

brighton
natural
health
foundation



Evaluation of mindful movement classes for people with chronic health challenges

Healthy Communities, Healthy City, Healthy Planet



Report November
2024

Background and Introduction

This six week mindful movement course took place in two locations - one in central Brighton and one in Woodingdean. Referrals were made by social prescribers from the Central and East PCN team. Patients with long-term health conditions were invited to attend.

Mindful movement is characterised by slow, deliberate movements that pay special attention to the body and breath. It fosters acceptance and awareness and draws from practices such as yoga and qigong. These practices have been shown to be effective with a range of physical and mental health conditions such as chronic pain, anxiety, COPD and hypertension. Moreover, the focus on self-awareness and agency may be empowering for people who feel disenfranchised and overwhelmed, giving them tools to manage their own well-being.

The course was chair-based and especially designed to be accessible to people with chronic health needs, offering a different theme each week including: grounding, managing anxiety, balance, strength and resilience, changing habits and self-care.

Each class involved discussion about the different ways people manage their own conditions and some information about body awareness and tools before a short mindful movement practice. The practice included breathwork, meditation and some simple chair based movements (although some people chose to stand). Participants were then given sheets to take home with exercises to practise.

The teachers were both experienced in delivering community sessions and had had trauma sensitive and mental health first aid training.

Who we are

Brighton Natural Health Foundation (BNHF)

A charity that is passionate about empowering people and communities to embrace mindful movement for a happier, healthier lifestyle. We offer accessible classes, events, and training, especially for people facing health inequalities.

East & Central Brighton Primary Care Network

An NHS Collaboration between 9 GP Practices - Arch Healthcare, Ardingly Court Surgery, Broadway Surgery, Park Crescent Health Centre, Pavilion Surgery, Regency Surgery, St Peters Health Centre, Wellsbourne Healthcare CIC and Woodingdean Medical Centre. We are working together to provide extended services.

Who attended the course and why

Initially 10 people signed up for both courses - six in Woodingdean and four in the central location.

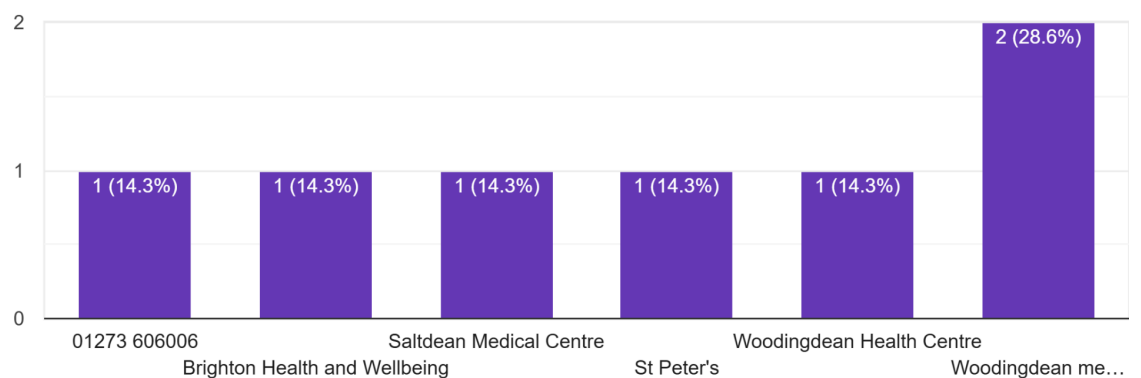
The reasons people gave for wanting to attend, in order of popularity, were:

- To feel more relaxed
- To improve mobility
- To become fit/ supple
- To access a class that met their needs
- To become more motivated
- To manage pain
- To gain routine

Pre-existing conditions

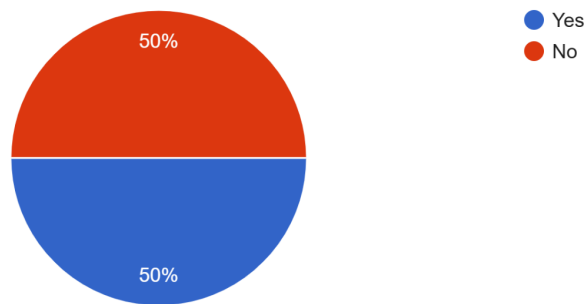
- 62% of people had anxiety
- 25% had arthritis
- Other conditions included: FND, Alzheimer's, Fibromyalgia, depression, asthma

GP surgeries that people belonged to

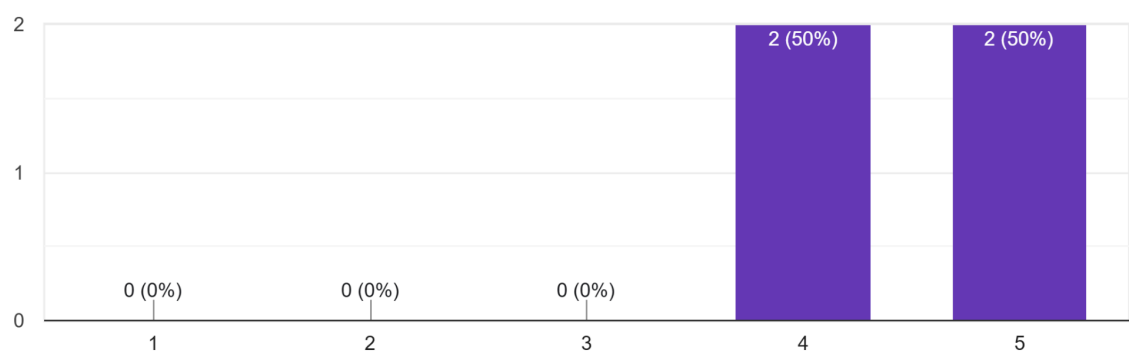


Course Evaluation

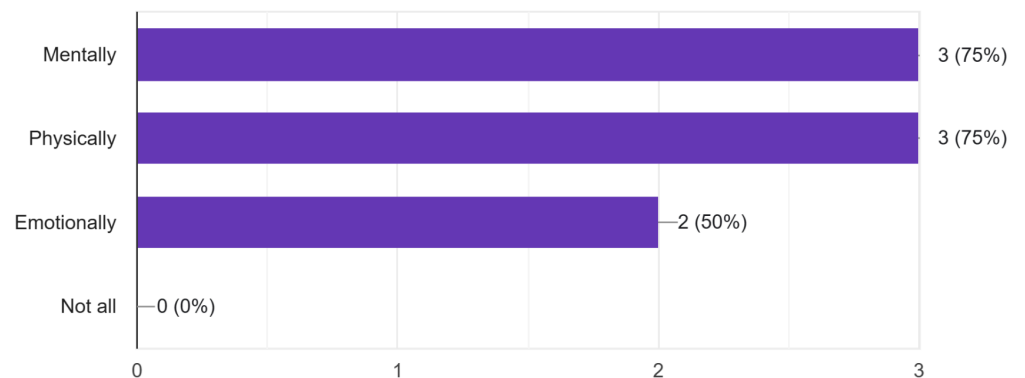
Have you ever done a mindful movement course before (yoga, qigong or similar)?



Overall, how was your experience of the course, where one is very negative and five is very positive?



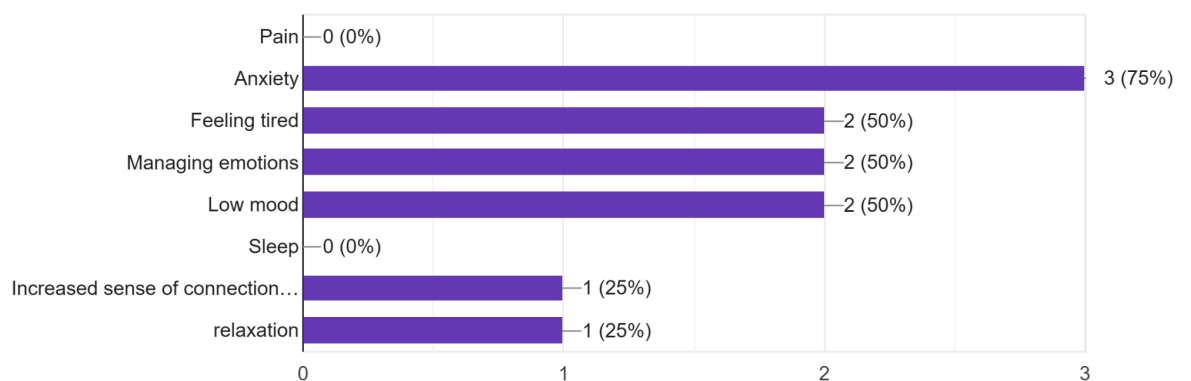
In what ways did you benefit from the course?



Could you say a bit more about what the benefits were?

- It was good to have something to look forward to, a bit of routine.
- Made me feel calmer, strengthened and resolved
- Encouraged resilience and inner strength
- Learning ways to moving, stretching and loosening

Did mindful movement help with any of the following?



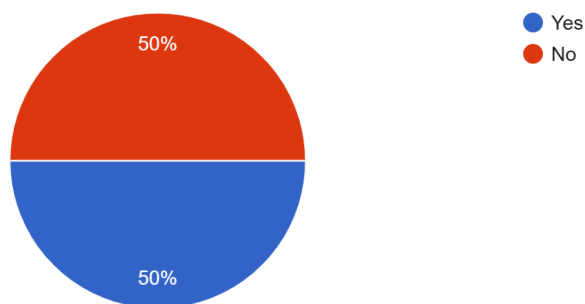
If you weren't able to attend regularly, could you say what the difficulties were?

- My physical health (fibromyalgia)
- IBS symptoms
- Calendar clash

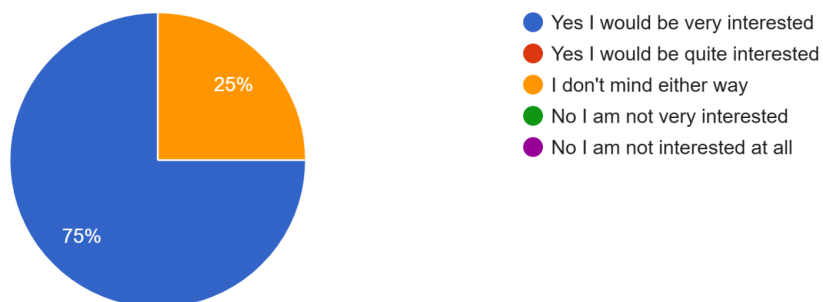
Is there anything that could have been improved? If so, what?

- Develop options to enable further enjoyment
- No, it's been brilliant

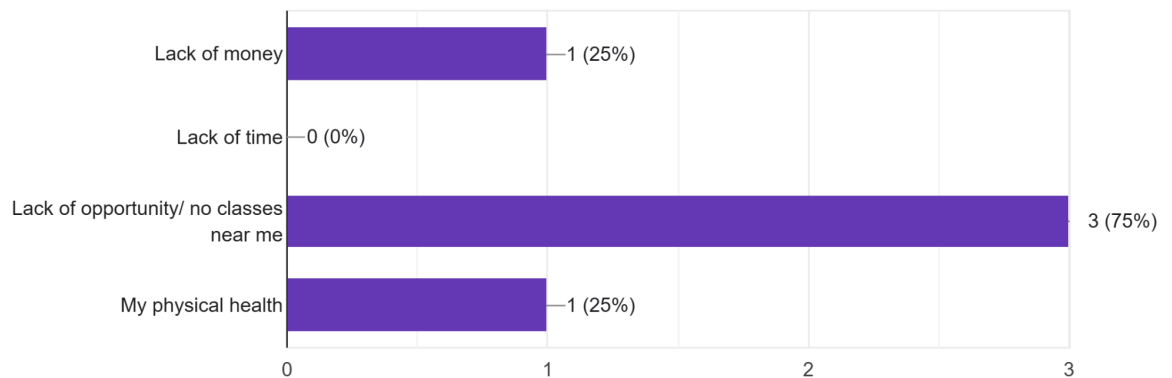
Do you practise any of the techniques learned in class at home?



Would you be interested in taking part in future mindful movement sessions?



What might prevent you from going to a session in future?



Is there anything else you would like to say about your course?

- It made me want to go back to yoga
- Maybe last a little longer
- I'd love to find something similar to continue.
- Thank you very much.

Conclusion

The classes were positively received by everyone who took part and most people said they benefited mentally and physically. Specifically, people said that the course helped them feel more grounded, stronger and less anxious.

Attendance was challenging - the largest number that attended each class was six and the smallest was one. In the end, five people completed the course to the end. The biggest reason for non-attendance was health, which is to be expected in a class aimed at people with health problems.

Half the people who completed the survey said that they tried some of the practices at home. As the health benefits of mindful movement tend to come from regular practice, this is encouraging but we could do more to encourage regular practice.

There was clearly an appetite for more amongst the people surveyed with most people saying they would like to carry on with some kind of mindful movement and two people said they were planning on signing up for a yoga class (participants were sent our list of community classes). Lack of classes near them was the biggest barrier cited to taking part in future classes, followed by lack of money.

The Future

- The course has the potential to improve the health and wellbeing of people with chronic health problems
- It would benefit from wider publicity and BNHF would consider putting on taster sessions for social prescribers and other staff to help them 'sell' the benefits
- We could do more to emphasise the benefits of home practice, possibly producing videos as well as practice sheets
- The course would benefit from robust evaluation, including a follow up survey to see who has taken up future classes or home practice