

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of January 12, 2005

Dear Reader,

Avoidance can be a true, partial, or false solution to a disequilibrium. How can we know which kind of solution it is?

A true solution is one that completely ends a disequilibrium. If a person sees a disturbance on the street, perhaps an impending confrontation between demonstrators and police, he can turn away and take a different route to his destination. The potential for trouble has ended and his disequilibrium has been solved. Or, if an opinionated co-worker challenges him about his beliefs, he can choose to refrain from arguing, thus avoiding what could become an ongoing friction. This, too, can be a true solution.

A partial solution decreases a disequilibrium but does not fully end it. Often a person is well aware that she is avoiding something. As she enjoys watching a TV program or reading a book, her pleasure may be compromised if she is aware that she has bills to pay that will soon be overdue. In fact, they may already be overdue. Why does she not attend to them? Perhaps this chore is boring and she wants to avoid the disequilibrium caused by understimulation. Or perhaps she is anxious about her financial circumstances and doesn't want to face them. In either case, her avoidance will continue until the disequilibrium caused by not paying the bills becomes more intense than the discomfort caused by paying them.

The mind always matches a new disequilibrium with the response that will end or most completely diminish it. Once avoidance has been chosen for one disequilibrium, its use may generalize to others and it may become a pronounced habit pattern. The woman who avoids paying her bills may avoid all of her worries by immersing herself in various entertainments. She may neglect to talk to her child's teacher about his learning problems and evade confronting an erring employee at work. In all of these situations she is encumbered by the nagging knowledge of tasks not done. She remains aware of the problems and, even though it has become second nature, of her use of avoidance.

A false solution is matched only when there are no true or partial solutions available or when the disequilibrium is so intense that partial solutions are insufficiently helpful. A double pathway occurs: in one arm the disequilibrium-without-solution continues out of awareness while in the other arm a false solution such as denial, amnesia, delusion, or hallucination, is experienced. A little boy, frightened by his mother's frequent threats to kill herself, experienced a false solution: unawareness of his fear and amnesia for the experiences. His mother, greatly troubled, was unable to attend to him properly and his fear of abandonment was also matched with a false solution: the conviction that he could be self-sufficient. In adulthood he married an



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older woman who, unbeknownst to him, served as a surrogate mother for the split-off pathway of the frightened child. When, in later years, she developed a chronic illness that would cause her physical and mental decline and eventual death, he was unable to acknowledge the obvious scenario that would take place because of the split-off little boy's fear of losing her. He expected her to be self-sufficient, as he thought he was, and as she gradually deteriorated he avoided making arrangements that would ease her discomfort.

Both the woman who didn't pay her bills and the man who neglected to make arrangements for his wife were aware of the responsibilities they were avoiding. The woman knew that the tasks she avoided made her anxious but the man didn't know why he was neglecting his wife because he felt no anxiety. He wasn't aware of the frightened little boy in the split-off mental pathway in his mind.

Avoidance is one of the more problematic responses to disequibrations because it often makes matters worse. The woman who was confronted with her bills might have responded by pacing the floor, talking to her friends, thinking about how she could reduce expenses or increase her income, or fantasizing being wealthy...but writing the checks. By avoiding paying, she is incurring interest expenses that are increasing her debt. The man, who must deny the significance of his wife's illness and avoid easing her discomfort, is causing her additional distress and may be hastening her demise.

Without an Inner Guide, this habit pattern can be changed only if associatively related complex stimuli occur spontaneously and repeatedly. An Inner Guide will create them systematically. It will also bring about integration of the man's split-off mental pathway so that the little boy can merge with the man and lose his fear.

QUESTION:

How does an Inner Guide function to help people rid themselves of addictions, especially nicotine addictions?

ANSWER:

An addiction, which is a partial solution, has a psychological and a physical component. An Inner Guide deals with the psychological component in the same way that it solves any chronic disequibration. It determines the origin of the problem and accesses a new solution. It then creates a complex stimulus to unlock the maladaptive habit pattern and lock in the new one. It repeats this solution until the novelty wanes sufficiently for it to enter awareness. Once the emotional need for an addiction has ceased, a person will be able to taper herself off of the substance, doing so gradually to minimize withdrawal effects.

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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