

THE  
DAVIS FOUNDATION  
FOR PROVIDING  
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of January 25, 2006

Dear Reader,

What causes a person to have difficulty persisting in an effort to achieve a goal? Lack of persistence can be a character trait that hampers much of one's progress, or it may occur only in certain situations.

Character traits are formed in our early years. They are responses to specific patterns of stimulation and, as with all responses, they become locked in. The response of persistence occurs when you are exposed to a pattern in which you receive frequent small rewards on your way to a long-term goal. A child who is learning to write can feel proud first of the individual letters he writes, then of words, then of sentences. He persists until he can write stories, reports, and essays.

Many of the skills we learn provide periodic small rewards. When these are not forthcoming, we may provide them internally. The talented child who hopes to become a dancer, a musician, or an athlete is frequently rewarded as she learns these skills. But if a child aspires to a goal that she is poorly suited for, her small rewards are diminished by her perception that others are doing better. Yet she, too, may persist if she can't bear relinquishing the goal. Her mental apparatus matches this desire with the *false solution* of denial and she provides herself with the rewards of unrealistic fantasies.

Clearly we all had experience with persisting in various tasks as we developed. How did some of us learn to generalize this trait? If we were repeatedly rewarded by parental praise for the act of persisting, itself, we internalized those rewards and were then able to provide them to ourselves. And by enjoying and being proud of this characteristic, we provided further reinforcement for ourselves.

Those who haven't developed an internal self-rewarding function for persistence are dependent on external rewards. They will have difficulty achieving long-term goals if small rewards along the way are not available. And their failure to achieve these goals will leave them feeling helpless and depressed.

In past Letters I have described many situations in which an unwanted habit pattern is formed when an individual's mental apparatus matches a disequilibrium with a *partial solution*. A child who is neglected by her mother may discover that eating provides soothing. This solution becomes locked in and she develops the habit pattern of eating whenever she feels down. She will have trouble losing weight because habit patterns can only be unlocked in the presence of a *complex stimulus*: a stimulus that signifies two contradictory meanings simultaneously. An Inner Guide will provide complex stimuli at the right moments so that unwanted habit patterns can be unlocked.



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But here we are concerned with the *absence* of a habit pattern: persistence. Can an Inner Guide help develop a new character trait?

When an unwanted habit pattern is unlocked the mental apparatus replaces it with the best available new solution. For the woman who overeats the *true solution* is the knowledge that she doesn't need her mother's attention anymore because, as an adult, she can take care of herself. She will find herself eating more healthily and losing weight. She has established a new habit pattern.

But a character trait is a response to a specific pattern of stimulation. Bravery is a response to a variety of dangers. Compassion is evoked by various situations in which another is distressed. Persistence is a response to the challenge of maintaining the work toward long-term goals. How do these positive traits develop?

They are implicitly present as optimal solutions but are stifled or compromised by the locked-in responses of maladaptive partial solutions. When those are solved these positive traits replace them.

When beginning self-hypnosis some people experience early rewards. They notice positive changes within the first weeks and/or establish communication with their Inner Guides. For others there are no apparent changes in the early months but if they have developed the trait of persistence they continue to do self-hypnosis. The remainder need external rewards in the beginning. These Letters are meant to serve as small rewards but the Davis Foundation is working to develop additional helpful strategies so that everyone can be enabled to develop their Inner Guides and achieve emotional comfort.

*QUESTION:*

I'm skeptical about self-hypnosis. Will it do any good for me to try it?

*ANSWER:*

All you need to do is to understand the definition of the Inner Guide (a pathway that is composed of three things: a sense of its own identity, the wish to help you, and the pathway containing all your memories of comfort). If you then wish that you had an Inner Guide, it comes into existence in your mind as a tiny new pathway. Then all that you need to do is practice self-hypnosis regularly.

It doesn't matter whether you are skeptical or even whether you believe in an Inner Guide at all. Once having come into existence because of your wish for it, it takes advantage of every opportunity (every session of self-hypnosis) to work on your behalf. As you experience the results of its work your skepticism will disappear.

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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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