

## Relax

"Then tell me how to relax!...", we often hear stressed-out people beg, nearly adding 'doctor'. As if it would be evidence of expertise to give a ready-made answer to that question. If there is one area in which one can earn a lot of money, it is... Do I have your attention? Well, this lucrative area is the field of Relaxation. The Great Relaxation. Because: you can't burn the candle at both ends all the time, and we have to enjoy ourselves. We have a well-defined task: to enjoy ourselves to the utmost, and to relax. Go for it! But how?

This is a little known place where many healers go and pour their solutions like hot lava over the Pompeii of the human self-determination.

I recently joined a relaxation session in prison as an "embedded" therapist, during which several things caught my attention.

During the session we practised the body scan. Each of the participants sat in the lotus position. The session lasted for forty minutes and started with breathing techniques and ended with slow activation of the body. My colleague, who led the session, persisted to remain immobile with his eyes closed during all of the forty minutes before the group dissolved. After exactly forty minutes he opened his eyes and the exercise was over. It reminded me of an anecdote from my time at primary school, when the physical education teacher asked us to sit with our eyes closed for one minute and to only stand up after that minute. After twenty seconds I jumped to my feet, thinking that I would be the last one to stand up. But there I stood for forty seconds on my own looking foolish...

During this session, I was seized with the same feeling. Each fibre resisted to the silence, the breathing techniques made my heart race. But what struck me more was that the majority of the participants (clients in prison, with aggression issues) not only sat through the forty minutes, but also left the place manifestly unwound.

What went wrong in my task as an "embedded" therapist?

Well, dear reader, absolutely nothing went wrong. Because not everybody unwinds in the same way. Everybody has an own particular way to slow down the mind's activity. As a non-diagnosed bearer of a broad range of psychopathologies, my relaxation method seems to be an active kind that forces up the heartbeat and flirts with anaerobic effort limits.

But don't worry, dear reader, if reading a book, watching a movie or a play relaxes you, you are perfectly normal. It is also perfectly normal to relax by taking pictures of wigs filled with fruit, or by knotting tapestry representing an aerial view of your street during four years, or by drawing pictures of mad cows. In positive psychology Seligman speaks about "the flow" as the carrier of relaxed activity, the moments in which time and space become less important (do not confuse with psychosis or dementia though) for a while. When we succeed in capturing these moments, in being aware of them and reproducing them, we have found a way to our personal path to relaxation.

The Tour of Flanders may be ours, but relaxation is yours and don't let anyone take it away from you.