. I hope you will share it with us.

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*QUESTION:*

Do you think I can do self-hypnosis? I'm not good at sticking with things.

*ANSWER:*

Persistence can become a personality characteristic if it has been experienced as helpful in the past. But lack of persistence isn't necessarily a personality characteristic. It can occur simply because reinforcement is missing. We all need the kinds of reinforcement I have been describing in order to persist.

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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](mailto:info@davis-foundation.org). If you would like to be anonymous, just let me know.

Cordially,

*Judith M. Davis*

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