

# The Alternative

Meet the people at the cutting edge of complementary health

I am walking along a beach in Goa as the sun beats down and Dominique Antiglio whispers soothing words into my ear. Except I'm not. I am actually in a Mayfair consulting-room with views across rooftops, which I'd see if my eyes weren't closed. But such is the power of visualisation under the sophrologist Antiglio, 37, that you can soon imagine yourself anywhere. Gone is that pit-of-the-stomach anxiety, replaced by a sense of deep relaxation – or “dynamic

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relaxation” – induced by breathing exercises, gentle bodywork and the aforementioned visualisation.

That is sophrology pretty much in a nutshell. Put crudely, it is like a souped-up form of stress management. “It is so adaptable and everyone can do it, but it is particularly suited to people who find it difficult to switch off,” says Antiglio.

I certainly can vouch for it: after a session I would experience a calmness rare in my life, and over the weeks felt more positive, less stressed and sharper somehow. I was also left wondering why something so simple isn't available on the NHS. If Antiglio had her way it would be. In her native Switzerland sophrology is routinely offered to women prior to labour and to children overwhelmed by exams and adolescence. Which is how she came to it, aged 15. She went on to work as an osteopath but 12 years ago decided to practise professionally what she had been doing for herself every day for 20-odd years. “I turned my own life around in five sessions of sophrology,” she says. “I became passionate about it. I think it should be taught in schools.” Fret not: she is on to it, having already run sessions in one London academy.



**DOMINIQUE ANTIGLIO**  
Sophrologist

#### What is it?

A blend of Eastern and Western philosophies and practices, sophrology draws on various relaxation techniques to bring harmony to the mind and body. It has been popular in France and Switzerland in particular, for 50 years. To date there are only about 30 practitioners in this country, though their number is growing.

#### What is it good for?

It can help clients overcome specific obstacles, such as an

interview, but also stress and its symptoms, such as insomnia. Many Frenchwomen wouldn't even contemplate childbirth without it.

#### How does it work?

A typical session might combine breathing exercises, visualisation and gentle bodywork to acknowledge and let go of tension and negative emotions. The idea is that these can be re-enacted – say in the loo at work – when you're feeling overwhelmed, angry, unfocused or whatever.

Antiglio also makes digital recordings of sessions for clients to listen to at home. These are great for anyone who's ever struggled to meditate. “The more you practise, the more it becomes part of your life,” she says.

#### Who's a believer?

Burnt-out executives, sports people, mothers-to-be. One large food company has called on Antiglio's services, as has a karate club. ●  
£95 for an hour-long session; be-sophro.co.uk