

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION

FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of August 10, 2005

Dear Reader,

What is a flashback? How and why does it occur? Is it always pathological or may it be helpful? Have you ever had one?

Out of awareness, our minds are always working to preserve our comfort by maintaining an optimal stimulus level. We are made uncomfortable when over- or understimulated. When an intense stimulus occurs, our minds cope with it by matching various *partial solutions* and, if necessary, a *false solution*.

You have undoubtedly had such experiences at times. Whenever something has happened to you, either good or bad, that causes you to think, "Oh no, this can't be," your mind has matched it with a false solution: a mental split, or dissociation, during which a double pathway is created. In one arm of the pathway you experience the intense overstimulation while in the other you deny its existence. You are also, simultaneously, enacting partial solutions: thoughts, feelings, and actions that serve to deal with the situation and also to decrease its novelty.

Perhaps you locked your keys in the car, and thought, "Oh, no, what have I done?" Or tried to pay for something and discovered that your credit card was missing: "Oh, no! Where is it?" Or found that your child has unwittingly destroyed a valued possession: "Oh, no. What have you done?" The false solution, denial, is quickly followed by partial solutions to rectify the situation. You call the locksmith to open your car, retrace your movements to find your credit card, or sadly sweep up the mess your child has created. Yes, feelings, such as sadness, are also partial solutions. They give expression to your discomfort. Once you regain access to your car, find your credit card, or reconcile yourself to your loss, comfort has been restored.

Perhaps you have won a prize, received an unexpected promotion, or suddenly thought of the solution to an important problem. You think, "I can't believe it!" You may jump up, pace, write down your thoughts, call your friends, and, by and by, you do believe it. The initial denial is a false solution and, as it is followed by various partial solutions, the novelty of the event wanes sufficiently so that full appreciation of it can enter awareness.

Sudden events are more likely to be matched with false solutions because the suddenness increases the magnitude of the stimulus. A traumatic incident of great magnitude, such as a horrendous battlefield event, may be matched with a false solution of unawareness or amnesia that continues over time. When this happens, the intense disequilibrium in the other arm of the double pathway causes continuing stress on the mental apparatus. If that stress exceeds the stress of re-experiencing the incident, a flashback will occur. A flashback is not a memory; it is a re-living. Because it is so



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traumatic, the mental apparatus will soon re-establish the previous amnesia. A cycling of these two states may occur.

While the majority of us have not been subjected to the battlefield or to the various natural disasters, accidents, and serious crimes that occur, we, too, have had incidents in our past that have been sufficiently traumatic to cause amnesia. Young children are especially susceptible to trauma because their lack of knowledge and experience causes them to misinterpret difficult experiences as excessively frightening, depressing, or enraging.

Any event in your early life that stimulated unbearable anxiety, depression, or anger was matched with a false solution, most commonly, unawareness, amnesia, or denial. When you react excessively to a current stimulus that evokes these feelings, the excess feeling is a partial flashback. Your Inner Guide will solve these disequibrations over time and you will find that you no longer have exaggerated responses of anxiety, depression, or anger.

This work is done silently. But as you do self-hypnosis, you may have one or more flashbacks that are quite noticeable, perhaps even dramatic. A woman, during self-hypnosis, found her head being tipped forcibly back. As she wondered what this meant, she recalled a story that she had been told about herself. When she was a toddler she had swallowed some poison and a doctor had come to the house and “pumped her stomach.” She now became aware that the tipping back of her head was a re-living of that event. Her Inner Guide led her to know that this event was especially traumatic because the doctor had initially inserted the tube in her larynx rather of her esophagus, causing her to choke. The pressure of his hand on her neck during that event was the source of a subsequent intolerance of anything touching her neck. Sheets, blankets, scarves, hairdresser’s capes, all had to be positioned away from her throat. Following this realization her intolerance began to subside.

You may possibly experience a noticeable flashback as you do self-hypnosis. If you do, it will lead you to a new understanding of a past trauma, and will represent the lessening of its effects. It is all part of the process of solving chronic problems and becoming fully emotionally comfortable.

QUESTION:

I want to believe that self-hypnosis will work but there is a part of my mind that is very skeptical about this. Will this interfere and prevent me from having an Inner Guide?

ANSWER:

No. Because you truly wish for an Inner Guide, you now have one. And as long as you do self-hypnosis, your Inner Guide can do its work regardless of what else is going on in your mind.

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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