

THE  
DAVIS FOUNDATION  
FOR PROVIDING  
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

**Letter of October 19, 2005**

Dear Reader,

Many people complain of what they call “mind chatter:” involuntary repetitive thoughts, often unpleasant ones. How do these originate?

The mental apparatus registers each stimulus and matches it with the best available response. A *true solution* completely solves the disequilibrium caused by the stimulus and, if available, will be chosen. A *partial solution* diminishes the disturbance without completely ending it. If no true solution is available, and a partial one is, it will be matched with the stimulus. “Mind chatter” can be a partial solution.

Albert was criticized by his boss for not finishing a project on schedule. The delay had occurred because he had been overworked. If he had been able to explain this, and if his boss had accepted his explanation, the disequilibrium would have been resolved. Explaining would have been a true solution. But his boss was an impatient person and wasn't open to hearing explanations. If Albert had been able to leave for a better job this also would have been a true solution. Or if he had been able to tolerate his boss's immaturity and to feel calm in the knowledge that he had done his best, this, too, would have been a true solution. Why wasn't this solution available to him?

As a boy, Albert had often been unfairly criticized by his father. At that time he was too young to understand that the criticism was unjust. His mind matched the disturbance with a variety of partial solutions: feelings of depression and of being unworthy, attempts to please his father, and repetitive thoughts of explaining himself: “I tried...I didn't know how...it's hard...” Once a solution has been matched with a stimulus it becomes locked in and will automatically be used when that stimulus recurs. And it may become generalized so that it is employed in a wider variety of disturbances. Over time, Albert developed an ongoing inner monologue of justifying himself, both when he was at fault and when he wasn't. Because this “mind chatter” was locked in, he was unable to match criticism with a true solution.

Bonnie, too, was unfairly criticized by her father. Her partial solution was to identify with him, internalize the critical attitude, and criticize herself. Self-criticism, while painful, wasn't as distressing as having her father criticize her. As this solution became generalized she was inundated with continual self-criticism.

Charles was born with a genetically determined mental fragility that left him dependent on the presence of his parents and the stability of their household. When he went to college these supports were missing and he suffered an emotional collapse. He was obliged to return home and was unable to study or hold a job for some time. Eventually he found employment as a kitchen worker in a restaurant but continued to live with his parents. He had no true solution for his vulnerability.



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When no true or partial solutions are available, or when a stimulus is too strong to be handled adequately by them, a false solution is generated. A double pathway forms in the mind. In one arm the disturbance continues undiminished, out of awareness, while in the other arm a false solution occurs. A false solution may be a misperception or simply a denial or an unawareness of what is happening.

Charles' mental apparatus matched his problem with the false solution of fantasizing getting a better job and his own apartment in the near future. This fantasy developed into mind chatter as he ruminated on these plans continually. To maintain its strength he elaborated and intensified his plans and they became increasingly unrealistic.

His successful younger brother occasionally asked how long he intended to continue living with their parents. And his parents periodically talked about moving to a retirement home. These powerful stimuli threatened his precarious adaptation caused catastrophic anxiety. The false solution of unrealistic plans developed into delusions of grandeur. He viewed himself as all-powerful and talked of merging with God. At these times he required hospitalization and remained psychotic for several months. When remission occurred he had little memory of what had transpired during these decompensations.

Albert's and Bonnie's mind chatter, though uncomfortable, originally served a useful purpose. It provided a partial solution for disequilibrations for which there were initially no true solutions. But because it became locked in, it continued even when better solutions became available. Charles' mind chatter was experienced as pleasurable but was accompanied by the barely suppressed feelings of great anxiety.

An Inner Guide solves the underlying problems that necessitate partial and false solutions. Albert and Bonnie, if they develop their Inner Guides, will find that their mind chatter gradually abates. If Charles were to do self-hypnosis during his periods of remission, his Inner Guide would gradually fill in the inner defect that causes his anxiety and dependence. He would achieve autonomy and he, too, would achieve emotional comfort.

*QUESTION:*

What is the difference between my Inner Guide and my conscience?

*ANSWER:*

The conscience is that part of the mind that knows right from wrong and that causes you to feel guilty if you do something wrong. The Inner Guide is very different. It is a combination of three things: the mental pathway of comfort, a wish to help you, and a sense of its own identity (separate from your identity). Its goal is to end discomfort. As you become comfortable, you will find that you are doing everything as it should be done and you will have no reason to feel guilty. Guilt is one more of the many discomforts that your Inner Guide will eliminate.

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](mailto:info@davis-foundation.org). If you would like to be anonymous, just let me know.

Cordially,

*Judith M. Davis*

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