

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of July 2, 2003

Dear Reader,

Some of you have asked for more explanation of what goes on during self-hypnosis, and why it is helpful (and necessary!) to do it. This process, which may seem mysterious and puzzling, is really a very simple one.

Every moment, the mind registers what we perceive during that moment. Our minds break the perception into all of its parts, and store each part in a separate mental pathway for that category. For instance, a hungry infant, being fed, perceives the taste of the milk, the sight of the breast (or bottle), the sound of the loving noises made by the caretaker, the pressure on the parts of the body where it is held, the kinesthetic sense of its position in space, and the feeling of regained comfort as its hunger is assuaged. Its mind stores the taste of milk in the taste of milk pathway, the sight of the breast or bottle in its pathway, the feeling of regained comfort in its pathway, and so forth. As you can see, our minds contain a multitude of pathways. When a stimulus evokes a memory, as when the caretaker approaches the infant to feed it, the infant's mind gathers together the different parts of the memory from the different pathways and reassembles it as the original, intact memory of the experience of being fed.

As we develop, we have many experiences of regained comfort, all of which are stored in that pathway. When we wish for an Inner Guide to help us become emotionally comfortable, that wish serves as a stimulus that causes the mind to assemble a response that consists of the mental pathway of experiences of regained comfort and the wish to be helpful. So, just by wishing for an Inner Guide, we create one. But before it can help us, it must grow and develop, just as the infant does. How does this happen?

When we enter the self-hypnotic state, we do so by minimizing all stimuli. By sitting quietly and staring at a spot on the wall, waiting for our eyes to spontaneously close, we tune out other external stimuli, such as noises and movements. And, because we are thinking only of the spot, we minimize the internal stimuli of our thoughts and feelings. Because the spot is unchanging, it loses its capacity to serve as a stimulus. At this point, our wish to enter the self-hypnotic state becomes the strongest stimulus, and so we do. Our eyes spontaneously close and our body relaxes. But what does it mean to "enter the self-hypnotic state?"

Because our wish is for the Inner Guide to grow and strengthen, and because that wish has become the strongest stimulus, the Inner Guide pathway has become dominant. Because it shares our body, it can cause bodily movements. It closes our (its) eyes because that is the signal we have chosen to let ourselves know that we have entered the self-hypnotic state. It causes our body to relax because it is so relaxed. Because it is dominant, it feels real. (One of the first things my Inner Guide said to me was, "It feels so good to feel real.") While the self-hypnotic state continues and the Inner Guide is dominant, it works to solve our problems so that we will become completely comfortable. It does so by accessing solutions and repeating them to decrease their novelty so that they can enter our awareness and be acted on.

But what about us? What are we doing during this time? We are thinking our usual thoughts and feeling our usual feelings, just as we always do. If we remain in self-hypnosis long enough for our thoughts and feelings to lose their novelty sufficiently, we will no longer have adequate stimulation to retain awareness, and we will "go deep." It is as though we were asleep, but we aren't because the Inner Guide is still aware. When do we regain awareness? When a stimulus occurs that we must attend to. It may be external, such as a ringing telephone, or internal, such as the knowledge that it is time to do something else. When we regain awareness, it feels different than when we wake from sleep. That is because it is only *our* pathway that has lost awareness. We are not asleep physiologically; and the Inner Guide remains aware.

Although going deep may seem more impressive, the Inner Guide can do its work just as effectively whether or not we lose awareness, because the two pathways, ours and its, operate independently!

QUESTION:

A reader asks, “When I go into self-hypnosis, should I repeat the sentence several times about wanting my Inner Guide to grow and develop?”

ANSWER:

No, that is not necessary. When you say that sentence, you have provided the stimulus that activates the Inner Guide. It is like calling someone’s name to get their attention.

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,

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