



HIPPOCAMPUS INTERVIEWS

Introduction

This document contains the guidelines and questions to be used in the interviews that are implemented as part of the evaluation of the Hippocampus yoga programme. These interviews form part of a wider evaluation process that also includes the use of questionnaires and reflection journals to provide a varied array of “lenses” through which to examine the programme and its effects.

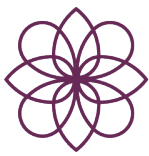
The document contains a set of considerations about the process, followed by some basic guidelines regarding interviewing, and then the questions to be used in the

A common approach

At the project meeting in Brussels in December 2018, it was agreed that it is important to maintain as much homogeneity across the different partner contexts as possible. Although there will always be some natural variation in the implementation process, it is useful to have some shared elements that guarantee a common baseline approach. These are as follows:

- All interviews would be based on a shared protocol (set of questions) that would guide the conversations, but the interviews will be semi-structured, which means that if a participant brings up an interesting unanticipated aspect, there is freedom to explore that.
- All partners will interview a minimum of 5 young people individually (if circumstances permit), and carry out a group interview with staff.
- In each country, all the interviews will be carried out by the same person, who should not be the yoga teacher.
- The interviews will be recorded.
- Each partner will analyse the interview texts in its own language, according to coding guidelines that will be shared separately.
- The results of the analysis will be translated into English to produce a final report.





Some guidelines for interviewing

The following are some basic guidelines for evaluation interviews. The central challenge is to create an atmosphere that is sufficiently one and friendly for the participant to open up, but at the same time maintain a certain objectivity.

Rapport

Perhaps the most challenging issue, especially when interviewing young people, is how to develop a rapport between the interviewer and the participant. Without this, it is difficult to get the participant to open up, and this can lead to unrevealing monosyllabic answers. For some, especially those who have experience with young people, it can be easy to establish this rapport, it just comes naturally. There is no “right” way to do it. With each person the process will be different but here are some pointers:

- Listen. Whatever questions you ask to “break the ice”, listen to the answers and follow up. The key is to have a genuine interest. In a sense at this stage the content of the conversation does not matter, it could be about shoes or ships or sealing wax, but your attitude is key to building a rapport.
- Participate. Building trust and a sense of rapport requires a conversation in which both people are active participants. Later in the interview, the focus will be on the perspectives of the participant, but at this stage joint involvement is necessary.
- Be open. It is alright at this stage, to volunteer information about yourself, and to do so, establishes that opening up is a natural aspect of this particular conversation. Once the interview proper has started you should not be giving your views, as this may “lead” the participant, but at this stage it is valuable to do this.

Guiding the conversation

The main objective of the interview is to find out what the participants perspectives are on a particular subject, in this case, the Hippocampus yoga programme. Ideally, we would simply switch on the recorder and ask them to talk about the programme, but few people are able to do this. Furthermore, those that do are often prone to talk about a wide range of subjects. For this reason, some prompts are required, both to elicit a response, and also to keep the conversation on the subject if necessary.

We therefore have a list of questions that are be used to structure the interview. More talkative participants may answer all the questions in their response to the first question,





with others you may need to use all the questions to make sure all the subject areas we are interested in are covered. Each question has a few follow-up questions that you may use, especially if the responses are quite brief.

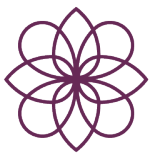
It can happen that the responses go in directions that you do not expect. For example, in these interviews which are in the end about the degree to which the programme has helped them you might for example find that someone starts to talk about home life and initially appears to be digressing from the subject. This “digression” may turn out however to be relevant, so it is alright to follow the thread and see where it leads. If it turns out to be a digression, then after a little you can gently use the next question to bring the conversation back to the subject. It is at your discretion to decide when to do this.

Leading questions

The main pitfall in interviews of this kind is the risk of “leading” the participant. An interesting facet of human psychology is that some people in interview situations can be eager to please, so they will try to tell you what they think you wish to hear. For this reason, it is necessary to be as neutral as possible. This affects the wording of your questions, your responses, and your body language.

- With regard to wording, the way you ask a question can give clues about the kind of answers you expect to get. Compare for example “Did you like X?” to “How did you find X?” The former frames the conversation by assuming that X is a thing that may or may not be liked, and therefore forces the respondent to take a position, when their view may be more nuanced. We would miss the nuances, if we asked that kind of question. The second formulation is more open and is more likely to capture a wide range of views rather than binary like/dislike.
- When you respond, it is important to avoid giving the impression that you agree with them, as this may mean all the response from then are in the same vein. Unfortunately, a “yes” that means “yes I have heard you”, can often be understood as “yes I agree with you”. It is better to use phrases such as, “I see” or “Thankyou, that’s interesting” can be more useful. Similarly, if you sense there is more to be said and you want to ask the respondent to give more information, try to use a neutral formulation such as “can you say more about that?” or “tell me more”.
- Your body language can be revealing. A neutral, open sitting position, looking at the speaker, is ideal. If you fold your arms or look down, this can discourage the speaker,





leaning towards them can have the opposite effect, though nodding lightly to show you are listening is helpful

The questions

In the interviews we are interested in a wide range of issues. We want to know whether the yoga programme has had any effect in a wide range of areas. These include physical well-being, emotional wellbeing, study, self- image, sleep, stress, and changes in personal (self and friends) family and school life.

As mentioned about however, we don't want to lead the respondents, so the questions need to be as open as possible. The main questions are as follows:

1. How do you feel about the yoga programme?
2. Have you noticed any changes in any area of your life since you started the yoga?
3. Have you noticed any effects on other people doing the yoga programme with you?
4. What would you change about the programme?
5. Would you recommend yoga to other people?

Follow up questions, especially for 2 and 3, if they are not sure what you might mean:

- for example, changes in your personal life or your family life or school life
- for example, changes in how you feel about yourself, or your emotions
- for example, changes in your physical health, or your sleep, or how you study

Follow up questions for 4

- for example, the postures, or the relaxation, or the breathing etc

Follow up questions for 5

- how would you recommend it, what would you say? (if they say yes to 5, of course!)
- would you continue with yoga yourself? how?

General follow-up questions

- could you say more about that
- tell me more
- could you explain that

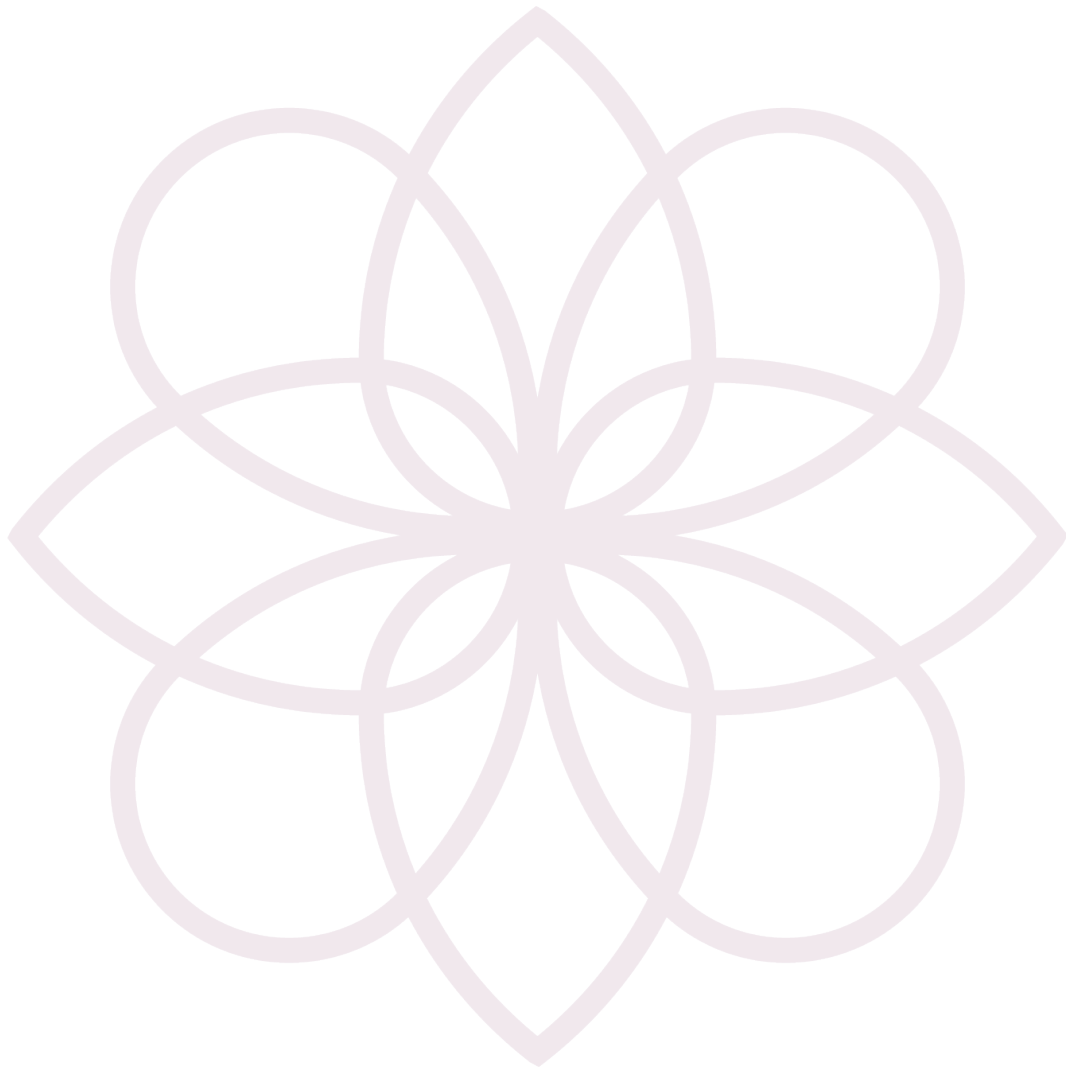




Promoting Mental Health
and Wellbeing among Young
People through Yoga

These questions are more general than the previous set of questions created in autumn 2018, and are therefore provide more freedom for responses to emerge. These should therefore be used.

TYF, January 2018



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein."
Project Number: 2017-2-ES02-KA205-009942