

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of December 17, 2003

Dear Reader,

We are in the midst of the winter holiday season, and one sentiment that is shared by all is the wish for peace. Strife occurs in many contexts. Some countries are at war with one another and others are experiencing civil wars. In addition, the “war” of various extremist groups against civilization has become manifest.

Struggle also occurs between opposing political and economic groups: liberal versus conservative, small business against large, competition for market share among companies in a given sector. Though these struggles rarely employ bullets and bombs, the intensity of the competition often leads to unfair and corrupt practices, cheating, and stealing.

Strife also occurs between individuals. It is driven by competition or dislike. People compete for material goods, financial gain, recognition, safety, and love. They dislike those who block or withhold fulfillment of their desires, or those who are reminiscent of these antagonists

In addition to all of these situations, conflict occurs internally. When one’s wishes are opposed by one’s conscience or by contradictory wishes, an inner struggle ensues. The person who wants more than he needs is aware on some level that his greed is inappropriate. He has formed a habit pattern of greed as a partial solution to a disturbance in his early life and this pattern has become locked in. If he is aware of guilt feelings, he will respond to them only if they are more disturbing than would be the feeling of deprivation were he to forgo what he desires. Otherwise he tries to stifle his pangs of conscience, or he may remain unaware of them. Even then, they are a source of disequilibrium that remains out of awareness but that causes stress.

Greed may be opposed not only by the feeling of guilt, but also by the contradictory wish to be generous. Should he share or should he keep all for himself? Here, too, the internal conflict will create disequilibrium. If he succumbs to his greed, he will feel distress because he is not being generous, and if he does share, he will feel deprived.

Competition with another affects one’s stimulus level. The enjoyment of a friendly game is heightened by its competitive aspect as long as winning does not become more important than enjoying one’s companions and exercising one’s skills. But when beating one’s opponent becomes the most important thing, competition creates an uncomfortable disturbance. Losing becomes painful, and even when winning, the pleasure of the effort is contaminated



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Stress is also caused by feelings of hostility toward another. When a person is the recipient of abuse or attack, she must cope not only with her opponent's aggression but also with her own anger. And her adversary will be disequibrated by her own anger, as well. Much of the discomfort that people experience is caused by transference, that is, the misperception of another as though he or she were a figure from the past. When a figure in the here and now resembles one who has previously been hurtful, one tends to react with feelings of distrust and anger. So much needless hostility and stress has resulted from this tendency.

The differences that a person experiences between herself and another affect her stimulus level. Too much sameness is understimulating and causes boredom. Some degree of difference can cause a heightening of stimulation that is pleasurable; for instance, a difference of gender (or, for some, contact with someone of the same gender). But if the differences are great enough to cause uncomfortable disequilibrium, a person will react with dislike and avoidance or hostility. Differences in race, religion, political views, and culture may cause this degree of discomfort, depending on a person's past experiences and level of sensitivity.

Much of the strife that occurs between individuals, groups, and cultures is caused by internal conflict, transference, and sensitivity to differences. An Inner Guide, by solving all of these problems, will contribute toward making the world a more comfortable and peaceful place. All of us at the Davis Foundation wish you a peaceful and comfortable holiday season.

QUESTION:

"I feel guilty because I've had too much going on, too many problems, to do self-hypnosis lately. This is when I need it most. Why can't I stick with it?"

ANSWER:

You shouldn't feel guilty. You can't help it. If you were to try to do self-hypnosis when you didn't have time for it, it wouldn't work. It wouldn't be possible for you to diminish all those other stimuli sufficiently to enter or stay in the state. Try to resume when things quiet down.

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