

The client organisation and context: Euromonitor

Euromonitor international is the world's leading independent provider of strategic market research. They employ analysts and market researchers from around the world and their headquarters is in London. The employees are relatively young, dynamic, and driven. As consultants, they often have to meet sales target, run large, data driven projects.

Why and how Sophrology was used

Goals of the programme:

This programme was designed to introduce Sophrology as part of an Employee Well Being Programme launched by the HR department a year ago. Its aim was to bring relaxation and energy to a voluntary group of participants and help them discover Sophrology and Mindfulness over a series of lunchtime sessions.

These sessions:

- Introduced Sophrology key techniques around breathing, visualisation, mind calming, gentle movements and the principles behind them
- Provided participants with experience of the practice and the impact it can have on their energy levels
- Aimed to create a sense of inner calm
- Introduced home practice exercises to increase the impact

Through a brief discussion after each session, new sessions were introduced every week to meet some of their needs and reinforce positive effects.

High-level overview of the programme:

The course took place in a large meeting room in the Farringdon office; with weekly 90-minute sessions, delivered over 8 weeks.

Impact

Summary of evaluation feedback from participants, survey result highlights and observations:

WHAT WAS IT THAT INTERESTED PEOPLE TO SIGN-UP?

Meditation and mindfulness have generated a lot of interest over the last few years. Most participants knew about it but were interested in learning more and experiencing it. Many were looking for a personal development tool: learning how to enjoy the 'here and now' and find ways to calm themselves down, have better control over their emotions.

In work situations, it could mean taking things too personally and overreacting. Apps are very popular but very few were able to stick to a regular practice. Some had problems with sleep, especially with young children or felt tired because of long commuting hours.

HOW MUCH TIME WAS SPENT PRACTICING BETWEEN SESSIONS:

Most participants practiced between sessions on average around three times per week.

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF THIS 8 WEEK PROGRAMME?

Participants reported in an online survey:

- Better sleep and less stress on the day of the session - like having a restorative nap.
- Increased awareness of the 'here and now', their environment (the air, the light, nature,...)
- Increased empathy for others – colleagues, friends or family
- Reduced stress levels, being more effective at work
- Gaining tools to control stress (vs just thinking about your stress)

PARTICIPANT QUOTES:

'The visualisation exercises have been very positive and effective for me; in terms of letting my imagination run free, and tying this with real physical sensations. Impressive how powerful the mind / imagination is'

'It is an opportunity to take a break from a busy lifestyle to focus on myself, learn new techniques to help with sleep/stress and focus on one thing at a time rather than doing the usual multitasking'

'I'm more aware of my stress levels.'

'Mindfulness helps me being more appreciative and to be in the present. This will be a crucial skill to have not only during my pregnancy, but in general throughout my life'

'I realise how much better I feel afterwards and how much better I sleep when I practice.'

'Probably I'm even more aware of every moment. I am more aware of the greenery around me, the sunshine on my face or just more empathetic when speaking to people.'

Learning and recommendations for the future

There is a need for Sophrology in the corporate world. There is definitively a need, as the positive feedback demonstrated and the large sign up. The trick is to maintain a large group of participants as it needs regular practice to make a difference.

Stress management was the benefit that attracted people. But the conversation with participants was more around their personal development, increasing their energy levels. Many discussed with me development courses they attended where sophrology could be used/ adapted to.

A power nap - resource yourself. These sessions have a massive impact on the participants' energy levels during the day. In a fast-paced city, where employees have long commuting and working time, it could be a real benefit to communicate.

Visualization power. A key technique that fits very well in the office environment. Being able to escape, go back to a nice, familiar place was an excellent tool to reduce their stress.

Stress impact on the body We are not aware that stress lives as much in the body as in our mind. We constantly try to reduce it with rational, thought-focused activities. It was one of the key points: listen to your body, act on it to heal the mind.

How to make corporate sessions successful?

- Select a warm, spacious, not too 'corporate' room, with no central table and natural light. It will signal a different mindset, different type of discussions among colleagues
- Lunch time is easy for participants but a morning session could be more beneficial
- Cater for different participants needs. Some participants clearly are exploring deeper issues, looking for a journey inside themselves, to impact their personal relationships...while others want a quick fix, an energy boost
- Integrate your initiative into an Employee programme or HR plan. Many companies offer CBT, yoga, Pilates and massage. Sophrology is just another tool to improve employees' wellbeing

For more information, contact Vanessa Mayneris at vanessa.mayneris@icloud.com