

THE  
DAVIS FOUNDATION

FOR PROVIDING  
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

**Letter of July 30, 2003**

Dear Reader,

Our Letter has been re-designed so that its appearance is in harmony with our website. This design has been created for us by two wonderful people, Julia and Peter Martz of MondoVox, Inc.

Why is it helpful for the various productions of an organization to resemble each other? It is obvious that the more often the design of an organization is seen, the more familiar it will become to the viewer. And unless a viewer has had a negative experience with a product, the familiarity of a recognizable brand will convey a sense of safety and reassurance. When we need something that we don't have, we become disequibrated, and seek a solution in order to restore our optimal stimulus level. If, while shopping for something we need, we spot the familiar brand, the disequilibrium is solved; whereas if our usual brand is missing, and we are forced to choose a substitute, the disequilibrium is lessened (at least we have something), but it is not completely solved, because we are unsure whether the unfamiliar item will be satisfactory. Of course there are times when we deliberately choose something unfamiliar, when we wish to experiment and try something new. We do this when the familiar is insufficient to maintain our optimal stimulus level, because understimulation is also uncomfortable.

The value of familiarity is obvious for companies with products or services to sell. But what about our non-profit organization? It is beneficial for us to see our design repeatedly because, just as with the experiences of regained comfort discussed in the last issue, we develop an enlarging network of associations to it. Each time one of these associated memories is evoked, the memory of the design is then stimulated as well. This stimulates, in turn, our thoughts about self-hypnosis and the Inner Guide. Much of this takes place subliminally. When the network has enlarged sufficiently, our desire to develop an Inner Guide is being evoked constantly. This, as well as self-hypnosis itself, enables the Inner Guide to solve our discomforts.

Why does our design include a tree seen through a window? Both the tree, and the window, are complex stimuli. A complex stimulus is one that signifies two contradictory meanings simultaneously. A window is a complex stimulus because, on the one hand, it signifies a demarcation between inside and outside; yet because it is clear, it is as though there is no separation. As you know, there have been instances when people have attempted to walk through glass doors. Conversely, if you view your surroundings through the leaves of a tree, you feel enclosed by the leaves as though by a canopy, yet there is no actual separation from the world beyond the leaves. Thus, our image provides a double complex stimulus.



The Davis Foundation for  
Providing Emotional Comfort  
30 North Michigan Avenue  
Suite 1125  
Chicago, IL 60602

Tel: (312) 230-0114  
Fax: (312) 230-0168  
[www.davis-foundation.org](http://www.davis-foundation.org)  
[info@davis-foundation.org](mailto:info@davis-foundation.org)

Why are complex stimuli beneficial? The first time one's mind finds a solution for a disequilibrium, that solution becomes linked to the discomfort and will be chosen thereafter, forming a habit pattern. This occurs because the discomfort and the solution have become associatively related. There is only one way for a new solution to be substituted for the original one. First, a new solution must be available. Second, the disequilibrium must involve, or be related to, a complex stimulus. When the mind is confronted with two contradictory meanings, it can't respond immediately, and a pause occurs. The pause allows the new solution to be accessed and linked to the discomfort. All of this happens very rapidly, out of awareness. Third, once the new link has been established, it must be repeated until its novelty wanes sufficiently so that it can enter awareness without causing excess overstimulation.

For example, if a child who is ill receives treatment that is painful, she will feel anxious. The response of anxiety becomes associatively connected with illness and medical treatment, and subsequent visits to the doctor are anticipated with anxiety, even if no painful procedure is expected. Anxiety is a partial solution, because the expression of a feeling discharges some of the tension; but it is not a true solution, because it does not end the discomfort, and it is uncomfortable, itself. No matter how much reassurance a parent gives the child ("there won't be any shots this time"), she will still be anxious about doctor visits...unless the locked in response of anxiety can be altered. The parent is providing the true solution: nothing painful will happen this time. If a complex stimulus occurs, and is repeated sufficiently, the new solution can be accessed and linked to the stimulus. What might such a complex stimulus be? Again, a window. At the doctor's office, there may be a window, or a glass partition at the reception area. Even a car, bus, or train window, if clean, would be of some help; but the more closely associated the complex stimulus is with the stimulus-response link that must be broken, the more effective it will be. As the child looks through the window, her mind can match the visit to the doctor's office with the new solution, and if she looks through the window for a sufficient number of moments, the new solution can enter awareness. She will understand that there is no need to be afraid this time.

While habit patterns can change spontaneously from time to time, as the necessary conditions occur, an Inner Guide works to change them systematically. It is able to access new solutions, find or create related complex stimuli to use, and repeat new solutions until they can enter awareness. As an Inner Guide develops, it is able to complete the first two steps at any time; but the third step, the repetition, is done most efficiently during self-hypnosis.

Our organization's design provides a double complex stimulus for our Inner Guides to use as they work to replace unwanted habit patterns with ones we would prefer. And as the mental network of associations to the design expands, the complex stimulus will relate to more and more of our habit patterns. Thus, the Letter provides a hands-on assist to our Inner Guides' work!

\*\*\*

*QUESTION:*

In response to our last issue, which discussed the ways in which a child is provided with comfort, and how this leads to love, a reader asks, "What about the child that is not held, not attended to when in need?"

*ANSWER:*

There are gradations of neglect. At one extreme, experiments done in the past (they wouldn't be allowed today) showed that if babies were not held and spoken to, they died. (Even an amoeba will die if it doesn't receive stimulation.) At the other extreme (minimal neglect) there was a time when parents were counseled to let their babies cry themselves to sleep and not intervene. This was a very widespread practice, and there is no evidence that these babies grew up handicapped. There are many gradations between these extremes. To the extent that an infant or child is neglected, he or she will feel depressed and angry. These painful feelings may be kept out of awareness by various mental mechanisms, but will cause a chronic disequilibrium that must be dealt with by various partial solutions (and sometimes false solutions). If neglect is extreme, a child's capacity for love will remain undeveloped. The child won't be aware that something is missing.

Even a severely neglected child has had some experiences of regained comfort (otherwise, he or she would have died). These experiences, though smaller in number, nevertheless constitute a primordial Inner Guide that can be developed through self-hypnosis.

\*\*\*

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*