

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of March 8, 2006

Dear Reader,

I usually write about ways that your Inner Guide can help you, but today I would like to describe how an Inner Guide can help your relatives and friends. And, of course, by making them more comfortable it helps you, too.

The mental apparatus registers all stimuli and matches each with the best available solution. When a *true solution* is available it is matched; otherwise the mind must find a *partial or false solution*. These alternatives are adaptive at the time but may become problematic later, especially as they tend to be intensified and elaborated over time. They may become a new source of discomfort: not only to the individual who uses them but also to those around her.

A young girl was unfairly criticized by her strict, judgmental mother. If she had been an adult, the true solution would have been simply to know that her mother was wrong and to either defend herself or shrug off the criticism. But the girl didn't know that her mother was wrong and, because she needed her mother's love and approval, she felt deeply hurt. The best available partial solution was to identify with her mother's judgment, to judge herself critically, and to hope she could improve. Over time she became more judgmental, herself, and this attitude became generalized. She became critical of those around her. Her friends tolerated this because of her positive qualities but they found it irritating and complained to each other about it.

A boy whose father was a perfectionist and expected perfection from his children responded with the partial solution of becoming rebellious. Because any partial solution loses its effectiveness as its novelty wanes, it must be intensified and elaborated over time. The boy's rebelliousness became more blatant and eventually caused him to run away from home. He managed to finish school and negotiate his way into adulthood on his own terms. In adulthood his rebelliousness was manifested more subtly, by questioning and challenging others' positions and accomplishments. He had many friends but they were often hurt by his reflexive tendency to disagree with their ideas and his inability to appreciate their achievements.

A girl who was raised by troubled, preoccupied parents felt lost. Because of their neglect she didn't learn social norms and felt that she didn't know how to fit in. She felt that she did everything "wrong." This stimulus was painful and her mental apparatus matched it with the partial solution of finding everything else wrong. She discharged some of her distress by complaining about everything. As an adult this habit alienated others and she had few friends. She wasn't aware that her complaining drove many people away and bored the friends she had.

There are many characteristics that can be annoying or hurtful to others. People who are shy, compulsive, anxious, self-effacing, competitive, argumentative, inhibited,



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impatient, manipulative, irritable, irresponsible, sadistic, chronically depressed, masochistic, or mistrustful cause distress. So do those who are procrastinators or workaholics. All of these characteristics are partial solutions that have been matched with early disequibrations and locked in as habit patterns. Most people have one or more traits with which they unknowingly cause distress to others.

Your Inner Guide solves the problems that you are aware of but it also finds new solutions for the character traits that disequibrate others. As this occurs, your relatives and friends will become more completely comfortable with you...as comfortable as their own partial solutions allow them to be. You will benefit too, by the decreased disequibration you feel when you are with them.

Your Inner Guide's goal is to solve all of your problems and end discomfort. But it also wants to help you make others comfortable because, as you do, you feel a heightened sense of pleasure. And when others are comfortable with you, you enjoy them more.

In addition, an Inner Guide helps others for its own sake. The pleasure that it feels by solving problems creates overstimulation that is discharged by giving pleasure to others.

QUESTION:

A college professor whose Inner Guide usually works silently was assisting a new student who, she had heard from colleagues, seemed a bit slow and a little strange. Her colleagues found him irritating and she was initially bewildered by his behavior. Then she heard very clearly her Inner Guide saying, "He has Asperger's syndrome." She had read about this diagnosis in the past and now recalled that it describes a condition at the higher end of autism. Those afflicted have normal intelligence but tend to think concretely and are lacking in social skills. Now, understanding his situation, she knew how to relate to him in a way that was calming and helpful. Why, she asks, did her Inner Guide speak out spontaneously in this instance? And why doesn't her Inner Guide do that more often?

ANSWER:

Her Inner Guide doesn't usually intervene directly in disconcerting situations because the disequibrations they cause create *complex stimuli* that are necessary to replace maladaptive solutions with true ones. But in this instance, her Inner Guide spoke to her directly so that, by understanding the situation, she could provide comfort and assistance to this impaired student.

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