Sophrology

Dynamique
Relaxation
And so
much more...

A Guide to
Practical Health
and Wellbeing
Overview

Sophrology is a bodily approach to wellbeing: it calls upon breathing exercises, concentration, movement and the sound of one’s voice.

Developed techniques originate from a combination of Western and Eastern influences by a Spanish neuro-psychiatrist in the 60’s.

Summary

Chapter 1: First Point of Contact
Chapter 2: One Thing Leads To Another
Chapter 3: A Bespoke Protocol
Chapter 4: Hypnosis, Sophrology And Mindfulness

Told through a patient’s story, this booklet aims to demystify and clarify the concept of Sophrology, while answering some of the questions you might have, along with other frequently asked questions I find myself answering within the framework of my everyday practice.

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Chapter 1: First Point of Contact

Christian attends a session on Initiation to Sophrology which I deliver as part of his firm’s well-being programme.

The firm offers its employees a range of complementary care including Osteopathy and Sophrology, in order to improve their wellbeing and psychosocial quality of life.

Attending the session, held in a meeting room, are 12 employees - including Christian.

A practical demonstration is always worth a thousand words and so, before proffering any information, I ask the participants to take a few moments to pause and gather themselves, so that they may reach in and develop an awareness of their body.

“Allow yourselves to feel at ease, sitting comfortably on your chair, feet on the ground, hands on your lap, with a straight back and open shoulders. Breathe deeply, let your eyes close and focus your attention on the points of contact between your body and the chair. Take a moment to readjust your posture maybe, feel an awareness of your body, take a few deep breaths... and when you are ready, in your own time, open your eyes”.

The atmosphere in the room is calmer, faces are already more relaxed.

From the very outset, a practical introduction of this nature helps lift the lid on the complex meaning of Sophrology.
Immediately, the awareness of one’s body develops — that same body that is viewed everyday in the mirror with an instinctive critical gaze, seen more often as an opponent than an ally.

Indeed, above all, Sophrology helps channel and embrace the presence of one’s body as a whole, one could say it helps “give body” to one’s body.

To explain Sophrology in simple and user-friendly terms.

Sophrology provides means and strategies that are simple, easily accessible, and adaptable in all circumstances. It offers solutions to respond positively to unexpected everyday situations.

In the 60s, a Spanish neuro-psychiatrist, Doctor A. CAYCEDO, created Sophrology - both as a word and a method.

Its etymology (SOS = harmony, PHREN = conscience, LOGOS = discourse) can be translated as harmonious conscience. Without judgement or bias, it is referred to in philosophy as a phenomenological existential discipline.

Sophrology is not a psychotherapy: Its practice necessitates no designated equipment (no mat or special clothing…), no specific physical or mental aptitudes.

We follow up with a second technique, a little more in-depth this time, still established according to a set routine, this time standing up. Sophrology is adaptable.

Within a few moments, the participants find their relaxation rhythm, they master their breathing, and each in their own way, they begin to perceive their body more positively.

The session closes on the participants sharing their experiences and asking any questions that might arise.

Christian, a gentle forty year-old man, says that, against all expectations, the tensions in his neck have disappeared.

According to the OMS, France ranks third in the list of countries with the highest number of work-related cases of depression. Stress is a concern for 4 out of 10 employees.

According to the American Institute of Stress, stress is responsible for 75% to 90% of medical appointments, and 60 to 80% of work-related accidents.

Source: http://www.stress.eu.com
Chapter 2: One Thing Leads to Another

Intrigued by this unexpected relief of tension in his neck, Christian is curious to hear about the particulars of Sophrology.

Sophrology first came about within the field of medicine: Doctor A. CAYCEDO hoped to autonomise his patients rather than simply treat them with passive methods like the prescription of medication.

The most frequent motivation for using Sophrology is as a tool to remedy stress.

Negative stress can indeed be considered a modern-day evil, present in every course of life.

It can be:

- a source of discomfort, physical and/or mental;
- a daily occurrence;
- present at every age;
- individual and/or collective.

Some figures relating to stress:

- 3 principal factors of negative stress: work, relationships, and money;
- 3 complaints linked to stress: sleep disruption, musculoskeletal disorders, and anxiety;
- 1/20 of the population in the UK suffers from “general anxiety disorder”

Source: http://www.nhs.uk

The positive effects of Sophrology during the course of its practice are measured through self-evaluation, with each participant asked to measure their stress levels – pre and post session.

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 the maximum), Christian estimates a drop from 7 to 4 after 20 minutes of practice.

Why turn to Sophrology?

Sophrology inscribes itself in the pursuit of health, from feeling better to actually being well. Used in anaesthesia and inflammatory diseases for instance, Sophrology can also be seen as a method to optimise health.

Sophrology is a solution for success where certain specific projects and occasions are concerned, used as a proactive method.

It is frequently used in situations such as:

- The desire to conceive; along with preparing for birth, right up to post-partum. Sophrology stands as a crucial instrument in attaining this goal;
- Preparing for challenges at any age; from the “going to school” tummy ache of youth to the anxiety of public speaking. Sophrology is swift to provide one with the faculties necessary for success;
- The world of sport: tennis player Yannick Noah, golfer Sergio Garcia, numerous other sports players or indeed entire teams rely on Sophrology techniques in the pursuit of their objectives.
Through its large spectrum of techniques, Sophrology allows one to deploy one’s inner potential, in light of one’s core values and capacities.

It is equally a strategy for personal development.

We pursue our journey of discovery with a technique that allows one to identify and eliminate the tensions in our body.

‘Breathing out through your mouth; breathing in through your nose; hold your breath; then contract your entire body and only stop when you start to feel uncomfortable; then release your breath and relax your entire body... This exercise is repeated 3 times. Through corporal cleansing, it helps one experience pleasant sensations.’

Chapter 3: A Bespoke Protocol

Sophrology is a structured method based on fundamental principles. Its limits are devised according to a protocol adapted to each patient’s needs and availabilities.

Whether calling upon a flash technique or a 45-minute session, the patient disposes of tools that can be called upon whenever they are required:

Rugby player Jonny Wilkinson uses a hand gesture to regain calm and confidence when the time comes for him to kick the ball between the two posts.

Like with every discipline, practice and perseverance are crucial.

All positive action aimed at one’s consciousness has repercussions on the being’s psyche.

The following technique activates, calms, or harmonises our vitality by synchronising our concentration and our natural breathing patterns.

Christian experiences a change in temperature from the nape of his neck down to his shoulders, like a pleasant current

First fundamental principle of Sophrology
The demonstrable effect it has on Christian both within and without is called ‘phenomenon’.

It accompanies the patient and measures their progress according to the principles of objective reality and the corporeal schema as a real-life experience.

The 3 key techniques used allow for the identification and elimination of tension, enabling one to attain a state of relaxation, concentration, and control over one’s body, both physically and mentally.

Before bringing the introductory session to a close, Christian raises a hand to ask a question:

What is the difference between hypnosis, mindfulness and Sophrology?

Chapter 4: Hypnosis, Sophrology and Mindfulness

Chronologically, hypnosis is the most ancient of practices, going back to Ancient Greece - with Hypnos, the God of Sleep. Hypnosis is practiced at a level of consciousness that approaches sleep, after induction and deepening.

Sophrology is a dynamic corporal method, developed in the 1960s. Its practice is tridimensional: we experience our presence and can project the idea of ourselves into the future or the past, as well as the here and now.

In 1975 in the United States, the Science of Mindfulness made its appearance. It was a technique advocated by Jon Kabat-Zinn. Based on Buddhist meditation, mindfulness owes more to observation and meditation about awareness.

Christian returned with another question.

Second fundamental principles of Sophrology
Third fundamental principles of Sophrology

Maybe you have one too. If so, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

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