

wingwave

The power of flapping wings

Speaking in front of strangers, feeling uncomfortable in confined spaces - we all know

Situations in which we do not feel well. *wingwave* frees us from them.

Just wave away fears and negative feelings and heal our soul.

Our happiness editor Gertje Krumbholz did a self-experiment

U e all make annoying mistakes sometimes. We forget our key in the apartment, miss the train or don't remember the birthday of an old friend. In such moments we are angry and frustrated. A few days later, however, we often hardly remember it. The anger has long since faded. What happened? Our brain has processed and dealt with the feelings. That's why they don't bother us any more.

Now there are situations that our brain cannot process so well. Traumatic experiences or accidents, for example. The

psychologist Cora Besser-Siegmund compares such experiences with a box that

is suddenly delivered - without us having ordered it. We don't know what to do with it. It stays in the hallway and we always clean up around it. This is where wing-wave comes in. Like many other psychotherapeutic methods, the wingwave method has set itself the task of finding and clearing away such boxes. Researchers now believe that they are responsible for many of our fears. wing-wave uses two methods to do this: The problem is identified with the help of the myostatic test. And the feelings that trigger the stress are then dissolved by rapid waving movements in front of the eyes.

Brownies in the head

Together with her husband Harry Siegmund, Cora Besser-Siegmund has developed the wingwave-

S
h
e
e
x
p
l
a
i
n
s
t
o
m

e that every night our brain puts in order what we have experienced during the day. The psychologist compares this procedure to shopping in bulk: when we come home, we first put the bags in the hallway. From there, we sort the purchases later, away - everything neatly in its place. Our brain works in a similar way; everything we experience and the feelings associated with it are first stored in the limbic system - the hallway. Every night, our brain cleans up there. Emotions and experiences are compared with previous experiences and shifted to the cortex, the part of the brain where the mind is located. This sorting out happens in the so-called REM phases. The abbreviation stands for Rapid Eye Move-

"Emotions are important. They make our lives come alive. But they should also leave."

Psychologist Cora Besser-Siegmund developed the wingwave method together with her husband Harry Siegmund. I meet her high above the rooftops of Hamburg in her realm full of butterflies

Ms Besser-Siegmund, you simply wave away anxiety and stress?

That's one way of putting it. First we use the finger test to find out where the emotional knot is that triggers the stress. And then we untangle it: by waving, we dissolve the stressful feelings and then test again and again. The secret is the quick sequence. In doing so, we orient ourselves to the limbic sequence. We don't prescribe anything - the muscle test with the hand shows us where we have to go.

And how do you find out this order? We make certain statements, set linguistic triggers. The brain reacts to this, we notice this in the muscle reaction of the fingers. That's how we notice where things aren't running smoothly. We are, so to speak, overriding the otherwise mostly unconscious messages of the brain.

And which statements do you test?

There is a clear system behind this. We have developed so-called statement trees for different problems such as fear of flying, stress at work or somatic complaints. They contain everything that can be responsible for the fears. I test these statements one after the other or cross-check them. Often surprising correlations come to light.

Do you have an example of this?

When someone comes with a fear of flying, I test the baggage check, the security check, the boarding and finally the flight itself. Once we had a client who found out that the calm gliding of the plane caused the stress. There was a very dramatic story behind it. The woman was a film editor. She shared her office with a colleague who sat behind her. She could not see her. At one point she asked her colleague in the back, "How are we going to cut this scene?" The colleague did not answer. It turned out that she had died - in the presence of the client. So in this case, it was the silence of flying that was frightening. The client experienced it as a dead silence in the truest sense of the word. And you don't come across such concatenations in any training against fear of flying.

And when is a knot really untangled?

For most clients, the different types of

The most intense feelings and thoughts run through the mind and body. At first it may be fright or helplessness, but then memories of certain sounds or smells may come up. We "wave" one thing after the other and keep testing until everything is stable. The fact that the event was experienced so intensively and in so many ways is also the reason why the knot was formed. In addition, we are usually in strong emotional states of arousal during such experiences. As a result, the stimuli we receive are magnified in the brain. And that increases the danger that it is not able to dissolve this emotional tangle, this knot that arises, on its own.

What is the advantage of the wingwave method? Many psychotherapies, especially conversational methods, can be lengthy and also agonising. wingwave works much faster as a coaching method, much more targeted. We don't deal with the experiences in detail, we just try to explore the associated feelings one by one and "wave them away". This allows the knot to be broken and the experience to be sorted away.

Are there any side effects?

Those who really relieve emotional stress are exhausted afterwards. It's similar to shopping in bulk: while we're rushing from one shop to the next, we don't even notice how exhausting it is. It's only when we get home and are allowed to put the bags down that we don't jump for joy, but are totally exhausted. Because then we realise what's been going on, what we've been carrying around all this time. However, this "being caught up" only happens when we are safe. So a refugee is also completely exhausted when he arrives. He has the feeling that he can't walk a single step - but before that he may have walked hundreds of kilometres.

Cora Besser-Siegmund is co-founder of the wingwave method. Her latest book "Schnelle Hilfe bei Angst und Stress" (Weltbild-Verlag) has just been published. wingwave can also be used for self-coaching: Exercises and music are available at www.wingwave-shop.com.

ments because our eyes move back and forth quickly during them.

Tutoring for the brain

Is there a situation now that we cannot deal with?

If we are unable to cope, our brain's order system no longer functions. Often, this concerns experiences in which numerous strong emotions flow into us. There are so many of them that they become knotted into an inextricable ball. Our brain is not able to unravel this tangle and sort the individual feelings into the cortex - they remain in the limbic system, i.e. in the corridor. And this is exactly where the wingwave method comes in. Cora Besser-Siegmund gets her patients to remember these experiences and the emotions associated with them again. Meanwhile, she imitates the REM phases of sleep through waving movements. "This gets things moving," she explains. The tangle dissolves and the emotions can gradually be sorted away.

The "primal brain" triggers the alarm

"We psychologists live on half a second," says Cora Besser-Siegmund. Because that is exactly how long it takes for perceptual stimuli to be passed on from the limbic system to the cortex, the "thinking brain". The problem with this is that if the limbic system, also known as the "primal brain", assesses a situation as dangerous, it triggers a reaction - even before the stimulus reaches the mind. In this way, our primal brain practically overrides the thinking brain. This is why a spider-phobe leaves the room immediately when he sees a spider - his rational knowledge that the animals are not dangerous is of no use to him. But why does the limbic system sound the alarm at all? Either we are in a really dangerous situation. Then it protects us by triggering such instinctive reactions. Or

the situation is not dangerous - then we have virtually stumbled over the box in the hallway. Often it is related to an experience that happened so long ago that we hardly remember it.

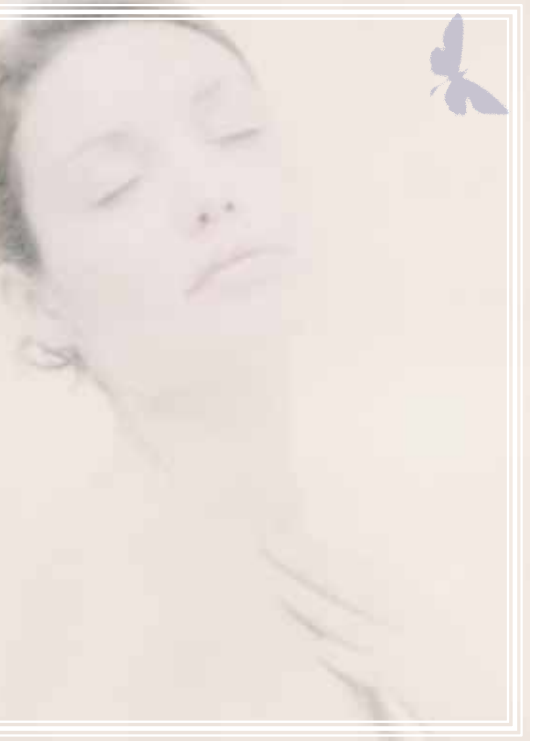
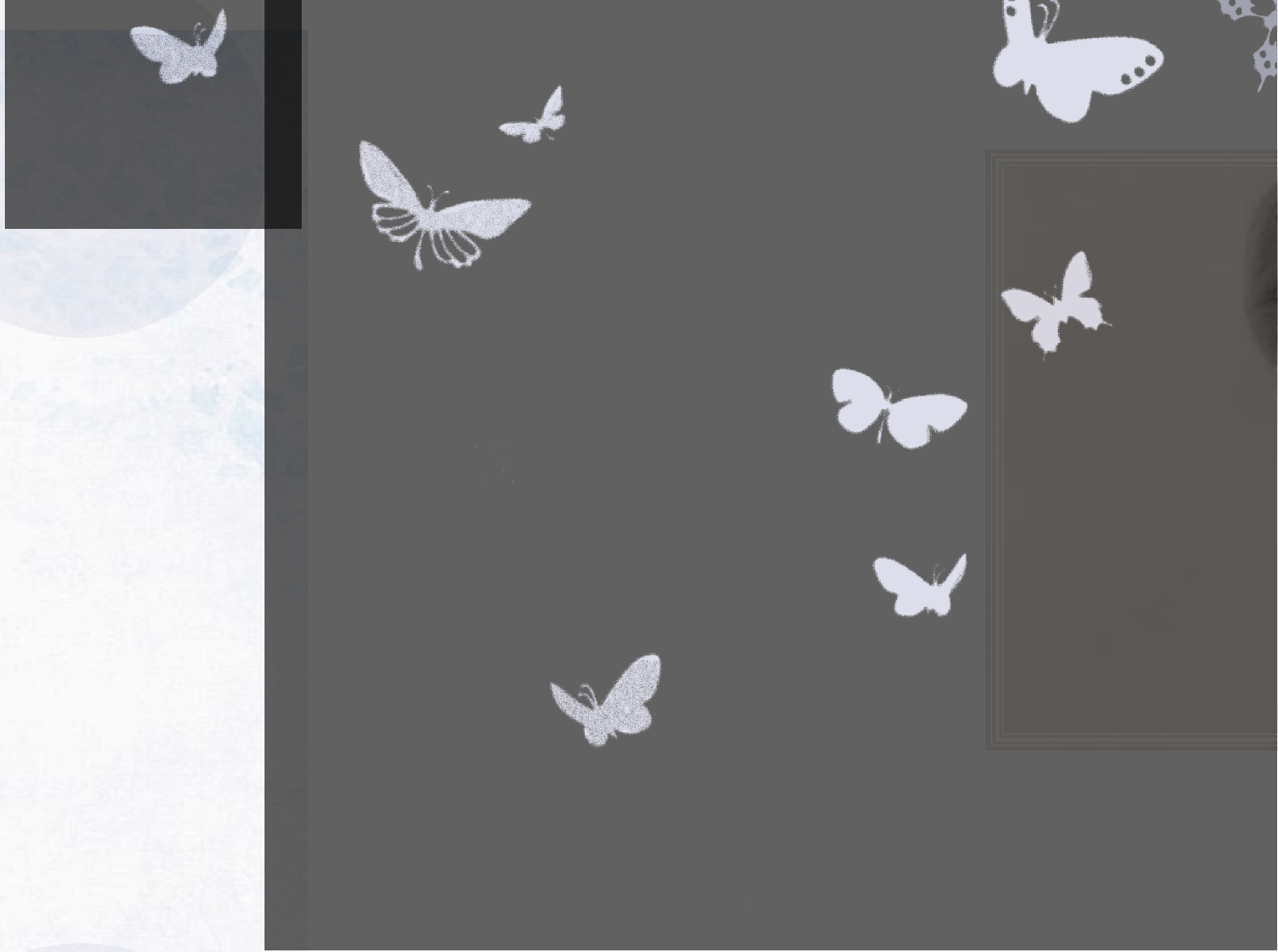
The maths game catches up with us

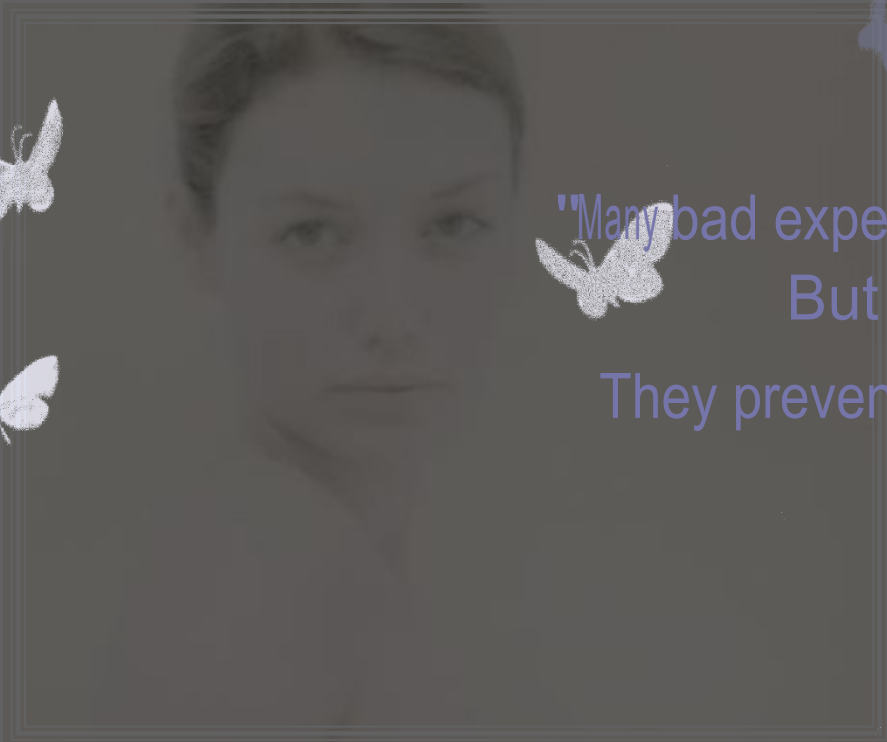
We all know the maths game or something similar from school. At the beginning, all the pupils stand. Then the teacher asks questions and only those who answer correctly are allowed to sit down. This is a great game for the children who are the first to sit down - and a torture for those who remain standing. Because then the limbic system assesses the situation as increasingly dangerous. The stress increases and the mind becomes more and more paralysed. Let us now imagine that a once bad maths student has become a young man. Every time he has to speak in front of a larger group, he gets stressed. Why? Because the limbic system whispers to him "You are the only one standing!" And there's the anxiety, because the maths game box is still in the way - he just doesn't know it. But how does a wing-wave coach decipher such connections? To understand this, I try it out myself.

The wonder of our hands

"The pizza is too hot to sweep." Excuse me? That's the sentence you want me to say and thumb and

Hold the index finger firmly together. So tight that they form a ring that Cora Besser-Siegmund cannot pull apart. I say this strange sentence - and when she pulls, my fingers open. I get a new instruction: "The pizza is too hot to eat", I am now supposed to say. Again the therapist pulls on my fingers - this time they don't come apart. The fact that I counteract with different strength is due to the fact that one of the sentences contains a pattern interruption. The brain reacts to this and we can prove this by the reaction of the hand over the fingers. Why here in particular? Cora Besser-Siegmund shows me a schematic representation of the area of the cerebrum where our fine motor skills are controlled. The area responsible for controlling the hands takes up a disproportionately large amount of space in contrast to that which controls other parts of the body. "It's no wonder," she explains. "Because no other living being can control its hands so sensitively and use them in so many different ways as humans." And that is why the muscle test on the hand, the so-called myostatic test, is so effective. The therapist uses it to test how I react to certain statements. If the ring on my fingers stays closed when she pulls, it shows that there are no problems. If she can close the ring however, this indicates that





"Many bad experiences we can cope with. But some leave traces. They prevent us from running round."

It seems unreal. Today I have one of those unloved presentations coming up. In the morning editorial conference I have to give a short talk on a current medical topic. Astonished, I realise that I slept well. In the underground, I feel inside myself, look for the familiar stomach flutter, the palpitations. Nothing.

I'm not comfortable with the thought of having to present right away. But I am more relaxed. I distrust this new feeling, question it. But it remains. Even when the time really comes. Of course, I am not completely calm. A little of the familiar tingling in the stomach area is still there. But I am nowhere near as excited as usual. When I have finished, I feel somehow free. Elated. Like a butterfly? Maybe a little.

TEXT GERTJE KRUMBHOLZ PHOTO CORBIS BESSER-SIEGMUND

she is on the right track with her statement - that something is wrong here. By systematically testing different statements, she works her way further and further towards the experience that triggers the stress.

Simply "wave away" stress

"You are stressed to the max" - that is the next phrase we try out. Because when Ms Besser-Siegmund asks me what kind of problem we could "wave away", I have two concerns: the feeling of being permanently under stress and the discomfort of speaking in front of groups. When I read this sentence now, she can't pull my fingers apart. I am surprised. "Would I be If I were a talk therapist, I would start here," she says, "but wingwave works differently. If something tests strongly, I don't go into it at all. Because the reaction of her hand shows me: whatever it is - you can cope with it. We don't dwell on the things that man can cope with." I didn't expect it - but apparently I can handle the stress more than I thought I could. So let's move on to the next topic. I imagine a typical lecture situation. And this reveals another advantage of this method: with wingwave, the therapists don't need to know the whole life story of their patients. Excruciating experiences

se do not need to be discussed. It is enough to imagine them. Meanwhile, my mind is on a stressful lecture situation. One after the other Cora tests Better-Siegmund now statements: "It's about the number of people" - I counter. "It's about your feelings" - again my fingers remain closed. Only when it's about the feelings of others does she pull it apart. About disappointment. I am supposed to imagine how it feels when other people are disappointed in me. And now she begins to wave. Again and again she moves her hand quickly in front of my face.

and back. I try to follow their movements with my eyes.

difficult. Later, the psychologist explains to me that this is because we cannot move our eyeballs well when we are stressed. In between, she makes larger, sweeping movements, then smaller ones again. After waving, she tests again. And again my fingers come apart. So the matter is not yet settled. It turns out that in early adulthood I had badly deceived someone. When we have also waved away the associated feeling, she tests again. This time I counter. I can hardly believe it. That was it? No more stress during presentations? The next morning the whole

their movements. At the beginning I find it

How does a session work?

After you have described the problem, the finger test and the statement trees are used to determine which experience could be the cause. The emotions associated with this are "waved away" one by one. Afterwards there is an offer to talk.

How many sessions do I need?

Three to five. After the third session there should be a significant improvement.

What does coaching cost?

Prices vary slightly, usually a session costs around 150 euros.

Where can I find trained wingwave therapists? You can find a coach near you and more information about the method at www.wingwave.com.