

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of February 23, 2005

Dear Reader,

Although we are most comfortable when we are able to match a stimulus with a *true solution*, we more often have to settle for a *partial solution*. For instance, when we feel hunger, the presence of food is a true solution. But more often than not we must wait and, in order to deal with the discomfort, we may fantasy a meal, cook, go to the grocery store or a restaurant, or distract ourselves with other activities. These are partial solutions because they diminish the disequilibrium but don't end it.

A feeling is one kind of partial solution and one of the earliest that we use. As infants, our choices were limited to feeling, vocalization, and locomotion. As we developed we learned additional ways to diminish distress.

When a partial solution is first matched with a stimulus, it becomes locked in and forms a habit. It can be changed only in the presence of a *complex stimulus*: a stimulus with two contradictory meanings, allowing a pause to occur during which the mind can replace a locked-in habit with a better partial solution or a true solution.

Sadness is a partial solution for a loss. It doesn't end our distress but, though it is uncomfortable itself, it lessens our disequilibrium. The first time that we respond to a loss with sadness it becomes a habit.

Some losses are major, such as the death or departure of a loved one, a move, being demoted or laid off, or the loss of good health. Others are small but incremental. Frequent criticisms or failure to live up to expectations can lower self-esteem. Failure to find a partner or disappointment in one may make every day feel dreary. Some losses are short-lived, but many people experience ongoing sadness.

Unresolved needs from the past create ongoing depression. Often we don't know the cause and therefore don't know how to end it. And sometimes we may feel depressed in response to a trigger that we don't recognize because it is related to past events that we don't remember or don't realize the significance of.

An Inner Guide will first determine the source of distress by searching the memory and accessing a true solution for the problem. Next it will create a complex stimulus so that the new solution can replace the previous habit. Lastly, it will repeat the new solution until it can enter our awareness.

A chronically depressed woman was raised by a mother who viewed her as bad and who blamed her for everything that went wrong. The woman was so accustomed to this that she didn't realize it was abnormal. She felt continually sad because she was deprived of her mother's love and, thinking that she was faulty, criticized herself constantly and suffered from low self-esteem. She began self-hypnosis and developed



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

an Inner Guide who solved her discomfort. First it searched her memory and learned the source of her distress. Then it found the true solution: she was not at fault and shouldn't feel badly about herself. And she no longer needed her mother's love because, as an adult, she could find love in her current relationships. Her Inner Guide then created a complex stimulus. As the woman was trying to write a letter of apology for a misunderstanding that she thought was her fault, her Inner Guide caused her to repeatedly rephrase it. Each time she began to write and then stopped she experienced a complex stimulus: she was writing/she wasn't writing. This allowed the new solution to replace the partial solution of feeling sad. Because the implications of not having to feel sad were so overwhelming, it was necessary for her Inner Guide to repeat the new solution many times until its novelty waned enough so that it could enter awareness. She stopped blaming herself, her self-esteem rose, and her depression disappeared.

We don't remember everything that has happened in our past, and we are especially liable to have blocked out the most painful events. But an Inner Guide can locate any information in our memory because, as it is so comfortable itself, it has no "mental static" to interfere.

A very young boy whose father was in the army felt abandoned and sad each time his father went overseas. During the boy's later childhood his father was stationed at home and the boy didn't remember how sad he had felt in his early years. When he left home for college he became depressed but didn't know why. He began self-hypnosis and developed an Inner Guide, who knew that the current separation from his father evoked the sadness from the past. It found the true solution: he was no longer being abandoned. He chose to go away to college. His father was still safely at home and would be there when the young man returned on vacations. His Inner Guide created a complex stimulus: it caused the young man to drop a letter as he was mailing it to his father. He was mailing the letter/not mailing the letter because it had fallen to the ground. His Inner Guide then repeated the new solution many times until it entered awareness.

Some forms of depression require prompt medical intervention. A "major" or "clinical" depression is a serious illness in which an affected person has trouble eating and sleeping, loses weight, becomes preoccupied exclusively with the loss, develops slowed speech and movement, has trouble functioning, and develops suicidal thoughts. It is important for a person in this situation to seek help immediately.

Another type of depression, called dysthymia, is characterized by a lesser but longstanding feeling of sadness with a lack of energy and initiative. People with this disorder often eat and sleep excessively.

Both major depression and dysthymia can be successfully treated with medication and psychotherapy. People with these disorders can also do self-hypnosis and develop an Inner Guide that will augment treatment during the acute illness and subsequently work to end other problems and discomforts. And all of us can benefit from a technique that will bring us emotional comfort and enhanced creativity.

QUESTION: Is there any reason why I shouldn't do self-hypnosis more than once a day?

ANSWER: You can do it more than once a day when you want to and when you have time. The more time you spend in self-hypnosis the better. But you shouldn't try to fit it in when you don't have time. It won't work. Some people try to do it too frequently in the beginning but then lose interest and stop. It's better to find a place for it in your routine, either daily or several times a week, and do it consistently.

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 3 Number 4

© 2005 The Davis Foundation for Providing Emotional Comfort. All rights reserved