

Dear Reader,

Minor annoyances...when a driver cuts in front of you, when your train is late, when a salesperson is rude to you, when you leave the house only to realize that you have forgotten something, when an appliance breaks...all of these situations, and many more, typically evoke the response of irritation or anger. The disturbance caused by the annoyance is heightened by the uncomfortable response.

Anger in response to an annoyance is a habit pattern that is formed early in life. From infancy onward, as each new stimulus is registered for the first time, the mind seeks the best available response, which then gets locked in and becomes habitual. For infants and young children, a feeling (and its physical expression) is often the only response, because they do not yet have the skills and resources to access a better solution. An angry response to one who is perceived as an aggressor or a frustrater, such as a bullying playmate or a limit-setting parent, becomes generalized as a response to any kind of aggression (rude drivers, rude salespeople) or frustration (late trains, broken appliances, etc.). This habit pattern becomes so deeply ingrained that it is experienced as a given. Are we doomed to endure this uncomfortable response indefinitely? Not necessarily.

If, when the mind registers an annoyance, a new, better solution is available, the mind can lock into the new solution if a complex stimulus is present. A complex stimulus is one that represents two contradictory meanings, and it causes a momentary immobilization of the mind's response to it. This pause allows the mind to lock into the new solution. If the new solution represents a significant improvement over the old one, it will be so disequilibrating that its novelty must wane before it can enter awareness.

For example, when a driver cuts in front of you, or when a salesperson is rude to you, the best possible solution, the true solution, is the knowledge that it doesn't really matter. Yes, the other person was wrong, but it's not important. Perhaps you are even aware of this as you fume at the evildoer, yet you can't turn off your anger. You probably don't even want to, because it has been locked in as a partial solution to the problem. It does diminish your distress even if it doesn't end it. But though diminished, some discomfort remains. A complex stimulus is needed!

Under ordinary circumstances, complex stimuli occur spontaneously from time to time (otherwise, no habits could ever change). For instance, while attempting to pay for the item sold to you by the rude salesperson, you may reach into the wrong compartment of your wallet or purse for your credit card. You reach for it and it isn't there! For that instant, you are paying, yet you are not. This experience constitutes a complex stimulus. The momentary pause allows the mind to link with the new solution. But because of its implications, that is, the possibility of being rid of numerous moments of distressing anger, the new solution is too disequilibrating to be allowed into awareness. In order for that to happen, its novelty must wane, a slow process.

The Inner Guide, however, can engineer the appearance of complex stimuli. It can cause your hand to reach into the wrong compartment for your credit card. It can also expedite a new solution's entry into awareness by thinking about it repeatedly, until the novelty has waned. This thinking is most effectively done during self-hypnosis, because when the Inner Guide is dominant, it feels real, and this perception increases the reverberations of its thought.

What about the driver who cuts you off? What does the Inner Guide engineer in that situation? It isn't necessary for a complex stimulus to occur for every instance of annoyance, because a true solution for one will be generalized to others.

But isn't it creepy to think that one's Inner Guide can make one's hand go into the wrong compartment? Yes, at first. But you will come to welcome this ability of your Inner Guide as you begin to experience the effects of its activity. Remember, the sole purpose of its existence is to increase your comfort and well-being.

While the best response to a rude salesperson is the knowledge that this discourtesy isn't really important to you, there are many instances when someone's aggression toward you does matter. This problem will be discussed in a future issue of the Letter.

*QUESTION:*

At what age can my child begin self-hypnosis to develop her Inner Guide?

*ANSWER:*

When she expresses an interest in doing so, and is able to understand the concept of the Inner Guide. She needs to be able to understand the abstract concept that when the mind registers a perception, it breaks that perception up into its component parts and stores these parts in different mental pathways; that one such pathway is composed of all the experiences of comfort; and that her Inner Guide will be composed of this pathway, a sense of its own identity, and the wish to help her achieve maximum emotional comfort.

A child should never be pressured into trying self-hypnosis. Not only will the child be made uncomfortable; under pressure, self-hypnosis won't work.

\*\*\*

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*

Volume 1 Number 11

©2003 The Davis Foundation for Providing Emotional Comfort. All rights reserved.

30 North Michigan Avenue • Suite 1125 • Chicago IL 60602 • Tel: (312) 230-0114 • (312) 230-0168  
[www.davis-foundation.org](http://www.davis-foundation.org) • [info@davis-foundation.org](mailto:info@davis-foundation.org)