

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of June 27, 2007

Dear Reader,

People tend to feel most comfortable when they are in control of their circumstances but there are times when this becomes impossible. Sometimes control is relinquished purposefully as when a person undergoes elective surgery or travels on an airplane. Other lapses of control occur involuntarily as when one becomes stuck in traffic or when uncooperative coworkers cause delays in a project. Why does loss of control create discomfort?

Obviously loss of control may suggest external danger. Will the operation be successful? Might there be problems with the anesthesia or post-operative complications? What if the airplane crashes? Might one be late to a meeting and lose the sale? Will the boss be angry if the project isn't finished on time?

Situations in which control is lost may also cause internal danger; that is, the attack of one's critical faculty on the self. What if the doctor I chose isn't experienced enough? Why did I decide to fly instead of driving? I should have left earlier for the meeting. Why do I persist in this job when I know my coworkers will let me down again? I'm stupid, inadequate, thoughtless, lazy, or careless.

These sources of anxiety will cause discomfort. But in addition the presence of uncertainty, itself, creates disequilibrium. The mental apparatus strives to maintain an optimal stimulus level and matches every stimulus with the best available response. But a state of uncertainty creates disequilibrium for which there is no *true solution*. A *partial* or *false solution* will be chosen but neither fully ends the disequilibrium.

In the presence of uncertainty the solutions chosen will often oscillate between two alternatives. On the one hand, the partial solution of hoping or even assuming that everything will turn out all right will momentarily decrease a disequilibrium. But soon the possibility of being wrong will create a greater disequilibrium because of the greater discrepancy between the alternatives. To go from hoping or assuming that one will get to the meeting on time to realizing that one won't is a greater change than simply being uncertain. The partial solution for this new disequilibrium is to again assume that one won't. And of course the discomfort from that assumption causes the mental apparatus to again choose the hope that all will be well. Hence the mind flip-flops between these alternatives.

In addition to undergoing a loss of control of the environment one may also experience what feels like a loss of control of oneself. This occurs when a stimulus evokes a response that feels foreign because it emanates from a mental pathway that one doesn't fully identify with. For instance you may watch a movie that causes you to inexplicably burst into tears. This response feels out of control because you don't



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understand why you are crying. Or you may surprise yourself by reacting with rage to an irritant or an insult. And many people have bouts of anxiety for which they don't understand the cause.

These feelings arise when a stimulus is associatively related to a split-off memory that was so traumatic when it happened that the resulting emotional response was intolerable. The mental apparatus created a double pathway: in one arm the experience continued, out of awareness, as a disequilibrium-without-solution while in the other arm a false solution, such as unawareness, occurred. The intolerable emotional response of extreme sadness, anger, or anxiety formed a reservoir of intense feeling that is evoked when an associatively related stimulus occurs.

Positive experiences can also be so overwhelming that the mental apparatus must match them with a false solution. They, too, exist as reservoirs of feeling, out of awareness, that are evoked by associatively related stimuli. For example, a wedding may serve as a stimulus that evokes a response of such intensity that people cry. Here, too, they are out of control. Why do they cry at a happy event? In the midst of their pleasure they also feel uncomfortable because of the strength of the feeling that has been evoked.

While some experiences of loss of control are trivial others are very distressing. As we continue doing self-hypnosis regularly our Inner Guides will solve these discomforts as they do all others.

QUESTION:

Can a major problem stand in the way of being able to get "yes" and "no" finger signals? Will solving that problem allow me to focus on smaller questions that might make finger signal answers possible?

ANSWER:

No. If you are not yet getting finger signals it is because the prospect is so overwhelming that it cannot yet enter awareness. The mental apparatus is matching the false solution of finger paralysis. If you persist in attempting to get responses to "which finger signifies 'yes'?" and "which finger signifies 'no'?" you will eventually succeed because each time you try the prospect becomes slightly less overwhelming.

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. I will be out of the country for several days so there will be a slight delay before I can respond to you.

Cordially,

Judith M. Davis