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Book overview „Psychotherapeutic Techniques for the Development of Basic Emotional Competencies“

Understanding, processing, and managing emotions form the foundation of a quality personal, social, and/or professional life. The book *Psychotherapeutic Techniques for the Development of Basic Emotional Competencies* offers a comprehensive and practical guide for improving emotional competencies, relying on the principles of the OLI integrative psychotherapeutic approach. The authors guide us through techniques that enable a deeper understanding of our own feelings, creating space for personal growth and development, better interpersonal relationships, and the achievement of (professional) goals.

In the first part of the book, the authors focus on two fundamental and interrelated abilities that constitute the foundation of human development and functioning: the ability to love and the ability to work. After defining these key dimensions, the authors elaborate on them through the lens of seven narrower basic emotional competencies, which represent essential tools for understanding, expressing, and regulating emotions:

1. object wholeness; 2. the ability to neutralize and mentalize; 3. object constancy; 4. ambivalence tolerance; 5. frustration tolerance; 6. willpower; and 7. initiative.

Before each emotional competence, the text offers a clear explanation of its significance, practical purpose, and role in everyday life. In a simple and accessible manner, the authors point out what a particular competence represents, how it can be developed, and, perhaps most importantly, what it can contribute to in personal, emotional, social, and professional contexts. This methodological approach not only facilitates the understanding of each individual competence but also provides a broader picture of how they interconnect and complement each other. In this way, the reader gains clarity about the importance of these emotional

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competencies, while the book becomes not only a manual for the development of emotional intelligence but also a guide for integrating these skills into everyday life.

The first competence addressed in the book is object wholeness, also known as the "glue" of our psyche, as it "binds" and maintains its balance and stability. This emotional competence refers to the ability to perceive oneself and others as complex and whole individuals, who contain both positive and negative traits. Understanding and accepting this idea enables us to free ourselves from a simplistic, black-and-white view of the world, where others are often seen either as idealized role models or as entirely negative figures – which is characteristic of the early stages of emotional development.

By developing object wholeness, we gain a deeper insight into human nature, allowing us to connect with others in a more mature and stable way. This competence plays a key role in building authentic and lasting interpersonal relationships because it encourages emotional flexibility, tolerance, and the ability to see all the nuances of human behavior. Through this ability, we make significant progress in personal development and a more qualitative understanding of ourselves and others. In this context, the authors provide a variety of techniques designed to stimulate and enhance the development of this emotional competence. These techniques include practical approaches and exercises that help individuals overcome one-sided and polarized views of themselves and others, as well as build a deeper understanding of the complexity of human relationships. By applying these methods, readers have the opportunity to develop emotional stability, self-confidence, and the ability to create mature and balanced interpersonal relationships.

Next, the book addresses object constancy, or the stabilizer of the psyche, which refers to the ability to keep our psyche stable. Constancy is also explained as maintaining stable and consistent personal boundaries, even in situations where they are tested or threatened. This skill involves a clear awareness of one's own needs, values, and limitations, as well as the ability to communicate and protect those boundaries in interpersonal relationships. Constancy enables an individual to remain consistent in relation to themselves and others, regardless of external pressures or emotional challenges. This includes the ability to say "no" when necessary, to recognize situations that are inconsistent with personal values, and to avoid taking responsibility for the feelings or actions of others. In this context, the techniques in the book are focused on strengthening inner stability, developing awareness of one's own needs and limitations, as well as effectively communicating boundaries in various life situations.

The abilities to neutralize and mentalize represent key aspects of emotional maturity, which the authors thoroughly elaborate on in the book. Through the neutralization ability, an individual maintains their thinking balanced and rational by controlling and reshaping their instinctive emotions. These emotional energies are transformed into neutral ones, which allow rational thinking, effective problem-solving, and the making of thoughtful decisions. The mentalization ability, on the other hand, represents the individual's capacity to think about their inner world, as well as the ability to understand that other people have their own beliefs, desires, and

intentions. This skill enables deeper connection with one's own emotions and thoughts, as well as with the emotional states of others, contributing to better empathy and the building of healthy interpersonal relationships. Mentalization is key to correctly interpreting social situations and making thoughtful decisions based on understanding the motives and behaviors of others.

In the further sections of the book, the authors explain the ambivalence tolerance. This essentially enables individuals to cope with emotional contradictions and uncertainties in their lives, as well as in interpersonal relationships. In other words, it is the ability to make a decision, to move towards something or away from something, while taking into account all aspects of our decision, as well as taking responsibility for them. The techniques the authors propose are based on gradual work to understand and accept internal contradictions, with the goal of increasing emotional flexibility, but also stability.

The frustration tolerance refers to our capacity to cope with unexpected life situations and/or unpleasant emotions. In fact, people with low tolerance for frustration face difficulties when encountering obstacles that stand in the way of achieving goals or completing tasks. Or more simply put, it refers to how quickly or slowly we "break" under emotional pressure. In this context, the authors recognize the importance of learning/practicing frustration tolerance as a key ability for emotional maturity and successfully confronting challenges. The book offers a range of practical techniques and exercises to help in the development of this ability. Through specific examples and tools, readers are guided on how to recognize their own reaction patterns to obstacles, how to increase their capacity to cope with unpleasant emotions, and how to build greater emotional flexibility. The exercises are designed to help gradually strengthen frustration tolerance, thereby improving other important life skills, such as problem-solving, adapting to change, and maintaining inner stability in difficult situations.

In the final part of the book, the authors focus on the will and initiative abilities. The will ability is reflected in the strength and readiness of an individual to make an effort and persevere in achieving their developmental goals, despite challenges and obstacles. A strong will enables us to take control over our lives, build healthy developmental habits, and defend ourselves from present temptations in order to achieve long-term goals. In this context, various techniques are presented that enable individuals to develop the ability to invest effort into achieving their goals and to become more resilient to temptations that may impede their progress. Through these techniques, readers can learn how to create long-term developmental habits and how to more effectively manage their desires and needs, directing energy toward achieving important life goals. On the other hand, the authors emphasize the significance of the initiative ability, describing it as the tendency to start something, to take action, the willingness to take the first step, but also the responsibility to follow through with it. The techniques presented in this section focus on encouraging an active approach to life's challenges, developing the ability to recognize and take the first steps, even when circumstances are uncertain. The techniques include work on self-awareness and identifying personal goals, as well as exercises that help in

building inner motivation, overcoming the fear of failure, and developing the courage to take action.

Throughout the entire book, the authors clearly emphasize the interconnectedness of all the above-mentioned competencies, pointing out that they are not isolated processes, but form a harmonious and integrated system that allows for emotional growth and development. The abilities of will, initiative, neutralization, mentalization, and other basic emotional competencies are closely related and support each other in the process of achieving emotional balance and maturity. Each of these techniques contributes to strengthening the others, thus creating a comprehensive framework for improving emotional skills. Developing these abilities enables individuals to effectively manage their emotions, build stable interpersonal relationships, and achieve personal goals. Through the integration of these techniques, individuals can achieve comprehensive and sustainable emotional development.

Literature

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