

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of May 19, 2004

Dear Reader,

Why do people compete with one another? Is this tendency inborn or acquired? When is it a good thing and when is it harmful?

I hoped that Smarty Jones would win the Preakness Stakes for two reasons. I like to see someone, a horse as well as a person, prevail despite humble origins because it shows that the potential to succeed is universal and not solely the privilege of the advantaged. And winning the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness Stakes brings a horse two-thirds of the way to winning the Triple Crown, should he also prevail at the Belmont Stakes. Triple Crown winners are rare and very special, and I enjoy appreciating special things. But as I watched him win by 11 1/2 lengths I had mixed feelings. Although I was cheering him on, it also seemed unfair that he was that superior to the other horses. I was reminded of my longstanding belief that one disadvantage of competition is that there is only one winner and any number of losers. If all participants want desperately to win, the happiness:unhappiness ratio is not good.

Competition originates when a person doesn't have all that he needs and must fight for vital supplies. When needed items are available, knowledge of their presence is a *true solution*. When they can be acquired by some action, such as competing successfully for them, knowledge of that possibility is a *partial solution*. It doesn't end the disequilibrium caused by the need, but it diminishes it. (A solution isn't an action but simply the knowledge of that possibility.) During one's development, there will be times when needed or wished for supplies are not possessed, and competing for them may be the best possible partial solution. At these times, competition will be used and it will become a habit pattern, locked in as a response to situations of need. When used to acquire needed supplies, competition is useful for the individual, though not necessarily for his milieu. Others lose and must attempt to find different solutions.

Once having used competition successfully to gain basic supplies, an individual may choose it as a response to associatively related needs, such as items that she feels will bring her love or prestige. And a competitive response may become generalized as a partial solution to many stimuli.

A person may compete with others for a job, which she needs in order to have sufficient income. Once hired, she may compete with her co-workers not just for promotions but also for approval and admiration. This can occur if she is chronically disequibrated due to a lack of adequate approval in the past. If competing for approval proves successful and diminishes her discomfort it can be chosen as a partial solution for all sorts of distress. She will compete for things that don't really matter. While driving, she will try to reach the stop light before the car in the next lane. In the



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elevator, she will compare her clothes to those of the stranger standing beside her. When preparing for a dinner party, she will strive to come up with a superior menu. She may knock herself out trying to get her child into the most prominent school. Competing has become her way of life yet she is not aware of this because it has become a given. And because this habit pattern doesn't respond to the real causes of her chronic disequibrations, it doesn't fully solve them.

Although competition can be undesirable when it causes others to lose things that they need or when it is inappropriately matched to a disequibration that it cannot solve, there are situations in which it is beneficial. As one element of an activity that is engaged in for recreation, such as a friendly game, it can intensify the pleasure and serve as an additional stimulus for one to extend oneself and thus further one's development. So, too, when one competes against oneself, as when trying to best a previous time in running.

It is said that Smarty Jones loves racing and is a happy horse. If this is true, then we can know that, for him, competition is a beneficial thing.

QUESTION:

Is my Inner Guide as old as I am? I have only been doing self-hypnosis for a few weeks. Or is he still gestating, waiting for me to give birth to him?

ANSWER:

The moment that you wished for an Inner Guide, understanding what he consists of (the pathway of comfort, a sense of his own identity, and a wish to help you), he came into existence. He immediately made himself familiar with your entire memory bank, so he is as old as you are. If he has not communicated with you yet, it is for one of two reasons. Either he has determined that he can work more efficiently if he remains silent for a while, or communication from him would seem so overwhelming that it cannot yet enter your awareness. He is already fully developed and whenever you do self-hypnosis he is able to work very effectively on solving all of your problems and eliminating discomfort.

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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