



Evaluation of yoga classes at the Downsman Wellbeing Space

Healthy Communities, Healthy City, Healthy Planet



Report August 2024



'I really enjoyed the session as the teacher's instructions were very clear, and she had such a lovely energy. By the time I left, I almost felt like a different person - much more relaxed, grounded, and stretched at the same time.'

'Life can be stressful as a working mom with a teenage daughter while going through menopause. So finding somewhere local where I can restore myself is wonderful,' S - course participant.

Background

This feedback relates to a 12-week free yoga course funded by the Brighton Natural Health Foundation and run at the Downsman Wellbeing Space, running from April - July 2024. The course was funded by the National Lottery and run in conjunction with the Hangleton and Knoll Project. It followed extensive consultation with the local community, including a taster day.

12 people signed up for the course and 10 continued to the end. Although the retention rate was encouraging, attendance varied (reasons for not attending are listed below). Half the people who filled in our health participation forms had multiple health difficulties.

We worked with Nicola Harvey, an established local yoga teacher with significant experience in education, community work and mental health

Who we are

Brighton Natural Health Foundation

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.

Hangleton and Knoll Project

A Community Development charity based in the Hangleton and Knoll ward of Brighton and Hove in South East England. A part of the community since 1983 we are a project working for the community with the community and managed by the community.

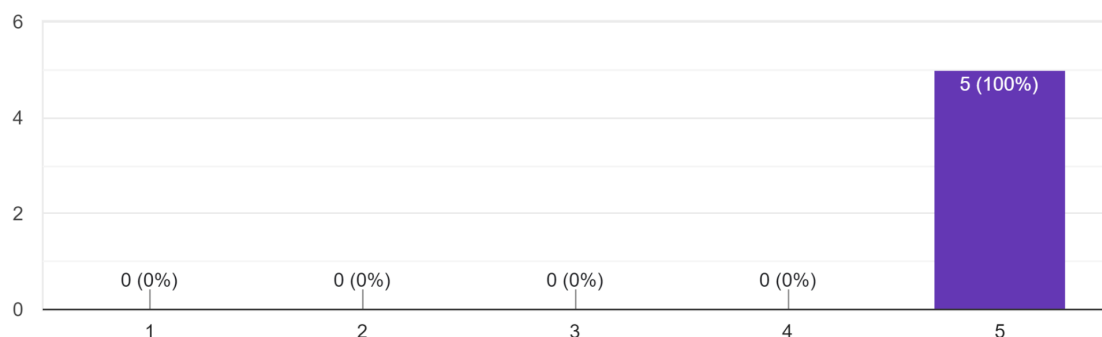
Evaluation Results

Had you ever done a regular yoga class before this course started?

For a large minority of respondents, this was the first experience of attending a regular yoga class.

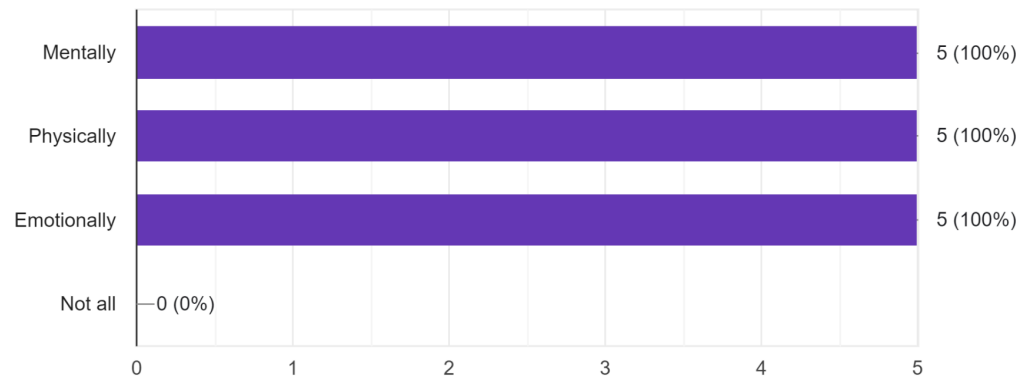
Overall - how was your experience of the course on a scale of 1-5 (where one is very positive)?

100% of respondents rated their experience of the course as wholly positive.



In which ways did you benefit from the sessions? Please tick the ones that apply

All participants said that they benefited from the classes mentally, physically and emotionally.



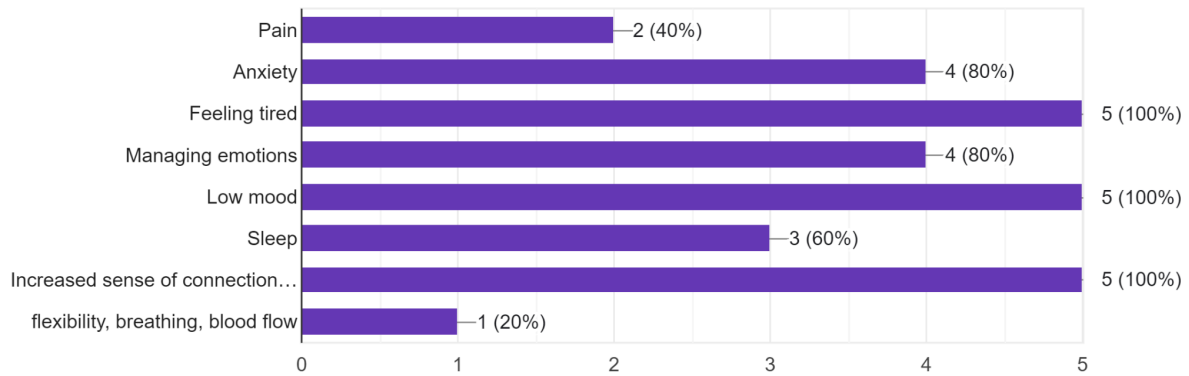
Could you say a bit more about what the benefits were?

All respondents mentioned the physical and mental health benefits of yoga with reducing stress being the most commonly cited improvement.

- Improving health, flexibility, balance, wellbeing. Very positive and enjoyable experience
- I love this session. Not just feeling well physically and mentally and also the teacher was kind
- Good for stress, relaxation, fitness and whole body .
- Very good for mental health. Helps with aches and pains
- Helped with de-stressing.
- Helped to move my body which I haven't done in ages
- Yoga classes helped with my wellbeing.
- It helped my present health issues. I felt calm and it helped with my stress

Did yoga help with any of the following? (tick the ones that apply to you)

100% of students said that the sessions helped them with feeling tired, low mood and community connection. And a large majority (80%) said the classes helped with anxiety and managing emotions.



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

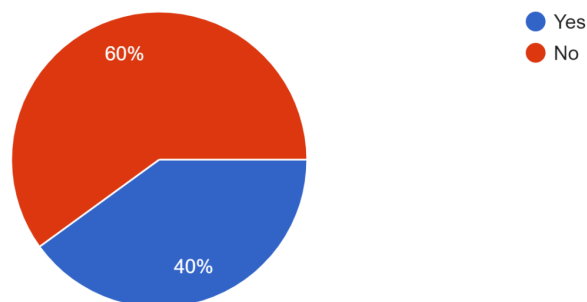
Participants cited a range of challenges including: family commitments, health personal challenges and caring responsibilities.

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

It was perfect

Did you try any of the yoga techniques at home?

Most people did not try any of the yoga techniques they had learned in class at home (although this had been encouraged by the teacher).



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

It was perfect. I should practice at home.

I would like to spend more time chatting and connecting at the end

It was amazing. Really really good. I feel so much better in body and mind.

It was fantastic. Such a friendly, approachable teacher.

It would be helpful if we had more classes at Downsman Wellbeing. More mindful activities such as mindful yoga which helps with people's wellbeing

100% of people said they would want to go to future classes but cited money, time and lack of classes nearby as reasons they might not be able to attend.

Conclusions and Learning

The courses were clearly beneficial to all participants who gained mental, physical and emotional benefits. The welcoming, friendly approach of the teacher and safe environment was key to the success of the project and students were keen for more.

Although the retention rate was good, regular attendance was a challenge with only one person attending every single class over the 12 week period. Attending regular classes is a common issue in yoga classes and can be especially difficult for people who have significant caring responsibilities and health challenges. A range of classes at different times of day might help alleviate this as might a drop-in model - giving more people the opportunity to attend.

It had also been an ambition to encourage students to take up a regular home practice in the form of simple breathing or movement exercises and the teacher encouraged students to keep a journal with this in mind. In the end, most students we surveyed did not do this. Building regular practice takes time and commitment and is likely to take more than one course.

Ways forward

- Providing drop in classes at different times of day
- Exploring a pay what you can afford model for future courses
- Providing more resources (videos/ home practice sheets)
- Longer classes might afford the opportunity for more community connection and also the chance to embed psychosocial discussions into classes to encourage home practice