

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of February 9, 2005

Dear Reader,

Everyone would like for things to go smoothly in their relationships but obstacles often arise. Some problems originate with our partners or friends but often we are responsible for the difficulty. It may be easy for us to see the imperfections of others while remaining oblivious to our own. And while nagging or attempts to persuade others rarely work, we do have the potential to alter our own irksome habit patterns.

How can we know whether we are at fault? When we feel that a partner is messy, is it true? Or might it be that we are overly neat? Does our spouse seem withholding or are we too needy? Is our friend pushy or are we self-effacing? We may not be able to decide.

Sometimes there are clues. Although our friends may silently endure our chronic lateness, we will regret missing the beginnings of movies. They may put up with our rigidity yet we will suffer from the extra work and missed opportunities that it causes us. Even then it is hard to identify our foibles because they have become second nature.

Some of these characteristics, such as perfectionism, rigidity, or submissiveness, are *partial solutions*. Others, such as messiness or lateness, result when the tension caused by chronic disequilibria saps one's energy. Discord between partners or friends will increase over time because partial solutions must intensify or generalize to maintain their efficacy, and they will be further exacerbated in reaction to each other. A needy person who is frustrated by her partner's withdrawal will feel increasingly needy, causing him to withdraw further, forming a vicious cycle.

When a problem does originate with the other, is there a remedy? Will we inevitably be drawn into a vicious cycle? And if we avoid that, must we endure the discomfort of the annoyance and its likely escalation over time?

Some people try to resolve these issues by thoughtful discussion but, as we know, a partial solution cannot be changed by willpower alone. Change requires a *complex stimulus* and repetition of a new solution.

A man was frustrated by his wife's procrastination. She left various tasks until the last minute, and then tackled them with a flurry of anxiety. She was never completely comfortable because she was always avoiding one thing or another. He was disturbed by the results of her delays and by her unease. When they discussed this problem she always resolved to change, yet could not.

A change would require a *true solution*, a complex stimulus to unlock the habit of procrastinating so that the true solution could replace it, and repetition of the 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

solution until its novelty waned enough so that it could enter awareness. With all these requirements, how can a habit ever change?

Her procrastination had begun during adolescence. She was anxious about writing a paper that she would have to read aloud in her English class, because she had a crush on the teacher and was afraid that she wouldn't impress him. This partial solution became generalized and she began putting off all of her homework and, eventually, any task that she found unpleasurable. She realized that this habit made life harder and didn't know why she continued it. The true solution was that she need not be anxious because English class was a thing of the past. The teacher was no longer in her life and she now loved her husband. And, in fact, she had no doubt experienced a number of complex stimuli over the years while trying to write: misplacing a page, dropping a pencil, vacillating over what she would write.

It would not be necessary for her to know any of this because, out of awareness, the mind automatically matches problems with solutions and replaces partial solutions with true ones when complex stimuli occur. More often than not, true solutions do become available and people do experience associatively related complex stimuli. All that is missing is sufficient repetition of the true solutions for them to enter awareness.

If the woman experienced a major disequilibrium, the final condition might be fulfilled. If her procrastination led her to delay getting medical treatment for her child, delay that caused a medical crisis, the resulting intense reverberations might suffice to free her of her habit.

An Inner Guide will work systematically to find the origins of our distressing habits, access true solutions, create complex stimuli, and repeat the new solutions until they enter our awareness. It will make us very comfortable and easy to live with. It will also help us become inured to the rough spots created by our friends' and relatives' problematic traits. Seeing our comfort, they might even be moved to develop their own Inner Guides.

QUESTION:

When an Inner Guide comes into existence and feels real during self-hypnosis, doesn't it have disequilibrium like we do, and don't these create "mental static" for it?

ANSWER:

No. It observes our experiences but they don't become part of its mental pathway. It remains only the pathway containing comfort, a sense of its own identity and the wish to help.

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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