

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of September 8, 2004

Dear Reader,

The recent hurricanes in the southeastern part of the United States have caused a lot of damage and some deaths. The latest hurricane was the second in recent weeks. As it approached, many people rushed out to buy emergency supplies but some of the stores had already been emptied and were obliged to turn their customers away. Why were people seeking emergency supplies at the last minute? Why hadn't they assembled an emergency kit after the first hurricane? Or even sooner?

The mental apparatus constantly scans the environment for stimuli and matches them with the best available responses. A response may be a *true, partial, or false solution*. All stimuli are responded to but not all stimulus-response sequences reach awareness. Those who failed to put together an emergency kit before the hurricane approached knew, out of awareness, that a hurricane might occur in their area. Hurricanes come to their part of the country every year. And their minds had matched this stimulus with a partial solution: the knowledge that they could protect themselves by taking advance precautions. They could have emergency supplies stockpiled, be prepared to board up vulnerable areas of their homes, and, if necessary, arrange to leave the area.

In the absence of impending disaster, such thoughts may surface sporadically, evoked in response to stimuli such as memories of past hurricanes, reading or hearing about hurricanes, or seeing emergency supplies on the shelves of stores. Yet so often people do not respond by acting on the knowledge that it would behoove them to make these preparations.

The most disequilibrating stimulus at any given moment enters awareness and remains there until a new stimulus that is more disequilibrating replaces it. A harried shopper passing a shelf of emergency supplies has many things on her mind and a momentary thought that perhaps she should prepare for disaster is quickly superceded by her other concerns. Her thoughts about the shopping that she needs to accomplish that day and other concerns will, though less important in the long run, be experienced as more pressing.

Some of those at risk during these hurricanes died because they left their homes too late. They had denied the threat. Denial is a false solution. The mental apparatus matches a stimulus with a false solution when there is no true or partial solution or when the stimulus is so overwhelming that it must be prevented from entering awareness. All of us have used denial at times, but for some individuals this false solution has become generalized and is applied to an ever-increasing number of



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
info@davis-foundation.org

situations. The people who waited too late to flee the hurricane may have done so for several reasons. Some found the prospect of having their homes damaged so overwhelming that they denied that possibility until the hurricane's presence shattered that delusion. Others denied as one more manifestation of a generalized habit pattern. And others may have been distracted by supervening stimuli such as illness or other very pressing concerns.

Not all of us are subject to hurricanes but dangers that we all do share are the activities of terrorists. In the face of multiple possibilities including biological or chemical attacks, damage to our physical or cybernetic infrastructures, "dirty" bombs or suitcase nuclear bombs, we may feel powerless to respond. Some authorities believe that nuclear attack is unstoppable and will occur. But there are preparations that we can take that will help us avoid or survive some of these possibilities. These preparations will also diminish the disequilibrations that come from knowledge of such threats, and from feelings of self-blame that we feel if we have not taken obvious precautions.

There are some who do prepare for emergencies and in fact go to extremes. Survivalists become preoccupied with planning for catastrophe and many purchase elaborate equipment and visualize scenarios in which they must act to save themselves. Their fantasies and preparations may become ever more excessive. For these individuals, preparation for survival has become a locked-in habit pattern that originated as a partial solution to a past stimulus and which has become intensified and elaborated over time in order to maintain its efficacy.

Some prepare too little, others excessively, all as a result of chronic disequilibrations that interfere with the ability to perceive threats accurately. Our Inner guides, by solving our disequilibrations, will enable us to do all that we can to avoid or prepare for realistic dangers.

QUESTION:

If my Inner guide doesn't communicate with me does that mean that I'm very troubled?

ANSWER:

No. It means one of two things. Your Inner Guide may have chosen to remain silent as a way of creating a mild disequilibrium that enhances progress toward comfort. Or it may be that you are unable to experience communication at this point because the contrast between how you feel now and your potential for comfort and creativity is so overwhelming that evidence of the Inner Guide can't enter awareness yet. As your problems are solved and your comfort is increased, your enhanced creativity will enable you to make a great contribution to society.

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

Volume 2 Number 18

© 2004 The Davis Foundation for Providing Emotional Comfort. All rights reserved