

# Transformation of Anxiety

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### Principle 1: Anxiety as a Way of Escape

The transformation of anxiety begins with a step that lays a wide foundation for change: expanding our emotional awareness of what is happening behind the scenes of the psyche whenever we experience anxiety.

Anxiety can take many forms—worry, stress, pressure, tension, obsessive thoughts, the need for control, and more. It can also drive unwanted behaviors such as losing composure in the middle of an argument, or even erupting into violence. The purpose of the first twelve principles in this process is to create the emotional ground from which we will later be able to practice and internalize tools for transforming anxiety.

The very first principle is this: **Anxiety as a way of escape.**

There is a reason this comes first. It is the very first thing worth considering whenever anxiety shows up: most likely, we are running away from something. Instead of facing that “something,” we get pulled into anxiety. And while it is not pleasant to be in anxiety, it covers up something else—something that, in that moment, feels even harder for us to face.

For this principle to be useful, it is important not to rush into asking: *What am I escaping from?* or *Which things am I avoiding when I’m anxious?* That part will come later. What matters now is the awareness alone. As we will see in depth later on, anxiety is a deeply emotional drama. And because it is a drama of the emotions, the tools for working with it must also come from the emotional realm, not just from logic and rational thinking.

At this stage, all we want to do is shift our attention, as much as possible, from the specific issue triggering our anxiety—whether it is worry, obsession, stress, tension, sleeplessness, or anything else—toward the recognition that what is really happening is an act of escape.

Remember, anxiety originally evolved as a survival tool, designed in part to help a person flee for their life. It has clear biological components: rapid heartbeat, dilated pupils, increased strength in the muscles due to a surge of blood flow. All of these were meant to prepare a person to fight or run away. This is also why, in some cases, people become aggressive or hostile when they are anxious—their biology activates the “attack mode.”

But here we are focusing not on attack, but on escape. When anxiety arises, it is a sign that, unconsciously, we are choosing to return again and again to this familiar territory. Each of us knows our own recurring anxieties. They are not random; they serve a purpose. They return because they help us build an inner habit of “where to escape.”

Inside these recurring anxieties, we feel trapped. We believe we cannot change the situation, and that adds to our distress. At the same time, we fail to notice that the whole drama—the inability to resolve the anxiety, the feeling of being stuck in it—is in fact a subtle manipulation of the psyche. It pulls us into giving excessive attention to the anxiety, precisely so that we will not go to some other place, one that the psyche feels unwilling or unable to face.

It is important to stress: this is an **automatic mechanism**. We are not choosing it consciously. It has its own emotional logic, and we cannot simply will it away or decide to act differently by reason alone. Even more, judging ourselves—telling ourselves that it is weak or wrong to avoid what needs facing—only makes matters worse. It does not help us move toward transformation.

For now, our task is to cultivate emotional awareness, as quietly as possible, within ourselves. We are simply teaching ourselves to relate differently to anxiety when it arrives. Along with the drama that always comes with it, we try to add this understanding: *this entire episode, this whole anxious experience, is in fact an act of escape.*

So when the next wave of anxiety appears, we can tell ourselves something like this: *“I recognize that I am anxious right now. It is not entirely in my control. I also recognize that this experience comes from a need to escape something—and at this moment, it does not matter what that something is.”*

The more we practice this way of thinking, the more we begin to see anxiety from a wider perspective, a little less rigidly. This is the first drop of change, and it will connect with the drops that follow in the coming principles. For now, our role is simply to tell ourselves the story a little differently. And just by doing that, we are already beginning—quietly, gently—the journey toward transformation. With time, practice, and the training of our psyche in new awareness and new tools, we will reach a different place: the place of true transformation of anxiety.

**For now, remember: you don’t need to solve the anxiety or discover what you are escaping from. All that is asked of you at this stage is to gently hold the awareness that anxiety itself is a form of escape. This small shift in perspective is already a seed of transformation. With each moment of practice, you are preparing the ground for the next steps, where new principles and tools will join together to expand your freedom.**