

## **Get rid of tensions with Sophrology**

*Adapted to our time and result-oriented society, this particular form of relaxation acts on body and mind. It offers exercises that are easy to do at any time during the day to take the pressure down.*

We all go through periods of stress during which we would love to know how to relax and not let our mind go wild. Sophrology is such a relaxation technique. It mixes breathing and concentration exercises, as well as Eastern techniques of meditation and yoga. It helps better manage your environment through the body as a gateway to the mind. It works on the here and now and helps feel stronger and have more autonomy. You learn to set aside brooding and negative thoughts, not to react but to choose and take a step back to adapt your behaviour. We have all heard about it but we usually do not know how it works. Specialists explain it all.

### **Dr Martine Orlewski, GP, Sophrologist and Director of the Languedoc School of Sophrology**

**Can anyone practice Sophrology?** Sophrology was created by a neuropsychiatrist, Alfonso Caycedo, as a healing therapy; then he realised how beneficial it was for prevention as well. Children as well as elderly people can do it. The only contraindication: when the consciousness is affected, in pathological cases dealt with by psychiatry.

**Why go to a Sophrologist?** For pain management (headaches, stomach aches, breathing difficulties, as a complement to a medical treatment), psychosomatic troubles (colitis, skin affections, etc.), birth preparation, surgery preparation, sleep disorders, eating disorders, addictions and anything linked to stress.

**How to choose a good Sophrologist?** Do ask which school they went to, for how long (no less than 2 years). It is a technique that uses the body to balance the mind. So, if they talk about the cosmos, this is not it!

### **To chill out – how to relax under any circumstances – Pilar Lopez, Sophrologist, specialised in stress management**

When tensions build up, the body is like a glass, it fills up completely until it overflows. You explode or implode! Sophrology teaches you how to empty your glass regularly to avoid “overflowing” and how to become more resilient. You can repeat the exercises three times a day so that they become automatic.

#### **Get rid of tensions**

In general, people do not dare express their stress; they tend to turn the accumulated tension against themselves, they become ill. Express your anger rather than directing it at yourself, but on a symbolic level: taking a cushion and throwing it against a wall. The success of the exercise is in synchronising the breathing and the throwing. Put all your worries in the cushion. Take a deep breath bringing the cushion near you, hold your breath and feel how strong you are. Throw the cushion while breathing out. Very liberating!

#### **Increase your resilience**

Breathe calmly by breathing out for a little longer. Imagine you are breathing through a straw, breathe in on one count, breathe out on 2 counts, breathe in on 2 counts, breathe out on 3, etc. as far as you can go. Use the time during the day when you are walking: breathe in on one step, breathe out on 2 steps, breathe in on 2 steps, breathe out on 3 steps, etc. When you can do it, let go. Imagine a time that was stressful and “zoom out” of it. Imagine you are seeing it from farther and farther away until everyone, including you, become as small as ants. This enables to distinguish what we see from what we feel. From farther away, we don’t feel anymore. And in stress, it is often the physical sensation that rules the mental discomfort.

### **Get rid of the negative**

Get rid of annoying thoughts. Sitting down, with your eyes closed, each time you breathe out, let go of all the negative in your body breathing longer and using an “expulsion” image: for instance, smoke coming out of your body or a sponge you are squeezing.

### **To relax – Be at peace with your body - Cindy Chapelle – Sophrologist**

Stress often creates muscular tensions and stiffness. Sophrology can help reduce them, they may even completely disappear but there is no “miracle” exercise. The technique has to be repeated as often as possible to work. 15 minutes, twice a week is ideal. If there is pain, it is essential to take medical advice to check that there is no illness.

#### **Become aware of your body again**

This is a compulsory starting point. For this, listen to your breathing. Sit down, close your eyes, put one hand on your stomach, one on your chest and try to find the rhythm of your breathing, the parts of your body that are moving: the abdomen? The upper body? Follow the air. Do this for 3 minutes.

#### **Learn to relax**

Sitting down, eyes closed, create a bubble around you, relax your muscles. Start with your face, eyes, unclench your jaw, etc. Go from head to toe with 3 breathings for each area. Go to your neck, shoulders, chest, abdomen, lower back, pelvis, legs and feet. Each time you relax, become aware of the shape and volume of the relaxed area. Once you have successfully relaxed, try to link with it the image of a peaceful place so that the mind relaxes too.

#### **Replace discomfort by peacefulness**

Focus on your discomfort and your need to appease it. Maybe you need warmth or coolness or lightness... Sitting down, with your eyes closed, link this need with an image or a word (snow if you need cold). Breathing, bring this feeling to the discomfort zone, nearer at each breathing, with an abdominal breathing, breathing in through the nose while the belly goes up, breathing out through the mouth while the belly goes down.

### **To live better with emotions – improve your self-confidence – Pascal Gautier, Psychologist, Sophrologist.**

Sophrology is more than an emotion management tool, it is a self knowledge tool. Working on our emotions can bring out some vulnerability, it is better to be guided first by a Sophrologist. But you can try a few simple exercises, especially relaxation, that helps to keep a positive relationships with your emotions and regain self-confidence.

#### **Seize the day**

Use all those waiting times that usually make you feel frustrated (like traffic jams, a computer that is slow to start, etc.) to work on your ability to enjoy the present moment. In that given, and not wasted, time, relax, let all your face muscles relax, your neck, shoulders, become aware of your body’s points of contact. Reconnecting with the present moment prevents anxious expectations and nostalgic regrets. You are here and well.

#### **Practice dynamic relaxation**

Synchronise your relaxation moments with your breathing. Standing up or sitting down, breathe in, hold and at the same time shake your shoulders. Then breathe out loudly and let go. Alternate with a calm movement: breathing freely, turn your head from left to right, paying attention to your movements and

observing what body sensations these movements are producing. Then concentrate on a neutral object, an object that does not give you much to think about, like a pebble. Concentrate completely only on this object for 2 minutes. Do these exercises regularly, they develop concentration and self-awareness.

### **Release tensions**

Imagine you are facing a negative emotion. Try for instance anger. Notice how clenched your jaw is, your fists closed and relax them. This will help you relax more everyday.

### **They tried, this is how they felt**

#### ***Distressed***

##### ***Marie, 30, graphic designer, Paris***

I am “naturally” stressed! A friend offered me to come with her to a Sophrologist specialised in stress management. I did 6 group sessions. I thought I was hearing things I already knew. But to have them showed to me made all the difference, I could put them into practice. For “nerves” and anxiety, I still use it, quite automatically.

#### ***Liberated***

##### ***Sylvie, 50, biologist, Lyon***

I went through a period where I had no energy, I felt I was running on empty. I saw doctors, osteopaths, nothing worked. My sister-in-law, who goes to a Sophrologist, advised me to try. It liberated me. It reconnected mind and body in just a few sessions. And I was able to move on!

#### ***Very relaxed***

##### ***Elia, 35, architect, La Rochelle***

I work a lot. I wanted some time to breathe. But no sport, more something to relax and learn. I heard about Sophrology. I went to a few sessions, it was fairly hypnotic, very relaxing. I felt I was letting go. But it was hard to work right afterwards. I was still drifting a bit.

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