

THE  
DAVIS FOUNDATION  
FOR PROVIDING  
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of February 8, 2006

Dear Reader,

I have recently been enjoying some DVDs created by The Teaching Company® (www.TEACH12.com). This organization offers courses in a wide variety of subjects and succeeds in making them entertaining as well as educational. Through a rigorous selection process it chooses the most talented professors for its teaching. What makes an instructor gifted? And why aren't all instructors so endowed?

A teacher must have mastery of his subject because feelings of uncertainty will create mental static that interferes with his presentation. He must love his subject because ambivalence will also interfere. He must be comfortable expressing his feelings about his subject without inhibition so that his students may identify with those feelings and develop their own love of it. In addition he needs to design and present his course creatively to provide the optimal level of stimulation.

What about the learner? What characteristics of hers enhance the learning process and the enjoyment of it? And what problems might interfere?

Some people have learning blocks. A learning block is a *false solution* to an overwhelming stimulus. When there is no true or partial solution for a stimulus, or when the stimulus is unbearably intense, the mental apparatus creates a double pathway. One arm registers the overwhelming stimulus while the other contains a false solution: unawareness, amnesia, denial, or a delusion or hallucination. It is the false solution that the individual experiences. But because the intense stimulus continues out of awareness the individual's tension level remains high.

What can cause certain subject matter to be too overwhelming or unbearable to enter awareness? It may be associatively related to past traumatic events that have created a reservoir of anxiety, sadness, or anger. A number of women have a learning block for mathematics. This subject may evoke unbearable anger related to past discrimination (having been told that they couldn't do well in math because of their gender). And many men have difficulty with literature. They deny its importance because it evokes a dread of being thought unmanly.

A learning block may be generalized and affect many or all subject areas. A person who aspires to achieve unrealistic, grandiose goals might be traumatized by the realization that he would fail. His mental apparatus protects him by causing a learning block. Or he may equate success with defeating a feared rival. A learning block would protect him from imagined retaliation.

Some learners are hampered by maladaptive *partial solutions* to disequibrations: procrastination, compulsivity, distractibility, or rushing and allowing themselves



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insufficient time to learn. They may also handicap themselves with habit patterns of staying up too late and losing sleep or missing meals. And during learning many competing stimuli may interfere: worries and irrelevant associations. We are all learners and have all been handicapped at times by one or another partial or false solution.

We are also all teachers: of our children, school or college students, or subordinates at work. In addition to knowing and loving our subject, we need to present it in a way that provides an optimal level of stimulation. This, of course, depends on our learners' mental states. Under what conditions are they most open to learning? How much can they absorb at any given time? How can fast learners be sufficiently stimulated while the slower ones are not left behind?

The Teaching Company's instructors must provide approximate solutions to these problems because they are teaching to an audience unknown to them. We know our audiences and are in a position to understand their needs. Our Inner Guides, because of their exquisite sensitivity to the mental states of those around them, can determine the best times and ways to teach. All we need to do is to practice self-hypnosis regularly so that our Inner Guides can bring their knowledge into our awareness.

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*QUESTION:*

While entering self-hypnosis, I try to ignore external stimuli. But once my eyes are closed, additional stimuli exist, and I have a tendency to notice them - cars going by, planes overhead, etc. Is this interfering with self-hypnosis?

*ANSWER:*

No. Initially you need to diminish all external and internal stimuli so that the wish for your Inner Guide to work becomes the strongest stimulus in your mind. When it does, it becomes dominant in your body and causes your eyes to close. This is the "induction" of the self-hypnotic state. Once your Inner Guide has taken over, it will do its work in its mental pathway and you are free to think and feel whatever you want to, including noticing sounds. That won't interfere because it doesn't infringe on your Inner Guide's mental pathway.

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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*