

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of October 8, 2003

Dear Reader,

What would you like to change? Perhaps there are specific problems that you would like to solve. Some might be external, such as a problematic colleague, an overly bureaucratic work environment, an insensitive partner, or a troubled child. Others might come from within: anxiety, anger, depression, or perhaps an unwanted habit.

It may not seem possible for self-hypnosis to change an external problem. "How," you may ask, "can developing my Inner Guide transform my office culture or my partner?" There are several ways to respond to these problems, all of which involve asserting oneself. You can make attempts to change the external problem. If your attempts don't succeed you can leave for a different situation. If that is not immediately possible, you can plan your future as you bide your time.

"But," you say, "these responses are obvious. You don't need an Inner Guide in order to think of these choices." It is true that some people solve these problems without an Inner Guide, but the majority don't. Just think of all the people who feel stuck in their jobs, or trapped in their relationships. They feel "stressed," burdened, and tired. They don't have the energy to assert themselves, and are often caught in a vicious cycle in which they become increasingly worn down.

What appears to be an external problem is more often than not revealed to be an internal one. A doctor, oppressed by the conditions imposed by managed care, complains bitterly. A teacher, demoralized by the increasing paperwork load and the necessity to follow rigid lesson plans, continues to passively comply. A hen-pecked husband daydreams about having affairs with beautiful young women. A parent feels helpless as her child yearns to belong to the "in" group. All of these people are suffering from a lack of assertiveness. In each instance, there are things that they could do to change these situations, if only they were able. Why aren't they?

For each of them, there occurred a moment in their early life when the best available solution to a problem was to hold back, to inhibit a response. The usual responses to danger are fight or flight, but children are often caught in a frightening situation where it would be dangerous to show their anger yet impossible to flee (for instance, when punished by an angry adult). A child may also become frightened of his own aggressive impulses. He may wish to hurt someone because of competitive or revengeful feelings. And sexual wishes can feel dangerous when the desired object, such as a parent, is taboo.



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Situations that are associatively related to these perceived dangers will be matched with the same solution, inhibition. This response, which occurs out of awareness, may become linked with so many situations that it becomes generalized. The individual lacks initiative and assertiveness but doesn't know why, and more likely than not, doesn't even realize it.

Surely most people have had such experiences as children. Why doesn't everyone lack assertiveness? Inhibition can be de-linked from the experiences that evoke it under certain conditions that sometimes occur by chance. When this happens, better solutions can be chosen. The doctor would participate in initiatives to change the system. The teacher might become involved in a charter school. The husband would confront his wife. The parent could help her child become interested in a new hobby or skill. Rather than depending on chance, an Inner Guide will work systematically to provide the conditions that allow de-linking of an old response and selection of a new, better one. Because it also enhances our creativity, we may be surprised at the originality of the new solutions that we come up with.

Some people feel that they have no problems. But even they will admit to feeling stress at times. This is caused by disequilibrations that they are not aware of. Everyone, during development, experiences many situations in which true solutions are not immediately available. They must select partial or false solutions, which produce chronic disequilibrations. While some of these may later be solved, this is again a matter of chance. The stress that is universally experienced by people is testimony to the fact that not all disequilibrations are solved spontaneously. These people, too, can benefit from developing an Inner Guide.

QUESTION:

A reader asks, "Where is the path of the Inner Guide in the brain?"

ANSWER:

The Inner Guide's pathway is not located in one specific spot in the brain. Complex mental pathways involve many different neurons in a number of different parts of the brain. It isn't really possible, at this point in our knowledge, to correlate complex psychological constructs with anatomical features.

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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