

THE  
DAVIS FOUNDATION  
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Letter of April 5, 2006

Dear Reader,

Once again I have received a question that merits an issue-length response. At the recent scientific meeting of the American Society for Clinical Hypnosis, I was asked whether an introject was a *false solution*. This is an intriguing question and in addition to its theoretical interest, it has practical implications for us.

Freud theorized that a developing individual wishes to take into himself the important figures in his environment, typically his parents, so that he will possess them or their characteristics. An infant wants to have his mother, whom he loves, inside him. A young child needs to acquire those attributes of his parents that will enable him to function healthfully and competently. The mental picture or aspect of the parent that is taken in is called an "introject."

It is questionable whether an infant wishes to devour his mother. True, he mouths everything, but this appears more as a desire to explore than to consume. But suppose he did. His wish would cause a disequilibrium that could not be solved with a *true solution*. Eating her would be impossible. And few *partial solutions* would be available to him. Too young to fantasy, his attempts to discharge tension would be limited to physical movement and babble. At some point, when his brain had matured sufficiently, his mental apparatus could create a split in which the unbearable disequilibrium continued out of awareness while he experienced a false solution: a delusion that he had, in fact, incorporated his mother, or perhaps a negation of the desire. The true solution would be to accept the impossibility of this wish.

A young child does acquire certain attributes of his parents and of other adults who exhibit desirable characteristics. Every problem he encounters creates a disequilibrium that must be solved. If a true solution is available it is matched with the problem because it will solve the disequilibrium fully. If there is no true solution the next best choice is those partial solutions that decrease the disequilibrium as much as possible. As in infancy, motor movement and talking are possibilities. But the child has now developed a large repertoire of additional partial solutions, among them, identification. He copies the traits that he has seen to be useful. More often than not he isn't particularly aware that he is identifying with an adult. The match is made out of awareness.

Some traits are very positive and a child may become hard-working, thoughtful, patient, and skilled at negotiation: partial solutions all. But a child may also match characteristics that appear undesirable. Perfectionism, procrastination, masochism, and bullying are also partial solutions.



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Although Freud's notion that an infant wishes to introject his mother is speculative, it is clear that, as we develop, we all identify with various traits that appear useful. Matching these partial solutions is part of how we become who we are.

But are there times when we choose the false solution of introjection? False solutions are less desirable than partial ones because, while they provide an alternate experience, the disequilibrium continues full force out of awareness and contributes to an individual's tension level. They include denial, negation, delusions, hallucinations, fainting, and, yes, introjection.

A person with Dissociative Identity Disorder (formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder) creates alters (alternative personalities) at moments of great trauma. They are false solutions and may involve introjection of a parent.

A soldier may introject a figure who is seemingly impervious to harm so that he feels indestructible. This introject is a false solution because, in fact, he is vulnerable.

During adolescence it is common to aspire to unrealistic goals. A girl who feels that she can become a ballerina or an astronaut is, with rare exceptions, wrong. So, also, is a boy who thinks that he can become a basketball star or a bestselling novelist. They have introjected admired figures to support their desire. These aspirations usually fade with time as reality prevails, but not always and not completely. Vestiges may remain of a belief in an unrealistic degree of power, talent, or skill. These fragments of the introject may, unbeknownst to an individual, distort his perceptions and interfere with his judgment.

Is an Inner Guide an introject? No, it doesn't come from outside. It is a convergence of three mental pathways that are within the mind. It originates as a false solution because we wish for something that isn't there: an Other that will fulfill the purposes of an Inner Guide. However when we wish for something *within* the mind it comes into existence. By thus creating an Inner Guide we have solved the disequilibrium caused by our wish for it. Originating as a false solution, it has become a true one.

Our Inner Guides are aware of all of the false solutions we employ, including introjects, and are working to replace them with true solutions. As long as we continue practicing self-hypnosis regularly, our Inner Guides will have the conditions they need to solve all of our problems.

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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*

Volume 4 Number 7

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