

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION

FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of March 23, 2005

Dear Reader,

We would all like to be successful in our work, but a variety of problems may hamper us. Some are external and others originate within us.

Every person has the potential to find work that he loves and cares passionately about, but only a minority have been able to realize this possibility. What impedes the others?

From infancy onward, as we respond to stimuli we find that their novelty wanes with repetition. In order to maintain an *optimal stimulus level* we must seek new stimuli. When a baby becomes accustomed to being fed, he attempts the more complex activity of feeding himself and, by and by, he may even try to feed his parent. When he tires of a toy, he looks for a different one. As he develops he continually strives to master new skills and enjoy new experiences. This is how and why we develop.

Each of us has had a unique environment in which to grow. Even siblings have had different life experiences. Being the oldest is very different from being the youngest, or the middle child. And because our innate sensitivity levels vary, our parents have responded differently to us. A parent may find one child high-strung and respond with anxiety, frustration, or irritation, while a mellow child may elicit a calm, loving response. On the other hand, a parent may prefer a vigorous, assertive child to a quiet one. And a child's sensitivity level also influences her responses to life's stimuli. A very sensitive child will more fully perceive the patterns she sees in her surroundings, and will enjoy experiencing beautiful things. A very assertive child will enjoy responding to challenges and will take pleasure in competitive sports.

As we develop, the combination of our innate talents and our positive experiences shape our interests and our capabilities. If nothing interferes, a passion will evolve. But there are many potential interferences. Some are cultural. A boy may be hassled if he loves interior design or ballet. A girl may be discouraged from becoming a mathematician or a pole vaulter. A poor child may be laughed at if he aspires to be an astronaut. A child from an affluent family may be discouraged from becoming a farmer. Whenever a child's passion is criticized, a disequilibrium occurs. If the child pursues his dream regardless, he experiences the chronic disequilibrium of parental or societal disapproval that interferes with his work. At some point, he may understand the *true solution* for this problem: that he is right to pursue his dream and those who disapprove are mistaken. If a person responds by acquiescing and doing work that is more socially acceptable, a *partial solution* to the disapproval, he suffers a chronic disequilibrium because he is deprived of exercising his best talents and fully enjoying his work.



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What are the internal interferences that may occur? Some are directly related to the choice of work. A child may become fascinated with an endeavor for which she is not well suited as an escape from problems. She may daydream of winning the Nobel Prize in literature, a partial solution if writing is not her forte. Even if she is an excellent writer, the wish to win a prize is a partial solution because it is a response to a problem rather than an expression of her talent. Perhaps she has been undervalued and wants to win a prize to “show everyone.” Or an uncoordinated child may aspire to be a star athlete because, missing a father at home, he has idealized and identified with a professional football player.

Other interferences include partial solutions that are responses to disturbances unrelated to work choice. A person who becomes frightened of his aggression may develop an inhibition that impedes healthy assertiveness. One who has experienced painful losses may become chronically depressed. Past traumas may result in ongoing anxiety. Other partial solutions to problems include procrastination, distractibility, and anger. All of these partial solutions, though they are responses to disturbances, become disequilibrations themselves and create mental static that either interferes with the pursuit of a passion or so contaminates the mind that a person isn't aware of his true desire. This is the case for the majority of people.

As we know, an Inner Guide works efficiently and systematically to solve problems and end discomfort. Our Inner Guides are accessing true solutions for our problems and working to bring them into awareness. As that happens, the partial solutions dissipate, unwanted habits disappear, and we become free to pursue our passions without interference.

QUESTION:

Why do I feel so compelled to work so hard when I know I am more effective rested?

ANSWER:

Overwork is a partial solution to a chronic disequilibrium. At some point, your mind matched the disequilibrium with the habit of overwork and it has become locked in. You may not know the source of the disturbance, but you can see its effect as you notice yourself overworking. You can understand intellectually that this is not best but you are powerless to stop. Your Inner Guide has detected the origin of the disequilibrium and has accessed a true solution for it. She will create a complex stimulus to unlock this response from its stimulus (perhaps she already has) so that the true solution can be locked in. Then she will work to bring this new solution into your awareness. When that happens, you will no longer need to overwork.

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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