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## 2.4.2 Different Approaches to Dealing with Negative Emotions

Below, we examine various approaches to dealing with negative feelings and stressful experiences.

### **The Conditioned Approach**

Let's take a simplified look at how we usually deal with negative emotions and unpleasant sensations:

**We are conditioned to try to get rid of them as quickly as possible.**

When we feel tension, we massage or move the affected muscles to release it. We react in a similar way to unpleasant emotions - often trying to improve them by talking or thinking about them.

One common strategy is distraction: we turn to other activities, hoping the negative feelings won't return.

Another frequent pattern is compensation: we attempt to mask unpleasant inner experiences through external actions or achievements - such as excessive performance orientation, perfectionism, or the pursuit of recognition. While these compensatory behaviors may provide a temporary sense of control or worth, they cannot truly substitute for addressing the underlying need.

However, if there is a deeper psychodynamic cause behind the feelings, they will keep reappearing.

### **Healing Through Processing the Original Experience**

In my therapeutic work as a systemic therapist, it has become increasingly clear to me that change occurs less through reflection and thinking, but more through perception.

**Pure perception of inner processes leaves no room for illusions.**

The more a client is able to consciously perceive their internal processes, attitudes, feelings, and connections, the less the therapist has to intervene. One's own reality reveals itself through perception - and **nothing gives a more powerful impulse for change than the clear recognition of reality.**

In psychotherapy, there are various methods to support this process.

A classical approach involves guiding the client internally to the original experience - the point at which the problem first arose. For example, consistent perception of feelings can trigger an internal search process.

By asking "Where do I know this feeling from?" or "When did I first feel it in my life?" we consciously come into contact with the original experience.

Once this connection becomes conscious and the emotional bond is established, we can process the experience. This is called regressive processing.

## **Consistent Mindfulness and Acceptance in Meditation**

The first step in meditation is similar to the approach in regressive processing: We become consciously aware of the feeling and its energy and stop thinking about it.

### **Pure Perception Instead of Thinking**

Through meditation, we learn not to be guided by our usual conditioning.

**The first conditioning we must overcome is automatic thinking.**

As soon as we experience something that triggers a negative emotion, we unconsciously begin to analyze the situation mentally. We try to resolve the feeling through inner dialogue and reflection - but this often works only to a limited extent and prevents us from going deeper.

Who hasn't experienced lying awake at night, unable to sleep because of incessant thinking about an unpleasant situation? In such moments, it's especially difficult to let go of thoughts.

In meditation, the meditation object - for example, the perception of the breath - helps us anchor our consciousness in present reality. By focusing on a physical sensation, we withdraw from mental conditioning.

We don't let our awareness be taken over by reflective thinking or analytical problem-solving, but remain with the immediate experience of the present moment. This allows us to consciously feel and remain in the emotion as a pure physical sensation - whether as a physiological reaction or an energetic presence.

This allows us to experience the feeling as a pure bodily sensation - whether it's a physical reaction or an energetic movement - and remain present in that sensation

### **Overcoming the Defense Against Unpleasant Feelings**

**The next conditioning we must dissolve is our instinctive defense against everything unpleasant.**

We are used to wanting to get rid of unpleasant feelings as quickly as possible.

Through meditation, we learn to accept negative sensations and feelings as they are. As I explained in the previous chapter, consistent mindfulness in the present moment is the first step toward consciously experiencing the presence of God.

We do not try to change reality and do not allow ourselves to become distracted. Instead, we remain with our feelings and give them conscious attention.

To me, this is the true meaning of self-love: to perceive oneself consciously without being

controlled by negative feelings.

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