

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of May 2, 2007

Dear Reader,

Sometimes a person experiences an inordinately strong response to a small stimulus. To him it seems natural; he doesn't realize that his response is disproportionate. We have talked before about the existence of a reservoir of feeling, out of awareness, that can be evoked by associatively related stimuli. Such a reservoir comes into existence when the mental apparatus matches a stimulus with the creation of a double pathway, a *dissociation*, and is evoked by an associatively related stimulus. But a disproportionate response can also occur as a chain reaction when a stimulus evokes a long and multiply branched chain of associations.

A woman becomes very distressed over the course of a few hours. She has just learned that her boss is not going to follow up on an idea she suggested to him. She feels like a failure and as though she is unwanted. At home that evening she feels very sad and is inconsolable. The future looks black. She is unable to put the minor rejection into perspective. What has happened?

She has had a number of significant rejections in her past. When she was a child her mother was chronically preoccupied and unable to praise her for her accomplishments. Others did and as she developed she received many accolades for her achievements. As a result she doesn't usually feel down about herself. She has developed a mental pathway containing memories of all of her past successes but also a pathway of memories of her feelings of rejection by her mother.

Although she did very well in school she did less well with math, getting only average grades in that subject. She played violin in her school's orchestra but her friend, who also played violin, was more accomplished. She played junior varsity basketball but wasn't good enough to make the first team. Because she was competitive each situation in which she wasn't the best contributed to a mental pathway of feelings of inadequacy.

She had several relationships with men before getting married. In all but one she had chosen to end the connection but one partner, a perfectionist, left complaining that she was not thoughtful enough. This event contributed to her mental pathway of inadequacy.

Everyone has a mental pathway of memories of events that felt unfair. One of this woman's friends had been killed in an auto accident many years ago. At the time, as she grieved, she thought about the uncertainties and unfairness of life. These thoughts, with the associated feelings of sadness, added to her mental pathway that contained past memories of unfairness. And there was also the memory of being late to her senior prom because the car taking her there had a flat tire. Although it seemed trivial in retrospect she had been very upset at the time.



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All of these past incidents had evoked the *partial solution* of feelings: sadness and anger. The anger was directly outwardly in part, toward the offending person or toward fate. But it was also directed inward toward herself. Why couldn't she have done better at math, music, and sports? Why had she performed inadequately for the partner who left her? Might she have contributed to her friend's death in some way? Or perhaps been insufficiently caring to her friend while she was alive? Might she have avoided being late to her prom by checking the car ahead of time? Each event and all of the many other instances of rejection, loss, and bad luck in her life were associatively related to the pathways of sadness and anger.

When the mental apparatus matches a stimulus with a response the pathways that are associatively related will also be evoked in a chain reaction. The woman's feeling of rejection when her boss discounted her idea evoked the past memories of feelings of inadequacy, failure, bad luck, sadness, and anger turned both outward and inward. These memories did not all enter awareness but they contributed to the intensity of her reaction.

Will everyone respond to disappointments with as intense a reaction? No, their responses will depend on the number and size of associatively related pathways and also on the strength of other stimuli closely related in time. And the types of stimuli that cause disproportionate responses will depend on the nature of past experiences.

An Inner Guide, by replacing the partial solutions of sadness and anger with *true solutions*, will cause disproportionate reactions to disappear.

QUESTION:

Are my sessions long enough? They last from fifteen to thirty minutes.

ANSWER:

Yes. Because you are doing self-hypnosis with an open-ended time frame (as indicated by the variable length) you are having as long a trance period as is possible at that moment and the results you have achieved so far show that this is effective. If you want to have even more trance time you can practice "alert trance" while performing habitual tasks or enjoying passive activities such as listening to music or watching TV. To use alert trance simply enter the self-hypnotic state then open your eyes. You will continue to feel slightly relaxed. This state will last as long as it is not interrupted by an unexpected stimulus.

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

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