

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION
FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of November 14, 2007

Dear Reader,

When you first learned self-hypnosis you were told to do so in a quiet place alone in order to minimize external stimuli, such as noises and other interruptions, and then to focus on a spot on the wall in order to minimize the internal stimuli of your usual thoughts and feelings. You were told to think a thought about your Inner Guide before focusing on the spot to create a stimulus that would evoke your Inner Guide's attention. Because the spot is unchanging it loses its capacity to serve as a stimulus and at some point the stimulus to evoke the Inner Guide becomes the strongest stimulus in your mind. At this moment the Inner Guide assumes dominance in your body and remains so until a stronger stimulus supplants it. It is in this trance (self-hypnotic) state that your Inner Guide can work most effectively on your behalf.

Once you have learned this technique you no longer need to think a thought about your Inner Guide before focusing on the spot because your intention to go into trance provides an adequate stimulus. Your Inner Guide is aware and alert during all of your waking moments and is pleased to comply with your intention for it to take over in the trance state.

As you have gained experience with self-hypnosis many of you have found that you no longer need to do it in a quiet place alone. It is possible to go into trance in a variety of situations: while riding on public transportation, while waiting in lines or for an appointment, or even while swimming, as one of our readers does. It is easy to go into trance in situations that are boring or repetitive because they are understimulating just as focusing on a spot is.

In fact any activity that involves focusing on one thing provides an opportunity for entering trance: listening to music, watching TV, or reading. It is even possible to go into trance during a vigorous activity such as playing a musical instrument or running a race. (We call this kind of situation "alert trance" because during these times we don't feel the relaxation that occurs during the passive self-hypnotic state.) Interestingly, the more intense your focus the more likely you are to remain in trance because the less likely it is that you will notice other stimuli. A successful runner will be more focused during a race than during a practice because the outcome will matter more.

But doesn't an intense activity such as playing in a concert contain many stimuli? What about all those notes? In fact a musician performing in a concert has practiced those notes so many times that the playing has become repetitive.



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But even when learning a new piece a musician can enter trance because his focus is the most intense stimulus at that time. Indeed whenever we focus intensely on any one thing we enter a trance state, usually unwittingly, because that focus evokes a part of the mind that specifically engages in that activity. People often use self-hypnosis as it is typically practiced to evoke a very specific capability, such as dieting or refraining from smoking. So, too, the musician's focus elicits the specific ability of playing well. And whenever we focus on a specific activity we evoke our Inner Guide, whether we are thinking about it or not, because it provides an enhanced ability to do successfully whatever it is that we want to achieve at any given moment.

When you first learn how to do self-hypnosis it helps to be in a quiet place and to focus on a spot so that your wish for an Inner Guide to take over becomes the strongest stimulus in your mind. But as you gain confidence in this method you will be able to evoke your Inner Guide in other circumstances. You can evoke it successfully by asking it a question even in a noisy environment or when you are doing something else. It is your focus despite those conditions that elicits it.

Once you have brought your Inner Guide into existence it will assume dominance in your mind whenever you are in a state of understimulation. And whenever you focus intensely on something it will participate in that activity. You will usually not be aware of being in trance during these times but your Inner Guide is taking every opportunity to work on your behalf.

QUESTION:

Is there any way you can “dumb down” your newsletters? I absolutely can't imagine the amount of people that [have difficulty understanding them].

ANSWER:

Since receiving your request I have tried to write in a more user-friendly way. The last two issues have contained no technical terms. However with this issue I must again use terms such as “stimulus” and “understimulated” because I can't think of a way to avoid them and I do feel that today's topic is important. But I take your criticism to heart. I do want people to understand the Letters and I will continue to try to make them as clear as possible.

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