

# BODY + MIND = 1

## Facing Anxiety and Pain in a Group using Sophrology

Rosado Figuerola, Silvia; Villoria Sistach, Begoña; Flores Martinez, Paz

Institut de Neuropsiquiatria i Adiccions- INAD – IMIM, Parc de Salut Mar de Barcelona

### Introduction

As we already know, body and mind are linked. There is a proven relationship between anxiety and pain, and both can be very limiting. Regarding our experience in the Anxiety Unit in Hospital del Mar in Barcelona, many users that suffer from pain and anxiety do not get better with the conventional relaxation techniques.

The Group Therapy is a very suitable environment to treat these disorders, since the patient feels included in a group of people with the same pathology, at the same time as he can benefit from other resources and experiences. Nowadays, in Catalonia (Spain), nurses are becoming more and more active in this field.

Sophrology pretends to study the consciousness in balance, using techniques of relaxation and imagination as a means for the development of well-being, giving special emphasis to corporality, and the integration of the body schema, leading to the consolidation of the mind-body balance, improving the relationship with oneself and providing greater confidence in life.



### Aims

- Become aware of body tensions and unhelpful thoughts
- Learn how to relax body and mind
- Learn new strategies to cope with anxiety and pain
- Evaluate the users satisfaction about the nurse group therapy
- Evaluate the users satisfaction about Sophrology techniques

### Method

This is a longitudinal pilot study with a single treatment group, with a sample of 40 women with diagnosis of anxiety and fibromyalgia.

Four groups have been conducted by the nurse. All the women were recruited from the Anxiety Unit and the Fibromyalgia Unit in Hospital del Mar, Barcelona.

It is a closed semistructured group of 6-10 women, with a total of 8 sessions of 1 hour once a week. In the first and the last sessions they answered the psychometric tests HAD (to evaluate anxiety and depression symptoms) and SDI (to evaluate their feeling of disability). Besides, at the beginning and at the end of each session they answered the EVA Scale (to evaluate their pain from 1 to 10), and an emotional test using emoticons. To evaluate the results we used SPSS statistic program.

Each session consisted in a psychoeducational and a practical part. The nurse facilitated user's expression and gave tools for the management of anxiety, mood, pain, as well as consciousness and emotional regulation.



#### Summary of the Sessions:

- **Session 1:** initial evaluation, presentations, agenda of the sessions, introduction to Sophrology. **Technique:** Diaphragmatic and paused breathing to relax body and mind.
- **Session 2:** solving doubts, practice review, relationship between body and mind. **Technique:** Basic muscular relaxation to relax body and mind (here and now).
- **Session 3:** solving doubts, practice review, mechanism of anxiety and pain. **Technique:** removing tensions.
- **Session 4:** solving doubts, practice review, mood and relationship between anxiety and pain. **Technique:** positive somatization.
- **Session 5:** solving doubts, practice review, coping with pain. **Technique:** improving attention and concentration, and stopping negative thoughts.
- **Session 6:** solving doubts, practice review, healthy habits: sleep, meals, leisure, exercise, prevent toxic habits and risk behaviours. **Technique:** Free futurization (visualization of a pleasant future situation).
- **Session 7:** solving doubts, practice review, emotional consciousness and validation. **Technique:** projection of capabilities (to reinforce self-esteem).
- **Session 8:** solving doubts, practice review, emotional regulation and expression, resolution of conflicts, final tests and satisfaction, closure. **Technique:** natural dream (to improve insomnia).

### Results

32 women have assisted to all the group sessions from the 40 recruited.

The daily practice was the main problem in most of the cases, usually for the lack of free time or periods of intense pain.

Regarding the results of the psychometric tests, the women that made the exercises daily at home showed better mood and anxiety levels at the end of the group, and they could relax easily.

At the end of each session most of the patients felt more relaxed and with less pain. In some cases the pain got worst at the beginning as they became aware of body tensions, but they improved with regular practice.

The preferred technique was different for each woman.

The final subjective evaluation of the users has been positive. They valued the group as “necessary to express their doubts and complaints”, and they found it useful to learn new relaxation techniques. They valued the nurse attention as “very helpful” and they felt “accompanied during the process”.

### Conclusions

It is demonstrated that we cannot consider the mind and the body as two separate entities, thus, they are interrelated. Chronic pain is very limiting, and also can be anxiety and low mood, and there is a proved relationship between them. Sophrology supports that any positive action on a part of consciousness has a positive effect on the whole being.

### References

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- Revuelta Evrard E, Segura Escobar E, Paulino Tevar J. Depresión, ansiedad y fibromialgia. Rev. Soc. Esp. Dolor. 2010 Oct; 17(7): 326-332.