

Losing weight with Sophrology – an interview with Gilles Pentecote, Sophrologist

To help someone who wants to change their relationship to food in order to lose weight, using Sophrology, work at several levels, at the same time or one after the other: the sense of taste, feelings linked to food (feeling hungry, full, feeling like having something), the psychological aspect to understand the emotional hunger and be able to manage them better and self-esteem where you find body awareness, self-image and self-confidence. We can start with the latter since, in all behaviour change, working on motivation is essential. It can be approached during the initial consultation but also more deeply grounded into body and emotional feelings in a sophronisation.

The most common goals are: feeling fitter, having a better sex life, having a child in better conditions, dressing up more easily, taking less medication, being free from food cravings, feeling more at ease in society, feeling lighter, attracting men (or women)'s attention, having a better self image, etc. Once objectives are set, the Sophrologist can use them in intra-sophronic activation, to “ground” the objective in body and heart. It is more effective than if it stays at mind level.

When you do not feel anymore the difference between hunger and craving, if the stomach is full or not, when you cannot bear real hunger anymore, you are cut from your body. Sophrology can breach the gap, while taking into account emotional difficulties. Thanks to body work on abdominal breathing after eating, you know when you are full. Through visualisation, you will try and become aware again of the difference between feeling like eating and being really hungry. Rediscovering the pleasure of tasting and eating can be done with exercises on mindfulness of the taste (sophronisation while eating!), the idea is being more attached to quality than to quantity and to develop your intuitive way of eating.

The problem of cognitive restriction is that it makes people feel guilty each time they do not eat the way they had decided to. So the objective is to get rid of the “I have to, I should, I should have...”. Many studies have clearly shown that eating less sugar or less fat, at breakfast or not, with or without sweetener, in 2, 3 or 4 meals, etc. has no effect on weight. In fact, no eating rule has proven its worth. The objective is extra simple: be free to eat what you want, when you are hungry, and be able to stop when you are not hungry anymore. Extra simple but not easy to do when you have done otherwise for years.... It does not mean controlling your hunger but accepting the sensations and welcoming them like a friend.

When stress is the source of emotional cravings, we can work for instance visualising situations when the cravings appear: coffee breaks, in the car, on the phone, looking at your fridge, sitting down on the couch, watching TV, meeting a friend, shopping... Visualising these situations in a state of relaxation, we can imagine alternative behaviours. Eating slowing, fully mindful of all sensations, memories, emotions, images and thoughts. Eating mindfully food we like brings pleasure and comfort and if eaten slowly we often eat less. Being aware of the pleasure helps feed the heart.

Working on self-esteem is also essential. Sophrology can do that in different ways: accepting your own feelings, being at peace with your self-image, developing self-love and auto-compassion, working on values. Accepting parts of your body you hate can be a step towards feeling in harmony with your body. Feeling lighter in mind could be a way to become lighter in body.

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