

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of January 26, 2005

Dear Reader,

It is hard enough to break an unwanted habit that one is aware of, such as overeating or smoking, but harder still to eliminate one that is unrecognized. Although we have difficulty seeing these characteristics in ourselves, we do recognize them in others. Perfectionism, passivity, rigidity, dependency, and selflessness are just a few of these traits. Although they originate as responses to discomforts, they cause discomfort themselves. These habits, as well as those we are aware of, contribute to an ongoing level of tension that causes distress, drains energy, compromises effectiveness, and interferes with creativity.

Patterns of thought, feelings, and actions occur in response to stimuli. When we are hungry we eat. Eating is a *true solution* for hunger because it ends our discomfort. If no meal is available, we must cook or eat out. These actions are *partial solutions* because the prospect of having a meal soon partially alleviates our distress. If these solutions are not immediately possible we may think about what we would like to eat or distract ourselves by thinking of other things. These thoughts are also partial solutions because they, too, diminish our discomfort.

The first time a response is chosen for a new stimulus it is locked in. This occurs out of awareness. When the stimulus recurs, the same response is chosen. It has become a habit. A person who responds to certain stresses by overeating will usually continue to do so no matter how strongly she vows to change. So, too, with unrecognized habit patterns. One who deals with his anxiety by denial is powerless to stop. The same is true of a person who responds to fears by overworking.

Out of awareness the mind works extremely rapidly. Each time a stimulus occurs, it is immediately matched with the accustomed response. The only way that a habit can be broken is if a pause between the stimulus and response occurs, allowing a new response to be inserted. A pause can be created by a *complex stimulus*: that is, a stimulus that conveys two contradictory meanings.

A child who was repeatedly criticized for being boastful responded by developing a partial solution of excessive modesty. This habit decreased his discomfort because he was no longer criticized but it was harmful because he couldn't enjoy his successes or be appropriately assertive. He didn't realize that his modesty was detrimental; he assumed that it was a positive trait.

He became a scientist and, in the competitive milieu in which he worked, his new ideas were often stolen by colleagues. He was unable to assert himself and to claim the credit. He was obliged to move to another position and, because of his new environment, he encountered many complex stimuli. Each time he reached for the phone he was startled because it wasn't in its accustomed spot but was now in a new



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

position. For a split second he was starting to phone/he was not starting to phone. Many objects were in new positions and each time he forgot and began to do something the old way he was similarly taken aback. Although these disruptions were trivial, each constituted a complex stimulus to which he had a double and contradictory reaction: for an instant, he could/he could not. Because these pauses, occurring at work, were associatively related to his excessive modesty they provided opportunities for that response to be unlocked.

A habit pattern, when interrupted by a pause, will only change if a better solution is available. The true solution for this man's problem was the knowledge that it is acceptable to take credit for one's accomplishments. He may have read, been told, or realized this somewhere along the way and may have been intellectually aware of it. But as long as the previous solution was locked in, this one could not be used. A pause following the stimulus, however, would allow the true solution to be locked in. Once that had occurred, it would be necessary for this solution to be repeated many times before it could come into awareness and be acted on.

Occasionally a person will experience a flood of complex stimuli that is sufficient to allow a changed habit to enter awareness but more often this does not happen. Longstanding habit patterns usually remain entrenched and the individual continues to be hampered.

The modest man's problem is just one of many that can interfere with comfort and happiness. Any partial solution, whether recognized as a problem or assumed as a given, will compromise one's ability to see problems clearly and act effectively to solve them. It will hamper productivity and impair creativity. It will also contribute to feelings of tension, anxiety, depression, fatigue, and helplessness.

An Inner Guide will solve all problems including those that we don't recognize, because its first action, on coming into existence, is to search our memories for the origins of all of our problems including those we don't recognize ourselves. All we need to do is to maintain our practice of self-hypnosis. The Inner Guide does all the rest.

QUESTION:

I recently slipped and fell. This is something that I almost never do. I wasn't hurt. Could my Inner Guide have made this happen to cause me to be disequibrated?

ANSWER:

Yes. It may have been simply an accident but it is possible that your Inner Guide did cause this to occur. But she wouldn't do anything that would result in a significant injury. I recently slipped on the ice and fell but my Inner Guide caused me to land in such a way that I was not hurt.

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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