

THE  
DAVIS FOUNDATION  
FOR PROVIDING  
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of February 11, 2004

Dear Reader,

When one is worried, lonely, or irritated, the source of the resulting discomfort is obvious. But many people are also aware of a non-specific feeling of stress that is present much of the time or even constantly. And often, they become so accustomed to this stress that they take it for granted and don't realize that it can be remedied. Where does it come from?

As people develop, there are many moments during which a *true* solution for a disequilibrium is not available. The mental apparatus must choose a *partial* or even a *false* solution. A partial solution diminishes but does not eliminate a disturbance. When there is no true or partial solution, or when a situation becomes so unbearable that a partial solution is inadequate, the mental apparatus chooses a false solution such as denial of a reality. This does not diminish the disequilibrium; that persists full force out of awareness causing ongoing tension.

In the last issue, I described a boy who was chronically distressed by his parents' criticism and preference for an older sister. A true solution would have occurred if his parents had changed their attitude (the problem would have ended) or if he had been able to understand that their criticisms were not valid and that he was just as valuable as his sister. But young children are not usually capable of evaluating the veracity of their parents' pronouncements. He rebelled against the parental standards, achieving an indirect expression of anger, an indirect rebuttal, and some release of tension. But even this partial solution was inadequate at times and then he accessed, in addition, a false solution: he developed amnesia for the criticism that was unbearable.

The chronic disequilibrium that resulted from the lack of a true solution caused his rebelliousness to become generalized and so habitual that he no longer notices it. And the chronic tension is now taken for granted, not understood as something that could be changed.

There are many character traits that are hidden, inconspicuous, or taken for granted that are the source of non-specific stress. Rebellious is one, criticizing is another. The boy's parents were no more aware that they were hypercritical than he was that he was rebelling. Under what conditions might someone become critical?

A young woman was aware that she was frequently angry with others but didn't know why. She held herself and everyone else to a high standard of behavior. When she failed to meet this standard herself she felt mild regret, but when someone else did something that she felt was wrong, which happened frequently, she became angry and harshly critical. She was unaware that these were overreactions. This woman idealized her father, a man whom everyone regarded very highly, but when she was a teenager he



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had behaved inappropriately with her. After dinner, while her mother cleaned up in the kitchen, he would sit with her on the sofa and fondle her breasts. Shocked and appalled by his misconduct, her mental apparatus accessed a false solution: denial of his wrongdoing. A mental split occurred. She continued to idealize him, but out of awareness remained intensely disequibrated by his indiscretion and felt highly critical of him. This response became displaced onto the misbehavior of others and served as a partial solution because it decreased her disequibration. But because her disturbance was not solved, her responses of anger and criticism continued and became generalized, leaving her feeling tired, drained, and subject to frequent minor illnesses.

Another young woman was hypercritical not just of others, but of herself as well. Her mother, though perfectionistic herself, had been supportive of her daughter and proud of her. But the girl had spent considerable time on a regular basis with another adult authority figure who was, herself, relentlessly picky and critical. The girl identified with this woman's trait because the partial solution of identification provided, for her, the best available response to the disequibration caused by being criticized. Because the disturbance was not completely solved, the girl's tendency to criticize herself and others also became generalized and intensified. She was able to feel good about herself some of the time, but when anything happened that could be construed as a criticism or a rejection, she responded by feeling worthless because the self-critical response had become hypertrophied.

In the face of criticism, why does one person choose rebellion while another chooses identification? In each instance, the mental apparatus searches for all available solutions and chooses the one that will most effectively decrease the disequibration. For the girl, giving in and identifying with the woman's criticism of her (and of others) was easier than rebelling because it ended the reproaches, which were of specific behaviors. At other times, the girl was able to feel good about herself. For the boy, rebelling was preferable because it was less painful than identifying with a condemnation of himself as totally inadequate.

An Inner Guide can end these disturbances so that rebellion, hypercritical behavior, and feelings of unworthiness disappear. It will find the origins of the disequibration, access better solutions, create the complex stimuli that will allow the new solutions to replace the maladaptive characteristics, and work to bring these new solutions into awareness. The Inner Guide silently removes sources of stress, enabling an individual to feel a new sense of comfort.

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*QUESTION:*

What sorts of people can benefit from self-hypnosis?

*ANSWER:*

Almost everyone. People who have Dissociative Identity Disorder, formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder, need preparatory psychotherapy before they can benefit. People who are prone to psychotic disorders can benefit during periods of remission. Children can benefit as soon as they are old enough to understand the abstract concept of the Inner Guide: an entity composed of the mental pathway of all experiences of comfort, a sense of its own identity, and a wish to help. Anyone who wishes for an Inner Guide will acquire one, and all who persevere with self-hypnosis will enable it to solve their discomforts.

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*