

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION

FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of July 13, 2005

Dear Reader,

There are many specific discomforts that make their presence known, but there are also chronic disturbances that silently contribute to an ongoing level of stress. Some of these are habit patterns that have become second nature and so are unnoticed. They are *partial solutions* because they decrease a disturbance without completely ending it. A child who is frequently criticized may develop a character trait of perfectionism, selflessness, or rebelliousness. These responses don't end the pain of criticism because it has become internalized. And these partial solutions bring their own discomfort.

There is another kind of difficulty that silently adds to one's stress level. When a stimulus occurs for which there are no *true* or partial solutions, the mental apparatus creates a *false solution*. A mental split, or double pathway arises. In one arm the disturbance continues unabated but in the other arm an alternative perception, one that protects against the painful stimulus, occurs. Someone who receives very bad news may lose awareness, or faint. People who undergo cardiac arrest often depersonalize: they feel as though they are outside of their body, often looking down on it. Depersonalization probably occurs routinely during sudden dangers and catastrophes.

False solutions such as these are dramatic but unawareness or denial, which are inconspicuous, are much more frequent expressions of a false solution. A person may be totally oblivious to a danger such as the implications of a deteriorating economy. Or he may simply deny or ignore a threat: he is intellectually aware of it but discounts its significance. Many people who know about the hazards of smoking shrug them off and continue to smoke.

Unawareness and denial can also become habit patterns. Stimuli that are associatively related to a traumatic threat may evoke the same response. A man who was sexually abused in childhood denied that his abuser had done anything wrong because that thought was intolerable. Out of awareness, he remained very upset and, because nothing was ever done to solve the problem, his distress continued into adulthood. His mental apparatus perceived other problems that arose as associatively related to the early trauma, simply because they were also problems. His response was to deny them, too. His work situation, his finances, and certain legal positions that he had assumed all became precarious, but he was unable to deal with them because he denied all of them.

Denial is very widespread. Only a minority of people respond to the information that is available about dangers. Some dangers are huge, such as problems about the environment, the economy, and political unrest. Even these can be responded to, to some extent. But others have the potential to be fully dealt with. Smoking and



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overeating are bad for one's health. Overspending and gambling are bad for one's financial security. Procrastinating on getting needed home and car repairs done may only make matters worse. While these habits are partial solutions that can be altered only with the help of a complex stimulus, the denial of trouble or danger also impedes change.

Yet there is another side to denial and unawareness. A false solution occurs not only when there is no true or partial solution available but also when a stimulus is overwhelming, even if it is positive. The mental apparatus strives to maintain an *optimal stimulus level* and will match a too-powerful stimulus with unawareness. If you learn of some wonderful news, you may disbelieve it at first.

Your full capacity to work, to love, and to enjoy life remains unknown to you. Your Inner Guide is working to replace maladaptive habit patterns with true solutions, freeing you of the discomforts and inhibitions that prevent you from realizing your full potential. But it is also working to lessen the overstimulation that this knowledge causes, so that a new understanding of your possibilities will enter awareness. This will come gradually, as you become able to tolerate it. In the meantime, you can enjoy the changes that are presently occurring.

In a recent issue, I discussed the danger of denying the problems that will grow as our oil supply diminishes. We must do what we can to prepare for this time. I am happy to report that my new hybrid car, a Toyota Prius, is getting 50 mpg, has ample acceleration, and was a pleasure to drive on a recent trip to the east coast.

QUESTION:

I can't get my fingers to rise when I ask my Inner Guide what the fingers represent, but sometimes they tingle. Is this a signal?

ANSWER:

Yes. The prospect of communicating with your Inner Guide through finger signals has been too overstimulating to occur, so she hasn't been able to raise fingers. If you now sometimes feel fingers tingling, the overstimulation is lessening. You can try to use the tingling as the signal.

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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