

Sophrology takes root in SA

A new to South Africa, holistic well-being technique that is widely used all over Europe is being targeted at the spa sector, both in terms of incorporation into treatment menus, as well for therapists themselves.

According to Sophrology South Africa's Ishana Maharaj, sophrology is a complementary technique created to enable the mind and body to work simultaneously.

Says Maharaj: "Sophrology has been practiced for over 56 years and is particularly popular in Switzerland, France, UK and Spain. It consists of various simple physical and mental exercises that, when practiced regularly, lead to a healthy, relaxed body and a calm, alert mind.

"I have already approached several high end spas in South Africa that have shown interest in sophrology, specifically to enhance the well-being of their therapists. They realise that therapists are not robots and have their own lives and problems."

Maharaj notes that sophrology would be an ideal half hour treatment addition to spa massages and even facials. "Generally, people who come to spas are suffering from stress. I believe that spas should conduct an upfront, personalised interaction and questionnaire as to how guests are feeling physically,

emotionally and mentally. Spas treat the body but they don't treat mind and spirit. Sophrology brings the guest to a total relaxed state - calm, zoned in and balanced. It's called the 'sophroliminal level'. This is the initial stage that I believe the guest needs to be in before a massage or sound therapy.

"Sophrology activates, rejuvenates and stimulates every single cell in the body, even skin cells, hence its relevance to facial treatments."

Transformation

Maharaj herself discovered sophrology while living in Switzerland. "I'd left the corporate banking sector in South Africa and was looking for a new avenue when I came across sophrology. Switzerland has a few big cities like Geneva and Lucerne and then lots of little towns in between, each of which has between eight and 10 sophrologists. And, every school has one.

"I researched sophrology thoroughly before embarking on my studies, which were done through the internationally accredited course in Geneva. My research revealed how sophrology transforms lives. What gives me joy is witnessing a positive transformation in my clients. I would like to see spa guests experience that same transformation. Sophrology is not a quick fix.



Ishana Maharaj

We need to constantly recharge the spa guest but also the therapist."

6 Systems

Sophrology splits the body into 6 Systems: (1) Brain, eyes, nose, ears, mouth & jaw; (2) Neck, throat, shoulders, back of arms, back of hands & fingers; (3) Chest, upper back, underside of the arms, palms of the hands, front of fingers; (4) Area between chest & navel, middle of back, internal organs - liver, kidneys, stomach; (5) Lower abdomen, lower back, hips, legs, feet & toes; and (6) Point of navel signifies the whole body.

The sophrologist conducts simple exercises in each of the six systems, one session per system. Sophrology exercises and breathing techniques can be customised according to each person.