

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of October 17, 2007

Dear Reader,

Sometimes we are of two minds about a situation. Perhaps we are torn about whether to indulge in something that we know isn't really best for us: "That cake isn't good for my diet" - "I'm going to have some anyway." A person may both hope for yet fear a promotion at work. He anticipates that it would be more interesting but the increased responsibility makes him nervous. Sometimes a person's generosity leads her to wish the best for a friend while envy causes her to hope she'll fail. These alternating contradictory thoughts and feelings take up time and energy and cause distress. Why do we have them?

They occur when opposing problems alternate. When we see a piece of cake we may remember how good cake tastes and want to eat some. We have the problem of satisfying that wish. But if we are trying to eat a healthy diet the cake also presents us with another problem: how to resist that temptation. Our solutions to these problems alternate: "I should" - "I shouldn't," because the problems alternate according to their urgency. The expectation of satisfying a desire for cake abates as one thinks of eating it. But this causes the problem of resisting this temptation to intensify. Back and forth go the solutions to the two problems: "I will" - "I won't." But we are not trapped in ambivalence indefinitely, What causes one solution to eventually prevail?

The ambivalence is a problem itself because it causes discomfort. Eventually solving this problem becomes the most urgent of the three. Whichever of the first two solutions ("I will" or "I won't") predominates at that moment is the one that is chosen.

Although the problem of deciding whether or not to eat a piece of cake may recur frequently each instance of it is time-limited and the solution chosen is determined by us. The problem of hoping yet fearing a promotion at work is more complex because, in addition to the three problems (wanting the promotion, fearing the promotion, and experiencing the discomfort of the ambivalence), other problems exist: discomfort due to the lack of control over whether an offer will be made and the uncertainty of whether and when this will occur. (These are two distinct problems. One has to do with powerlessness and the other with timing.)

The third example is complicated by the fact that it is ongoing. Cake and promotions are external events that occur intermittently. But although a friend is also an external entity, friendship is an internal phenomenon; it is a set of feelings about the friend. When good or bad things happen to a friend any feelings of pleasure or envy are heightened but a baseline feeling persists continuously. Hence the discomfort caused by any set of ambivalent feelings is constant.



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When ambivalence occurs it usually is the case that one of the choices is healthy and the other is not. Choosing to eat cake despite an attempt to diet may be healthy on certain occasions, as when one needs a special treat, and not on others. If a possible promotion represents a realistic progression in one's career path it would be unhealthy to fear it but if it would be too much too soon it would be unhealthy to desire it.

While eating cake or desiring a promotion may be healthy in certain circumstances one might at first think that feelings of envy are never healthy. But when they first begin, in childhood, they occur as the best way, at that time, of dealing with the discomfort of wanting something that someone else has. Feeling envy gives expression to that desire and discharges some of the tension. Yet it is an uncomfortable feeling itself. But, once begun, it becomes a habitual reaction to these situations.

Wouldn't it be nice to be free of ambivalent feelings? As you practice self-hypnosis your Inner Guide will solve the problems that have led to unhealthy choices and you will find that life will be much more comfortable.

QUESTION:

Does not every one have inner thoughts?

ANSWER:

No. Some people's Inner Guides work silently. Others' may communicate only by means of finger signals and/or automatic handwriting. Some people find that when their Inner Guide does communicate with inner thought it may sometimes be unclear who is having that thought: the person or their Inner Guide. When that happens it is helpful to use finger signals to ask one's Inner Guide to confirm the origin of the thought. You can ask, "Was that you?" and get a "yes" or "no" finger signal response.

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,

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