



# Project Analysis Of Just Relax

**A mindfulness and relaxation  
project designed for older people**



## **Rationale**

Many older people experience psychological or emotional distress associated with factors linked to old age, including isolation, loss of independence, loneliness and losses of many kinds, including bereavements and the loss of mobility and the onset of disability or frailty. Within the older population, it is no exaggeration that older people who are depressed or anxious have a much reduced life expectancy. This project was developed to provide older people with the chance to live an extended and happier later life.

We wanted to facilitate opportunities for older people to improve their mental state and learn techniques so that they can self-manage their own relaxation. We anticipated that the associated impact would be a reduction in their depression\anxiety\stress levels and improved self esteem and well being making them more resilient to external pressures and problems which are beyond their control.

## **Background**

This project was undertaken as a partnership between Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton (a well known local charity) and A Quiet Place (a private company, based in Liverpool, which offers mindfulness and relaxation sessions and training to all age groups). A Quiet Place has significant experience of working in school environments helping children (for example those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) to focus and feel positive. Penny Moon, the CEO of A Quiet Place, has experience of using the relaxation techniques with adults and was convinced that they would be beneficial to the older people with whom Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton (ACL&S) has contact. ACL&S wanted to test the effectiveness of the approach with older people and so applied for funding for a pilot project.

Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton was successful in securing an Awards for All grant from the Big Lottery in February 2015 which provided the funds we needed to purchase a bio-feedback machine (a “heartmath” monitor) and other equipment and to train some of our staff in relaxation techniques and use of the associated equipment.

A Quiet Place designed a bespoke package, unique to the needs of Age Concern Liverpool & Sefton, as well as providing ongoing support for the trainees. Ten staff were provided with a comprehensive introduction, over a number of sessions, to a variety of relaxation techniques including mindfulness, breathing techniques, bio-feedback and hand massage. For a variety of reasons, post training, 3 staff members were unable to continue with the project and so 7 staff members became active participants in the project.

## **Variation of the clientele**

One of the key aspects of the project was to ascertain if the relaxation techniques would generate positive results with older people from different areas and with different backgrounds. We offered relaxation sessions to older people attending our Poppy Centre leisure facility in North Liverpool; older people in their own homes and at companionship groups in Sefton (via our befriending and reablement service) and

older people in The Hamlets Nursing Home, Toxteth, Liverpool 8 (all of whom have functional mental illness).

The scale of the project was such that 512 relaxation sessions took place involving 346 discrete individuals. 235 sessions were held in the Poppy Centre, 206 sessions in Sefton and 71 at The Hamlets.

## Data Collection

All clients were asked to score their mental state, prior to the session, on a 1 to 10 scale with 1 being very relaxed and 10 very tense and then repeat the scoring exercise immediately after the mindfulness\relaxation intervention. Clients were also encouraged to comment on their feelings about the session if they wished to. Some individuals were also willing to allow us to feature them as a case study which provides a narrative context in addition to the purely statistical outcome monitoring.

## The Overall Results

Across all 3 pilot locations, positive results were achieved. Overall the outcome of the sessions was a mean change of 2.24 on the 10 point relaxation scale (demonstrating that the sessions produced a marked increase in degree of relaxation experienced).

A statistical analysis has been applied to the aggregated results for all 512 sessions.

### t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	6.162109375	3.921875
Variance	3.404197499	2.271771037
Observations	512	512
Pearson Correlation	0.43663676	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	511	
t Stat	28.12915256	
P(T<=t) one-tail	3.559E-106	
t Critical one-tail	1.647841009	
P(T<=t) two-tail	7.118E-106	
t Critical two-tail	1.964617138	

Standard Deviation before intervention = 1.85

Standard Deviation after intervention = 1.51

### Conclusion from statistical analysis

There was a significant difference in the relaxation scores before and after the mindfulness\relaxation interventions:

Before (M = 6.16, SD = 1.85) and After (M = 3.92, SD = 1.51),  $t(511) = 28.13$ ,  $p = 7.118E-106$ .

We started out with the null hypothesis that relaxation scores would remain unchanged after the intervention. The statistics show that this hypothesis can be rejected with an extremely high level of confidence.

It is therefore reasonable to say that the mindfulness\relaxation interventions do produce a significant change in the degree of relaxation experienced by the participants.

## Results by location

### The Hamlets

The Hamlets clients started with the largest scores (mean of 7.41) indicating more tension than the people from other locations, which is consistent with the fact that The Hamlets cares for older people who are experiencing mental ill health. After the interventions, the nursing home clientele experienced the largest benefit of all, with a mean change of 3.18 on the 10 point relaxation scale. This result is very encouraging and statistically significant as demonstrated in the following analysis:

#### t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	7.408450704	4.225352113
Variance	3.130784708	1.119919517
Observations	71	71
Pearson Correlation	0.095097012	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	70	
t Stat	13.59094492	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1.291E-21	
t Critical one-tail	1.66691448	
P(T<=t) two-tail	2.58199E-21	
t Critical two-tail	1.994437086	

## **The Hamlets - Case Studies**

### **Case Study 1**

Ms P has a diagnosis of personality disorder, Schizophrenia and has behavioural problems. Quite often Ms P can have anxiety issues and be in a very low mood. She has received 5 individual sessions comprising of mindfulness, breathing and hand massage. She has enjoyed the sessions enormously and the sessions seem to set her up nicely for the day making her less anxious and more able to cope with the day ahead. Staff have seen a difference in her mood and behaviour when she has had a relaxation session.

### **Case Study 2**

Mr G has severe anxiety disorder. He has had 2 relaxation sessions including hand massage. During the day when he has his session he is much more relaxed and able to function better.

### **Case Study 3**

Mr J has a primary diagnosis of Schizophrenia. He has had 6 sessions of relaxation including hand and shoulder massage. Mr J enjoyed the sessions so much that he asked for additional sessions. Normally Mr J is very withdrawn, doesn't engage with other residents much and doesn't make eye contact. These sessions helped to relax him and make him feel better able to cope in his surroundings. His scoring went from very tense to quite relaxed following the sessions

The results achieved at The Hamlets demonstrates that these techniques may have significant value in helping people at the higher end of mental vulnerability to feel more relaxed with concomitant benefits for the staff who care for them.

## Sefton

The Sefton participants in the relaxation sessions experienced a 2.26 mean change on the 10 point relaxation scale. Once again, the sessions have had a beneficial effect and this is again statistically significant.

### t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	5.577669903	3.32038835
Variance	4.430523325	2.228557897
Observations	206	206
Pearson Correlation	0.512099639	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	205	
t Stat	17.46584509	
P(T<=t) one-tail	9.52108E-43	
t Critical one-tail	1.652320556	
P(T<=t) two-tail	1.90422E-42	
t Critical two-tail	1.971603452	

## Sefton case studies

### Case study 1

#### Background

The client suffers from depression and anxiety; this had been accelerated by a change in medication which caused his sodium levels to drop very low. The client has heart problems and can become breathless when mobile. His doctor monitors his medication. The client also attends regular health check ups and is very aware of when he is beginning to feel depressed. The client attended counselling through his GP and has had counselling previously in the past – he feels this was beneficial. The client gets anxious in crowds and takes some persuading to go out and participate in everyday activities.

The client's depression contributes to his lack of confidence in going out to groups and activities which he used to enjoy. The client has also lost his driving licence and as a result makes getting out and about difficult for him and increases his anxiety.

#### Impact of A Quiet Place relaxation techniques

The client attended the Companions Group in Maghull and has been able to access the Quiet Place sessions that the Befriending and Re-ablement Officer has arranged for the group. The client benefitted greatly from using the HeartMath with the laptop and software. He said that the breathing techniques were great and very helpful to him enabling to relax. He was very impressed with the results on the HeartMath and his heart rate decreased as a result. He also felt a general overall improvement in his wellbeing and more relaxed as a result.

The client was very impressed with the software, so much so that he wanted to investigate purchasing it for himself. He is now in discussion with his son and wanted to see how practical it would be to buy the software and install it at home for him to use at any time. He has had more than one session at Companions and is benefitting from this more and more each time.

### Case study 2

The client had participated in breathing training. Subsequently she was unable to take her usual medication to relax her on the way to a hospital appointment and she remembered to work through her breathing techniques she had been taught on the way to the hospital in the Ambulance. The client said her anxiety was reduced greatly as her breathing was relaxed and less fractious.

### The Poppy Centre

There was some initial resistance to participating in the relaxation sessions, as the clients at the Poppy Centre felt that it would take up valuable time when they could be enjoying other activities which they normally attended the Centre for. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the Poppy Centre clientele showed the lowest positive response to the relaxation interventions with a mean change of 1.94. Despite the slightly lower gain experienced by this group of older people, the positive benefit is still statistically highly significant.

#### t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	6.29787234	4.35744681
Variance	1.825422804	2.13664303
Observations	235	235
Pearson Correlation	0.356996831	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	234	
t Stat	18.62049917	
P(T<=t) one-tail	2.19017E-48	
t Critical one-tail	1.651391475	
P(T<=t) two-tail	4.38034E-48	
t Critical two-tail	1.970153589	

In order to minimise additional disruption to the normal day of the Poppy centre clients, we did not pursue them for case studies.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The project demonstrated the beneficial effect experienced by the vast majority of the older people who took part in mindfulness and relaxation sessions. Most of the techniques we used are both simple and empowering so that individuals can practice them for themselves and improve the quality of their life.

Psychological and emotional distress depression and acute anxiety are very common as people get older. Symptoms including insomnia and chronic pain are common and the relaxation recordings are designed so that they can be listened to at home before bed.

- i. Our recommendation is that more older people are provided with access to basic relaxation training in order to build mental resilience and to enhance quality of life in a highly cost effective manner.

Whilst the project showed that older people of many types and backgrounds can benefit, it was interesting to note that the greatest benefit was gained by the older people with pre-existing mental health conditions. The impact of these techniques in a functional mental health nursing home environment was felt by both the end user and by the care staff who found that it made their job easier as the older person was calmer and less tense.

- ii. Our recommendation is, therefore, to extend the use of these techniques into more care and support settings. Obviously this would benefit the residents\patients but it would also be of great benefit to the care staff. The pressure on those who currently deliver care and support services means that time is of the essence and the techniques incorporated into this project are designed to fit into an already tight regime by bringing a layer of quality to existing contact sessions, without adding more stress to those delivering the session. Working in this way will also reduce stress factors for employees and thus improves the quality of the time provided. The concept is to offer empowering self management techniques that are both manageable and will increase the impact of existing services adding value as well as maximising impact from minimum input.

The project also had a collateral effect in that the staff trained to help older people to use the relaxation techniques also reported benefits from using the techniques themselves.

- iii. Our recommendation is that more employees are afforded the opportunity to engage in relaxation and mindfulness sessions both for their personal benefit, but also for the employing organisation which will benefit from a happier, calmer workforce, less stress related absence and improved employee retention.



## Contact Details

For more information about this project or to find out more about offering relaxation\mindfulness sessions or obtaining training in relaxation\mindfulness techniques please contact:



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