



IMPACT REPORT

HERE TO BE

Yoga & Mindfulness for Teens
May 31, 2019

“I learnt how to get myself out of a bad place... how to de-stress and how to trust myself”



YAMA Foundation Ltd is a local non-profit organisation that makes yoga, arts and meditation accessible to underserved communities in Hong Kong. YAMA focuses on three key services areas: (1) Children in need, which include those with special needs, rare diseases, chronic or terminal illnesses, as well as children living in extreme poverty; (2) Underserved Adults which include people with disabilities, special needs, vulnerability or disadvantage of any kind; and (3) Supporting our community by providing free workshops or public events around Hong Kong.

PROGRAMME SUMMARY / GENERAL INFORMATION

Project Name	Here To Be: Stress Management for Teens		
Organisation Name	Collaboration with lululemon		
Organisation Contact	Clara Fok - cfok@lululemon.com		
Programme Leader	Hersha Chellaram - hersha@yamahk.org		
Social Issue & Programme Outline	Hong Kong has one of the highest rates of teen suicide in the world and one of the lowest rates of mental health and wellbeing. Our programme targets teens and at-risk youth with the goals of sharing yoga and mental health tools to help enhance physical, social and emotional wellbeing.		
Staff	Margaret Chung, Minal Mahtani, Edwin Yau, Samantha Burns & Katia Bacon		
Start Date	November 17, 2018	End Date	April 6, 2019
Targeted Output	1 programme = 8 classes	Actual Output	2 programmes = 17 classes 1 workshop
Targeted Beneficiaries	20 teenagers across Hong Kong	Actual Beneficiaries	16 pre-teens 42 teenagers
Grant Funds Awarded	HK\$109,140.00	Actual Spend	HK\$82,651.10
Programme Extension	May 31, 2019	Remaining Funds	HK\$26,448.90

Overview & Objectives

Suicide is the leading cause of death among youth (aged 15-24 years) in Hong Kong.¹ Teens and young adults have high levels of stress which may come from academic pressure, over scheduling of activities, physical, social and emotional changes, unsafe living environments, family issues, bereavement or any unmet needs.

When overwhelmed, many teens experience anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, physical illness or poor coping skills such as substance abuse.² Only when a person feels that they have run out of solutions to problems that seem inescapable, intolerably painful and never-ending, does suicide become an option. Traumatic events can also play a pivotal role in influencing a person towards suicide.

YAMA Foundation partnered with lululemon as a grant recipient of the Here To Be initiative to provide a signature program that provides tools of yoga, mindfulness and meditation as a means to empower teens and young adults to manage stress and cope with negative emotions and isolation, and ultimately be a valuable source of suicide prevention for Hong Kong youth.

Objectives of the sessions:

- To empower teens to take responsibility for physical, social and emotional wellbeing
- To provide participants with tools to help cope with negative emotions and stress
- To enhance confidence and mood of the participants

Programme Summary

The programme initially targeted 20 teens (aged 15-19 years) from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds across Hong Kong to attend an eight-week programme. They were targeted from all secondary schools across Hong Kong. Increasing concerns from education professionals towards youth suicide risk in Hong Kong meant there was a high interest in the Here To Be programme from the education sector. Therefore, it was agreed that a second 8 week program would be held at a secondary school in Tai O, Lantau for another 24 school students. In addition, a stress management workshop was held to reach out to 14 pre-teens as a suicide prevention strategy. Therefore in total, the Here To Be initiative targeted a total of 58 youth aged 8-19 in three parts.

Part 1: Stress Management Workshop for Pre-teens.

- **Description:** Here To Be launch event workshop for pre-teens on how to manage stress through yoga, meditation and mindfulness.
- **Dates:** November 17, 2019
- **Frequency:** One-off workshop from 2pm-4pm
- **No. of Beneficiaries:** 14 pre-teens from various schools and socio-economic backgrounds
- **No. of Sessions:** 1 workshop (2 hours)

Part 2: Here To Be Programme for Teens (Hong Kong Urban)

- **Description:** Our core programme targeting 20 teens from diverse backgrounds.
- **Dates:** February 16, 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, April 6*
- **Frequency:** Weekly sessions from 10am to 12pm

¹ Source: Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention, The Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention: <https://csr.p.hku.hk/about-centre/>

² Source: World Health Organisation (WHO), Adolescent Mental Health Factsheet: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>

- **No. of Beneficiaries:** 20 teenagers across Hong Kong
- **No. of Sessions:** 8 sessions (120 minutes each session)*
- **NOTE: Due to public examinations on April 6 (the targeted last session) many teens would be absent so we arranged the last session as a double lesson on March 30, 2019.*

Part 3: Here To Be Programme for Teens (Tai O, Lantau)

- **Description:** After a site visit with lululemon, we included 8 weeks of yoga and meditation classes, recruiting a different team to run the programme.
- **Dates:** February 21, 28, March 7, 14, 28, (Break for holidays), May 16, 23, 30
- **Frequency:** Weekly sessions from 3pm to 5pm
- **No. of Beneficiaries:** 20-24 secondary school students
- **No. of Sessions:** 8 sessions (120 minutes each session)

About the Team:

Hersha Chellaram: Programme Director & Yoga Teacher for Part 1 & 3 — Hersha is the founder of YAMA Foundation. A Yoga Teacher Trainer & therapist, she has developed numerous outreach programmes for schools and NGOs across Hong Kong.

Samantha Burns: Programme Coordinator for Part 2 – Sam has lead many youth self-development programs across the UK. She is passionate about youth empowerment and leadership, ensuring that young people are provided with a voice in society.

Margaret Chung: Yoga Teacher for Part 2 — Margaret is one of Hong Kong's most prominent yoga teachers and public personalities. She is also the founder of BEYOND Children's Special Needs Foundation, a local non-profit that provides financial and emotional support to children with special needs and their families. She taught yoga at the core Hong Kong Urban programme.

Minal Mahtani: CBT Therapist for Part 2 — Minal is a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist (CBT), Mental Health First Aid practitioner and Stress Management Yoga teacher. She is the founder of local charity OCD & Anxiety Support Hong Kong.

Dr. Edwin Yau: Clinical Psychologist for Part 2 — Edwin is a leading clinical psychologist with extensive experience working with teens in Hong Kong, specialising in Addiction Counselling for teens struggling with drug or alcohol abuse, as well as those with social and behavioural issues.

Katia Bacon: Assistant Yoga Teacher for Part 3 — Katia is a certified Integral Yoga instructor with a speciality in yoga philosophy and yoga for teens. Additionally, Katia is a first aid instructor and committee leader for YAMA Foundation. She was back up teacher for Tai O programme.



Part 1: Launch Event: Stress Management Workshop for Pre-Teens

The first event was the launch event which was a one-off workshop for children aged 9-12 years that taught how to cope with change and transition. We had 14 children attend ranging from 8-13 years. The children came from a diverse mix of local and international schools and districts. The workshop consisted of a brief presentation on the effects of stress and how to cope, followed by yoga and meditation themed games and activities to help cope with stress.



As this was simply the launch event to kick off our partnership with lululemon, we did not include any formal feedback measures. We gathered some informal feedback through casual conversations with the children and their parents. Through our informal conversations, the children expressed that they had a lot of fun and learned some useful information. Parents expressed interest in having targeted sessions like this on a regular basis.

Part 2: Yoga & Mindfulness Programme for Teens (Urban Hong Kong)

The core planning of our programme was to target teens from across Hong Kong to attend the 8-week session. We chose a location in Prince Edward as it seemed centrally located and easy for all students to reach.

Key Performance Indicators for the Programme*

We decided to formally measure our impacts with the students conducting self-assessments:

1. Self Assessment: Mindful Attention Awareness Scale

The MAAS is a 15-item scale designed to assess a core characteristic of dispositional mindfulness, namely, open or receptive awareness of and attention to what is taking place in the present. The scale shows strong psychometric properties and has been validated with college, community, and cancer patient samples. Correlational, quasi-experimental, and laboratory studies have shown that the MAAS taps a unique quality of consciousness that is related to, and predictive of, a variety of self-regulation and well-being constructs. The measure takes 10 minutes or less to complete.³

Students completed this self-assessment at the first session, week four, and the last session.

2. Self Assessment: Levels of Physical Wellbeing, Stress & Mood

YAMA Foundation offered a standard feedback form, which asked students to self-assess their sense of general wellbeing, and their physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as energy levels each week between sessions; how they feel before the session; and how they feel after the sessions.

3. Therapists Observations: Qualitative Feedback

In addition to these measures, we wanted the therapists and teachers to share their observations on how they connected to the children, how well they feel the programme was received, highlights and challenges of the programme, as well as suggestions for improvement.

**NOTE: Please refer to the Appendix for samples of the Feedback Forms and Assessment tools.*



³ (<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/resources/questionnaires-researchers/mindful-attention-awareness-scale>)

Reference: Brown, K.W. & Ryan, R.M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 822-848.

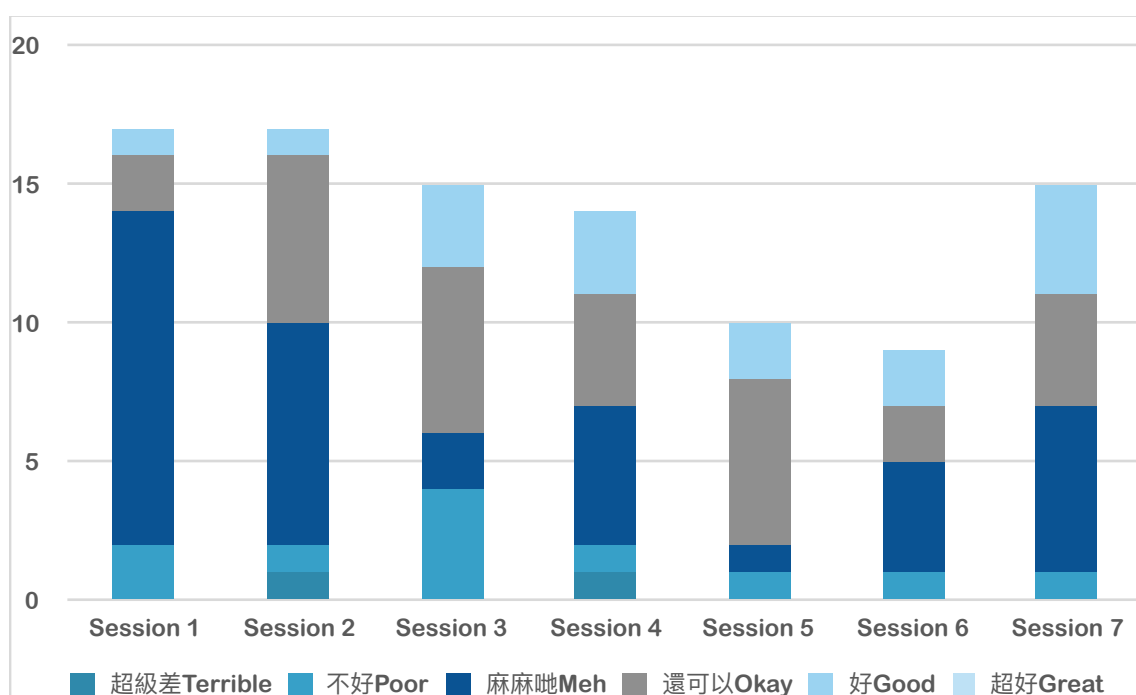
Student Self-Assessments of Wellbeing, Stress & Mood:

First, we asked our students to self-assess their sense of general wellbeing and stress levels during the past week before class. The indicators for these questions were; terrible, poor, 'meh', okay, good or great. There was an option to share additional qualitative comments.

Then we asked our students to rate their physical wellbeing, energy levels, stress levels and mood before and after each class, with the opportunity for qualitative feedback as well. The indicators for the before and after class questions were based on a low, average, high or other experience, with an option to share additional qualitative comments.

Here is a summary of our findings for each session.

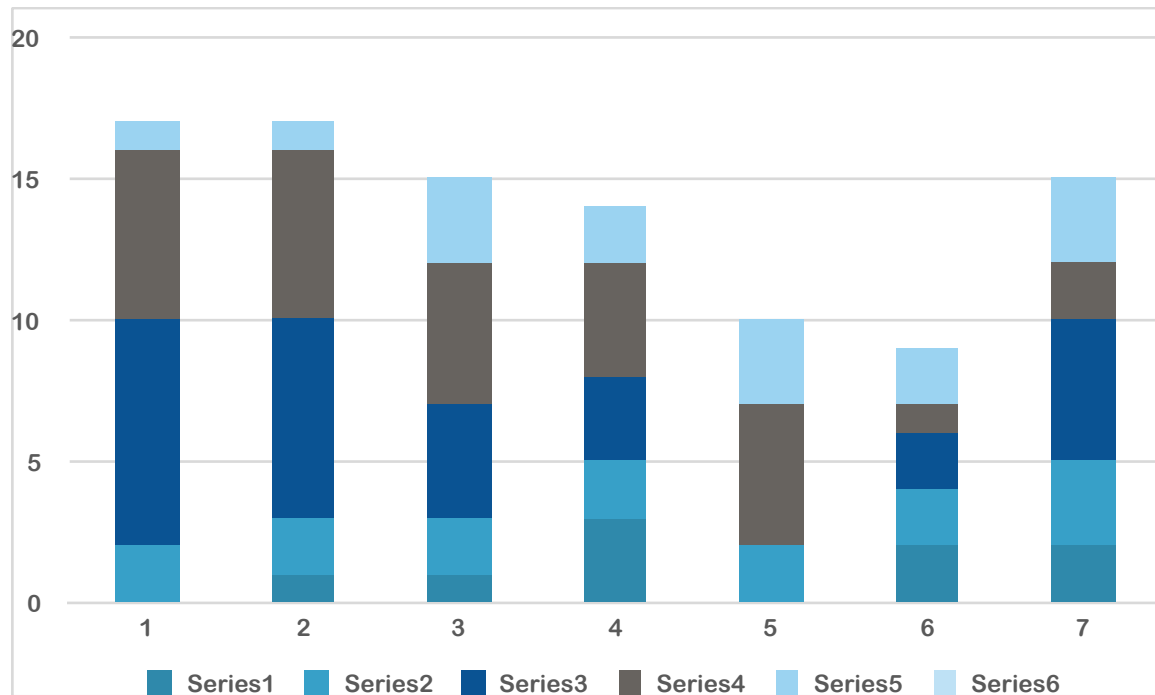
Chart 1. 上星期你的整體舒服感覺 | How would you rate your overall sense of wellbeing during the past week?



Sense of overall wellbeing showed improvements over the 7 weeks. Most teens reported feeling 'meh' in week 1, but by week 7 this had reduced by almost 50%, with over half the group reporting feeling either 'good' or 'okay'.

During week one, qualitative feedback included comments of headaches and insomnia, feeling nervous and experiencing a lot of anxiety. 'Tiredness' was the most common response, one teen would comment each week about always being 'exhausted from school'. Some shared having low energy and motivation before the session, and were worrying about exams or school pressures. Other common phrases were 'feeling stressed from work', a 'busy mind' and 'having a lot to do'.

Chart 2. 上星期你的整體壓力程度 | How would you rate your overall stress levels during the past week?



Stress levels improved steadily until week 5, although during session 4 teens had commented that they were already beginning to revise for their exams. Teens were trying to manage their stress levels during the week, and reported problems with sleep. There was a reduction in attendance during session’s 5 and 6. This was because teens had exam revision commitments and other school activities to attend. One teen expressed how they were feeling so stressed about their upcoming exams. Most qualitative comments on the feedback forms continued to be ‘*stressed*’ and ‘*exhausted*’. Changes in wellbeing and stress levels were expected because of the intensive nature of school and life pressures faced by Hong Kong teens.

On the final session, many teens were overwhelmed by their upcoming exams during the week. They felt emotionally drained and their minds were ‘*unclear*’. The results show however that attendance improved the results above show that school exams can relate to the self-reported higher levels of poor stress levels in the last 2 sessions. It is clear from the results that the students in the program were dealing with poor stress levels on a weekly basis. They interpreted that their overall wellbeing was still quite good, with the most popular response each week being ‘*meh*’. This can prove the urgent need for a yoga and mindfulness programme to improve the overall wellbeing and stress levels of youth in Hong Kong.

Summary of Findings for Physical Wellbeing, Energy Levels & Stress Levels Before & After Class

Chart 3. 現時身體的健康程度 Please rate your physical wellbeing

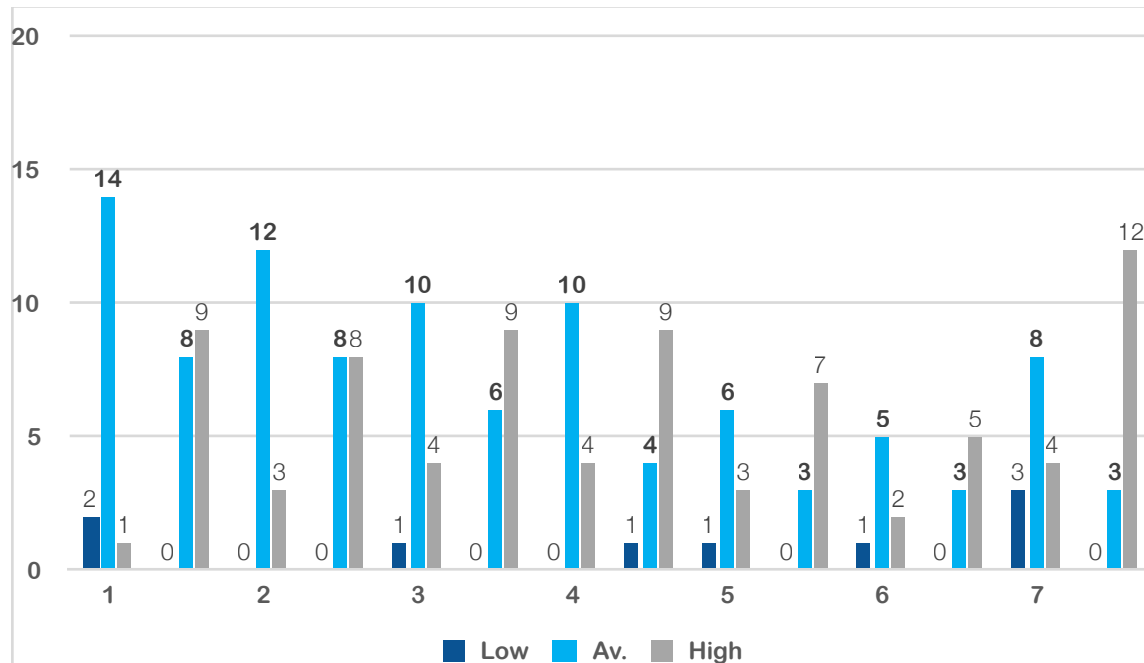


Chart 4. 你的能量程度 Please rate your energy levels

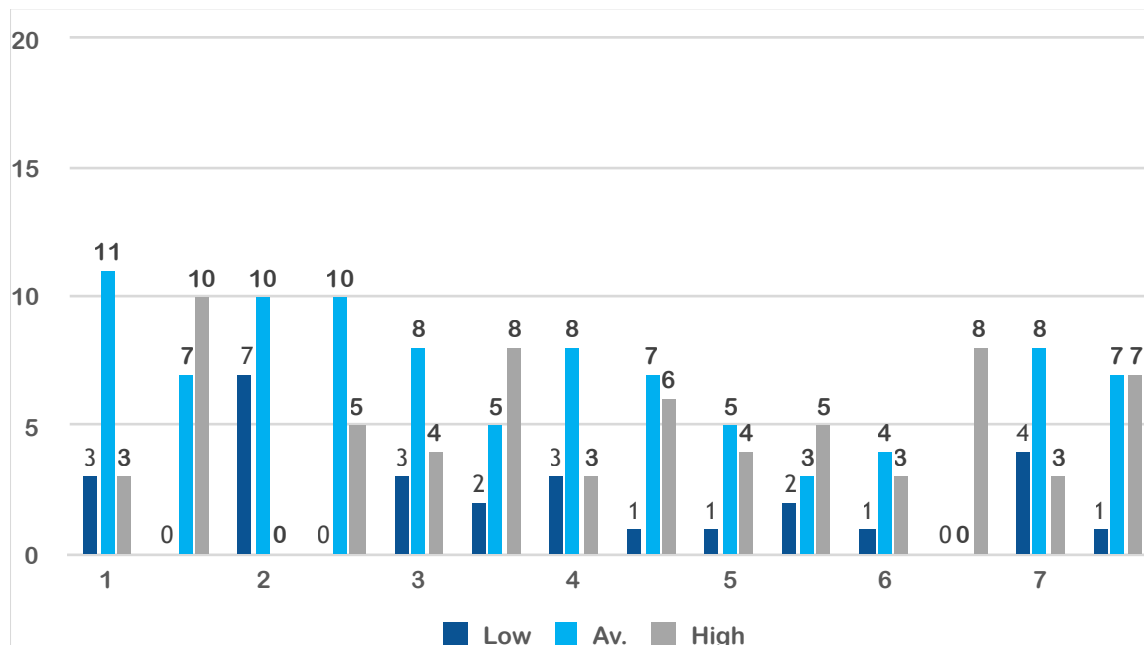
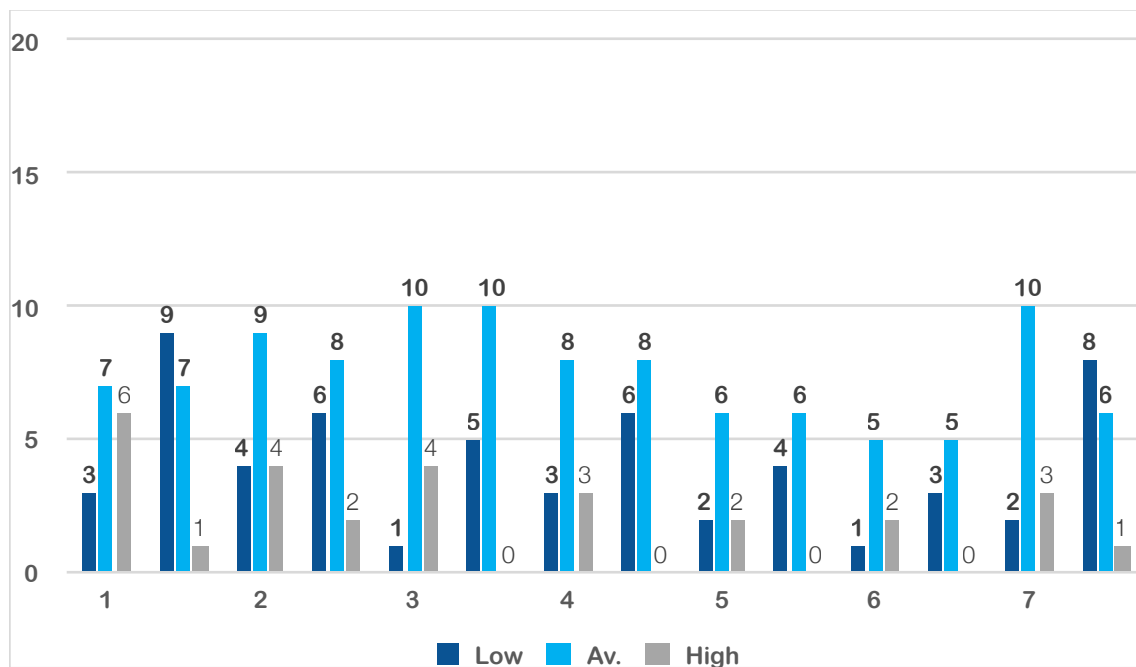


Chart 5. 你的壓力程度 Please rate your stress levels



There was clear improvement of physical wellbeing, energy levels and stress levels each week. Teen physical wellbeing increased each week after the session, increasing most from average to high. Physical wellbeing seemed to improve over the duration of the programme with 75% reporting high levels of physical wellbeing after class in week 7, compared to 50% in week 1. This shows that over the 7 weeks, teens felt the positive physical effects of yoga.

The most improvement can be viewed with reported stress levels. Many teens reported reduced stress levels after sessions. High levels of stress reported after sessions were 0 or 1. This is helpful to see the objectives of coping with stress being successful after the yoga and mindfulness sessions.

Qualitative feedback included in before session was 'tired'. On the first week, after class, the teens shared comments of how they were feeling 'more relaxed and excited for next week'. They felt more 'stable and calm' after, but 'still a little nervous'.

Over the weeks, the students increasingly commented that they felt more relaxed, more comfortable, and more determined to learn more challenging yoga poses. One student shared how they began realizing how unhealthy some of their coping skills were, and expressed how much they 'enjoyed learning the mindfulness techniques'. After the final class one student shared how they felt 'a release of built up emotions', and another student commented that they were 'sad because it was the last session'.

The evaluations forms were filled out after the mindfulness class in the 2 hour session, rather than straight after the yoga class. This could have affected how the students were reflecting on their energy levels and stress levels because they were less active during mindfulness activities and sometimes discussing personal emotions could have triggered some stress or discomfort.

Record of Mood:

The student's mood is based on a 7-point scale using emojis as a universal language to track emotional wellbeing before and after the class. 😊 😄 😌 😐 😞 😭 😡

Chart 6. Mood record before the session

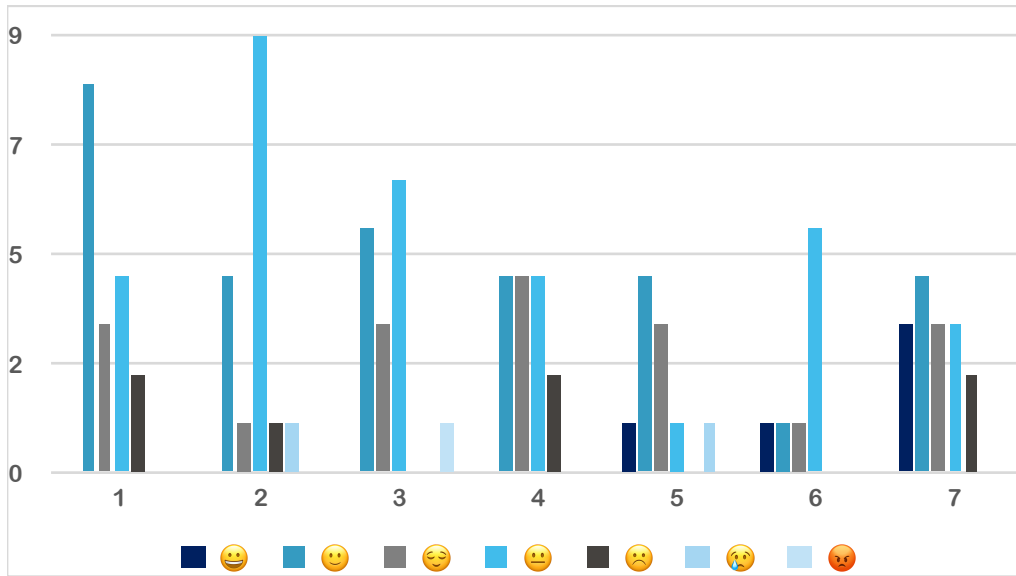
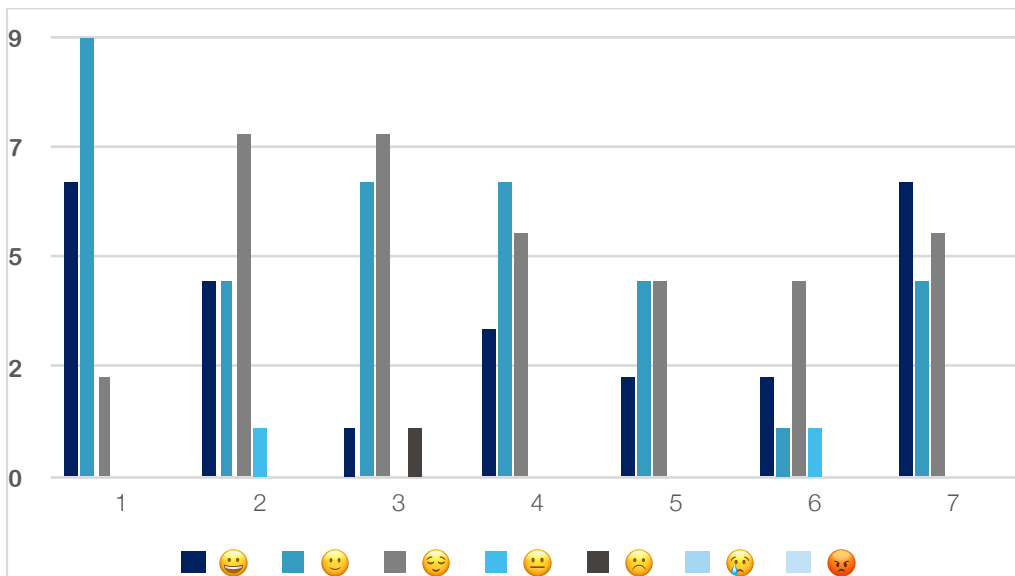


Chart 7. Mood record after the session



Every week, many students would comment that they were 'tired' before class. Then, after class they felt 'more relaxed' and 'happy'. All students would say they felt better afterwards. On week 3, one student felt angry due to personal challenges, but had shown great improvement after class and shared how they felt their mind was quiet and they had released a lot of anger during the session. On the last week one student responded with 'I woke up feeling tired, but after class I feel like taking on the day!'

Across the emoticon responses over the program the students sometimes circled the over the emoticon for **after class**. It is likely that the students had interpreted the 😊 emoticon to be a more positive facial expression to show how they are feeling. Therefore, the emoticon scale could be explained to the students in more detail about what each emoticon represents. Regardless, these results clearly show that students emotions improved after each class. The amount of students who felt the most happiest improved by over 50% each session



“I have learned a lot about my mind and body on this programme, and know that I should never give up on myself.”

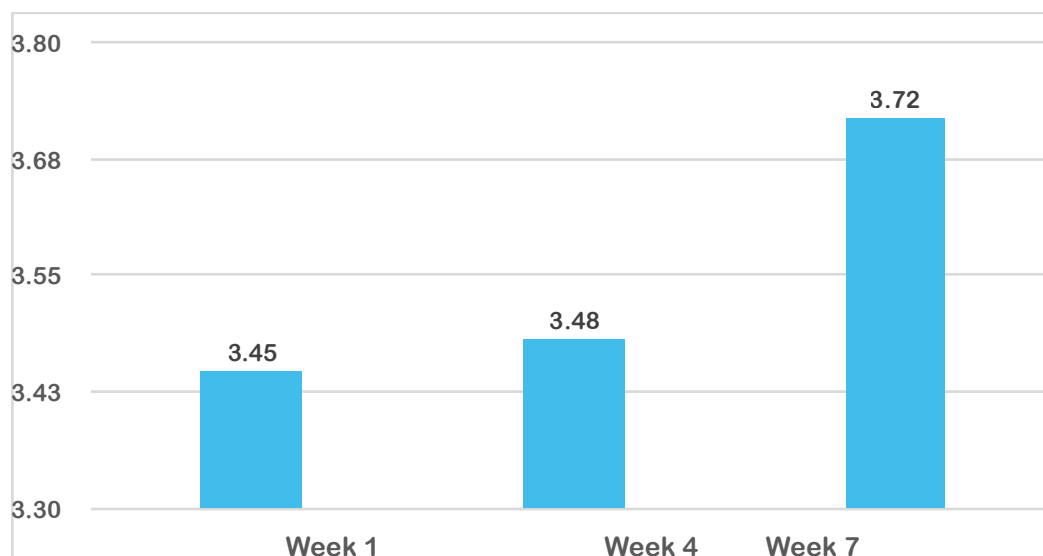
“The programme gave great insight on how to understand and approach uncomfortable emotions.”



Self-Assessment: Mindful Attention Awareness Scale

The MAAS is a 15-item scale designed to assess general mindfulness, receptive awareness and attention to the present moment. The scale uses psychometric properties and has been validated with college, community, and cancer patient samples. Previous studies have shown that the MAAS taps a unique quality of consciousness that is related to, and predictive of, a variety of self-regulation and well-being constructs. The measure takes 10 minutes or less to complete.⁴ (See Appendix for Sample.)

Chart 8. MAAS Average Score



The MAAS questionnaire was given to the teens in week 1, week 4 and week 7. This was to consider the impact of the programme on the teens general mental wellbeing. Using this awareness scale brought some challenges in the programme, because the group of teens was a small sample size to use this type of statistical testing. Also, many of the teens were absent during some of the weeks and so only 10 teens completed all 3 questionnaires. Using the 10 teens, an average score was calculated. On average there was a slight increase in mindfulness and awareness in week 4, with a greater average increase at the end of the programme. However, these results may not be so reliable because of incomplete data. Also there may be more appropriate psychometric scales to consider using in the future that could fit better with the programme objectives.

“ It just felt so good being here with everyone, doing yoga and sharing our feelings.”



⁴ Source: Mindful Attention Awareness Scale: Positive Psychology Centre, <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/resources/questionnaires-researchers/mindful-attention-awareness-scale>

Qualitative Assessment from Instructors

This section provides reflections and observations from the instructors working in the programme. The instructors were asked to think about how the teens received the information and responded in the sessions, what were the challenges and lessons learned for the future.

Instructor Assessment: Margaret Chung

The course seemed to pass so quickly. It felt like 8 weeks was not long enough to really get to know the teens. I believe it would be useful to have a follow-up session with the participants to see how they are getting along after the programme. The students were great and I was happy to see how diverse their backgrounds were.

The location was not ideal. In the future we can choose a space that has more natural light, higher ceilings and easier to set up. Other than that, I really enjoyed the collaboration with Minal and Edwin.

Instructor Assessment: Minal Mahtani

The objectives for the program was to give teens a good understanding of how stress manifests in their lives, how to identify signs and symptoms of stress on the body and mind. The programme provided a broad range of skills to manage stress and anxiety using positive self-talk, breathing techniques to calm the mind, challenging the inner-critic, deep relaxation, and cultivating gratitude. The programme offered materials and assignments to develop their own practice and build their confidence to cope with challenging life situations.

I believe the teens received the information well, but after week 2 we realised we gave them lots of information, and needed to enhance their active engagement through activities and games. We would have like to do some more ice-breakers with them in week 1 to form stronger relationships within the group... Students experienced an improvement in mood, wellbeing and energy from before the class started and after it had taken place. One teen who had special educational needs was disruptive at times, but the volunteer support from our teaching staff, alongside the activities, helped him to become more confident, willing to share, trusting and calmer as we progressed through the weeks.

The structure of the lesson involved presentation slides, with handouts and templates for activities. We found that keeping slides simple and as a prompt for us was the most successful to engage the group. Although we found that we were limited in time for the sessions because we wanted to recap the previous sessions main points and learnt techniques. Also the yoga studio did not have the set up that we expected for teaching the mental wellbeing component, so we will consider choosing a more appropriate location in the future. We found that because the studio was big, this made it hard to connect with the teens at times by keeping them present, engaged and focused. Also we had some technical issues with screen projector and sound system which need to be attended to in the future also.

Finally, one of the biggest challenges that I think the program experienced was retaining the students attendance each week. There were many reasons why this may be the case; examinations, tiredness and wanting to rest on Saturday instead of engage with the programme. The team could consider altering the time of the sessions, charge a higher deposit fee, or find a different time in the year when examinations are not impacting teens commitment to the programme.

Instructor Assessment: Edwin Yau

This was a unique programme combining mindfulness and yoga training together. It offers a new structured opportunity for teens to learn new skills to maintain their emotional well-beings. Some teens in the programme experienced a number of mental health issues and the programme was altered to create highly engaging experiences for them. It helped us harness their enthusiasm.

Assessing the teens using the MAAS scale aimed to measure their overall well-being, and around 40% of students showed improvement in the assessment tool, but the result was not statistically significant as the sample size was too small. Although the result was not statistically significant, some students reflected that the stress level experienced in the coming examination were not as high as before. They tried breathing techniques and found them effective in handling their anxiety and stress. They also pointed out that incorporating stress reduction into the yoga program boost their confidence to handle challenging events. Some students were not present in some of the sessions due to examinations or other personal reasons. Nevertheless, the opportunity to educate students about mindfulness and yoga together through the “Here to be” programme did offer an improvement in attentive mindfulness.

In the future, the team could consider ways to improve teens absorption of the teaching materials and monitor their practice of skills outside the classroom. I would like to explore various ways of delivering activities to keep it interesting to teens. Also, consider employing some alternative psychological test or measurements in the future programs to enhance better understanding regarding the strength and extent of the programmes.

“I would recommend this programme 100% to everyone because it was something I looked forward to every week!”



“It was incredibly helpful and reminded me to prioritise my mental health.”

Self-Assessment: Evaluation of the Programme

In addition to weekly feedback forms, 15 teens completed a feedback form to evaluate the whole programme. There were 4 parts to the evaluation form. Part one gave responses on the content, materials and assignments given. Part two was an evaluation for the instructors. Part three responded to qualitative questions involving their highlights, what they learned and what they would like to see in future programmes. Here are the results below.

The majority of the teens rated the overall programme as excellent. They mostly thought the handouts were 'excellent' and 'good', with one teen responding 'fair'. The assignments were also mostly 'excellent' and 'good', with 2 teens rating them fair, and 1 teen rating them 'unsatisfactory'. Overall, most students were satisfied with the programme.

The teens all rated Margaret 'excellent'. Minal was also rated excellent by most of the teens, with 1 teen rating her 'good'. Edwin was rated excellent by 11 teens, 2 rated 'good' and 2 rated 'fair'. The teens were happy with the instructors and made comments that the instructors were very supportive and helpful during the programme.

Part Three: Qualitative questions

What is the most important thing you learned?

Sometimes it is okay to just feel average and know things will get better

To trust myself

How to breathe properly during stressful situations

That it is so easy to take of yourself and I should do it more often

How to love myself

How to destress and move on

How to relax

How to get myself out of a bad place

How to cope with stress

Please share with us your highlights of the programme

Being able to focus on my mental health without feeling stressed about expressing myself

Learning yoga

The release of stress after the programme

The acts of kindness activity and sharing nice things to each other

The unique and varied skills we learnt

Becoming more aware of myself and meeting some amazing people

Any practices or techniques experienced that you intend to incorporate into your daily life?

I have started doing yoga to calm down or destress, and use more affirmations

The double nostril breathing exercise

Fit yoga into my daily routine

How to identify stress in my life

Deep breathing to calm myself

Please share some improvements you feel would make the programme better?

More reflection work to do at home and maybe some infographics on how to cope in stressful situations

The option to work alone for some exercises

Having more sharing sessions from participants themselves, and getting them to lead the sessions

Running it at a different time of the year

I found the games with props not as effective as other activities

If we did a follow up programme, what would this consist of?

Maybe some other aspects of mental health and learn different disorders

Learn more about yoga

More yoga classes and stress management

A full time yoga and mediation session

Opportunities for us to share our own experiences

The chance to talk to counsellors individually

Summary of Qualitative Questions

The responses show that the teens massively benefited from the programme and were able to release stress and learn how to cope with stress better, which meets the objectives of the programme. Many teens learned the invaluable tools of yoga and mindfulness through postures and breathing techniques that they began practicing in their daily lives. The teens expressed how they became more aware of themselves and how to engage in more self-care.

Teens commented that they would like more reflection work to do and be able to share their personal experiences more with the group. All of the teens said they wanted a follow up programme to happen and provided some ideas for what the programme would consist of.

Part 3: 8-Week Yoga & Meditation Classes for Teens

Tai O

YAMA & lululemon visited the Buddhist Fat Ho Memorial College on the invitation of Principle Eric Yuon who was keen to have the Here To Be programme conducted in-house at the school. We made a last minute decision to include a programme for secondary students at this school. We recruited a different team for the programme and kept it simple about yoga, breathing, relaxation and meditation as we had little planning time before implementation.

Key Performance Indicators for the Programme*

We decided to formally measure our impacts with the students conducting self-assessments:

1. Self Assessment: Levels of Physical Wellbeing, Stress & Mood

YAMA Foundation offers a standard feedback form, which asks students to comment on their physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as energy levels each week between sessions; how they feel before the session; and how they feel after the sessions.

2. Teacher Observations: Qualitative Feedback

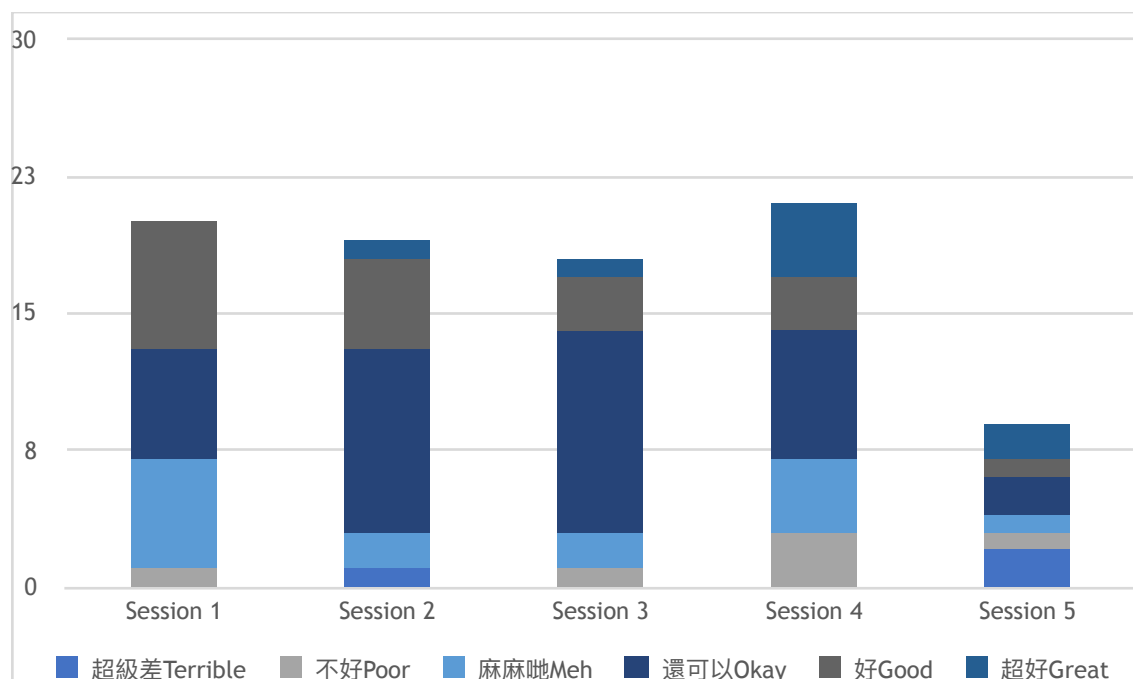
In addition to these measures, we wanted the yoga teacher and the school teachers to share their observations on how they connected to the children, how well they felt the programme was received, highlights and challenges of the programme, as well as suggestions for improvement.

**NOTE: See Appendix for samples.*

Student Self-Assessments of Wellbeing, Stress & Mood:

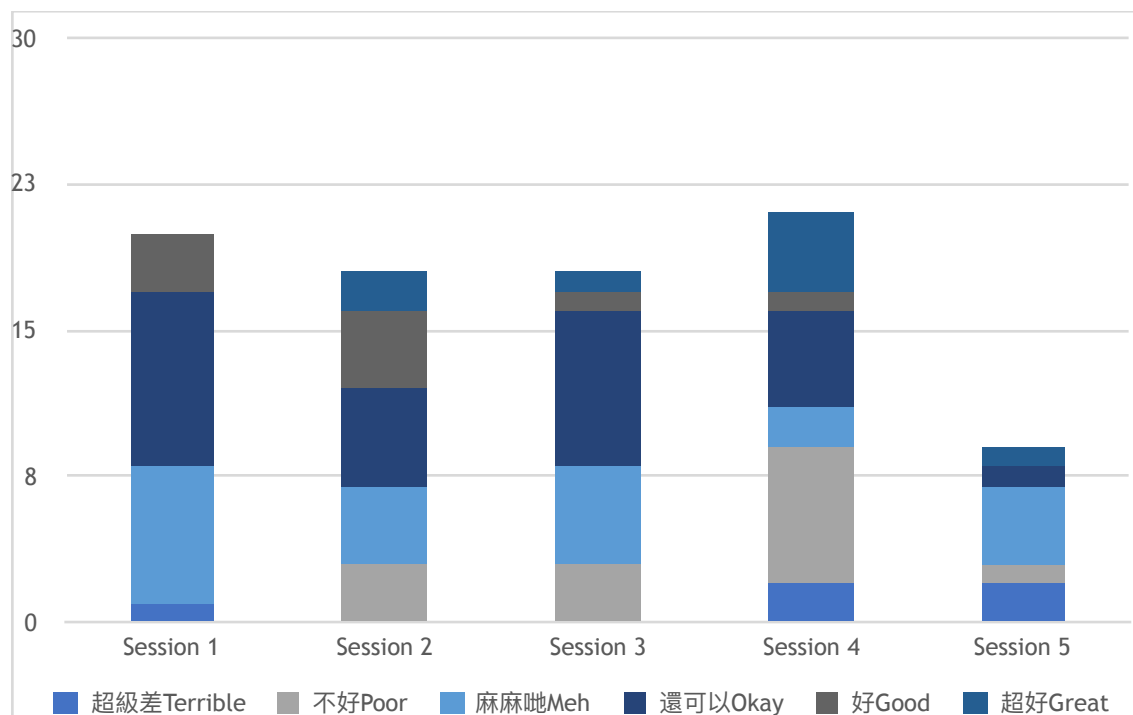
Similar to the Urban Hong Kong programme, we asked the students to self assess their physical wellbeing, energy levels and stress levels, as well as mood. The results are as follows:

Chart 9. 上星期你的整體舒服感覺 | How would you rate your overall sense of wellbeing during the past week?



The students from Tai O reported that they mostly felt 'okay' during the past week before each class. In week 2 and 3, around 50% of the students were feeling okay but this became slightly less in week 4 and 5. Also, the chart shows that around 30% of the students felt 'good' in week 1, but this slowly reduced and more students responded 'great' instead. Therefore, these results show that students overall wellbeing could have been improved over the sessions. Though, similar to the Urban programme, the lower sense of wellbeing from students in the week 5 session, could have been influenced by their feelings towards the examination period.

Chart 10. 上星期你的整體壓力程度 | How would you rate your overall stress levels during the past week?



The students reported varied responses to their stress levels during the week before each class. In week 1, over half the students said their stress levels were 'okay' or 'good'. Similar to overall wellbeing, stress levels show the most significant change in week 4, which is presumably the time when students were under a lot of pressure to perform in their exams. This can also explain why attendance dropped in week 5. Another notable difference is that the number of students who reported 'great' actually increased. In week 1 no one reported feeling 'great', but by week 4, almost 25% of the students reported feeling 'great'. This can show a positive impact of the yoga sessions in the students lives on a weekly basis.

Summary of Findings for Physical Wellbeing, Energy Levels & Stress Levels Before & After Class

Chart 11. 現時身體的健康程度 Please rate your physical wellbeing

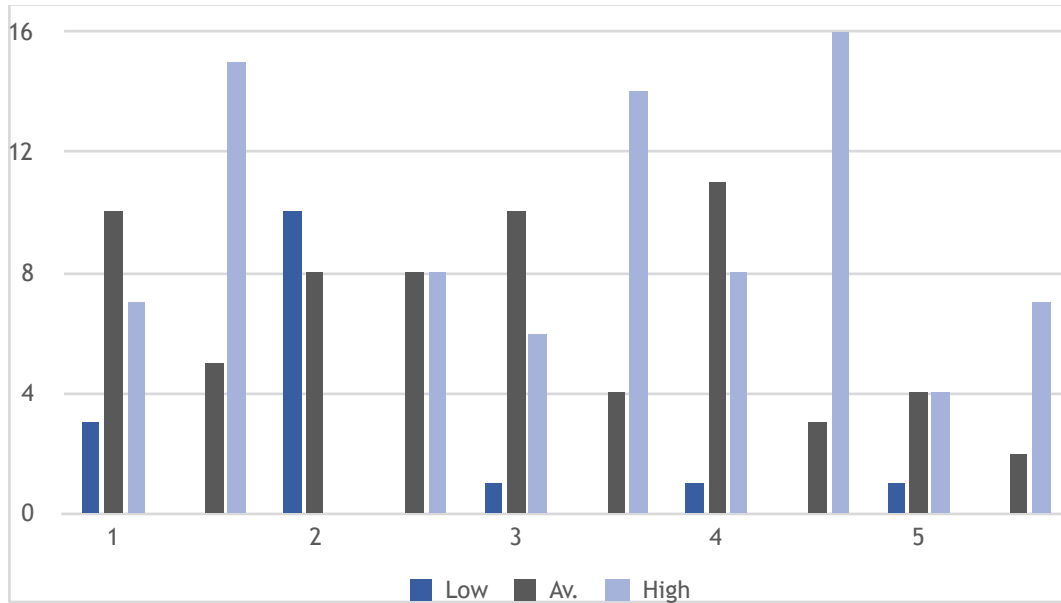


Chart 12. 你的能量程度 Please rate your energy levels

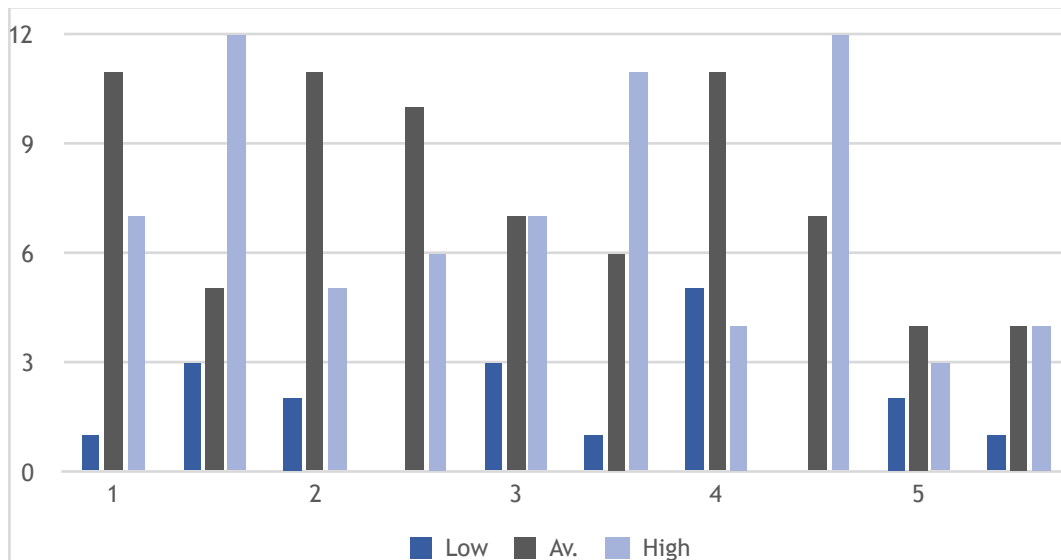
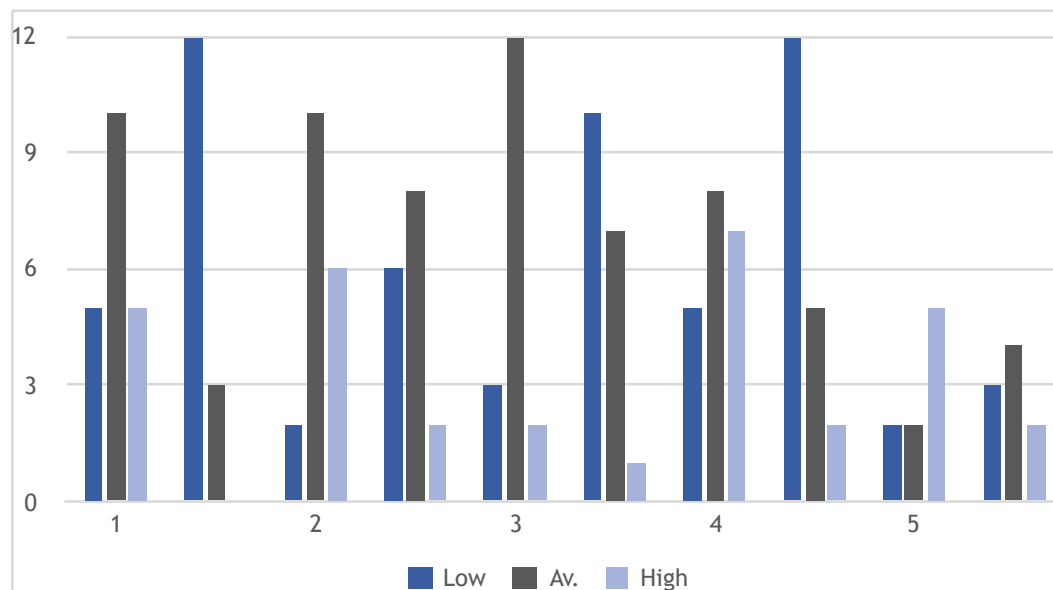


Chart 13. 你的壓力程度 Please rate your stress levels



The results above in the three charts show again that there was obvious improvement of physical wellbeing, energy levels and stress levels each week. Physical wellbeing showed significant increase each week after the session. The students at Tai O school felt the positive effects of yoga as every week. After each session there would be no reports of low physical wellbeing and the majority of students reporting high.

The most improvement can be viewed with reported energy levels. The students energy levels reported dropped significantly after class. In weeks 2 and 4, no one felt low energy after class!

Stress levels are important to see in a school environment. Before each class, students reported mostly average stress levels. High stress levels before class seemed to decrease in the first 3 weeks, and then increase again in weeks 4 and 5. The high numbers of low stress levels can also be seen after each class, which provides good evidence that yoga is a supportive tool in reducing stress amongst school students in Hong Kong.

Record of Mood:

The student's mood is based on a 7-point scale using emojis as a universal language to track emotional wellbeing before and after the class. 😊 😄 😌 😐 😞 😓 😡

Chart 14. Mood record before the session

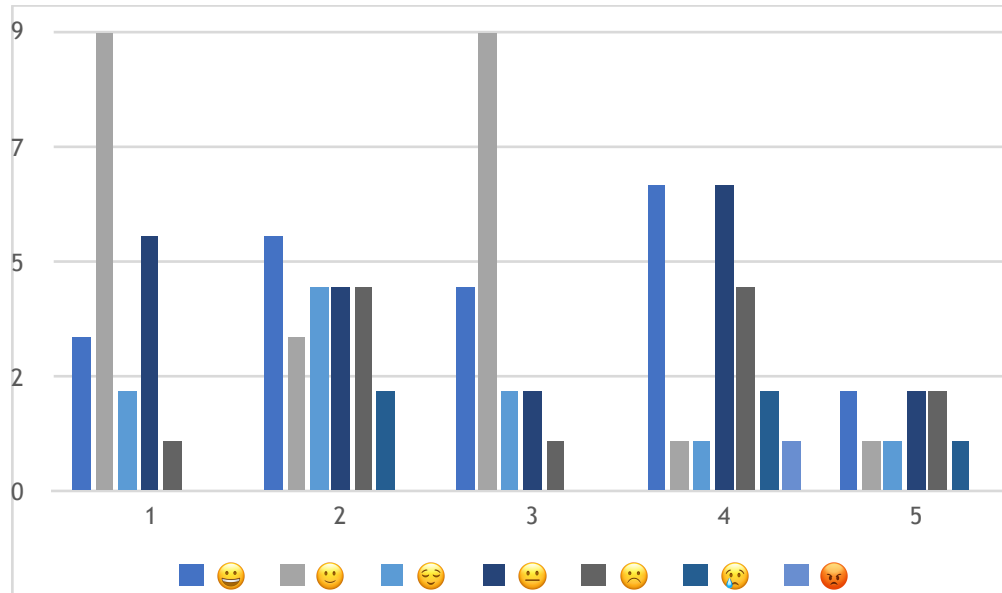
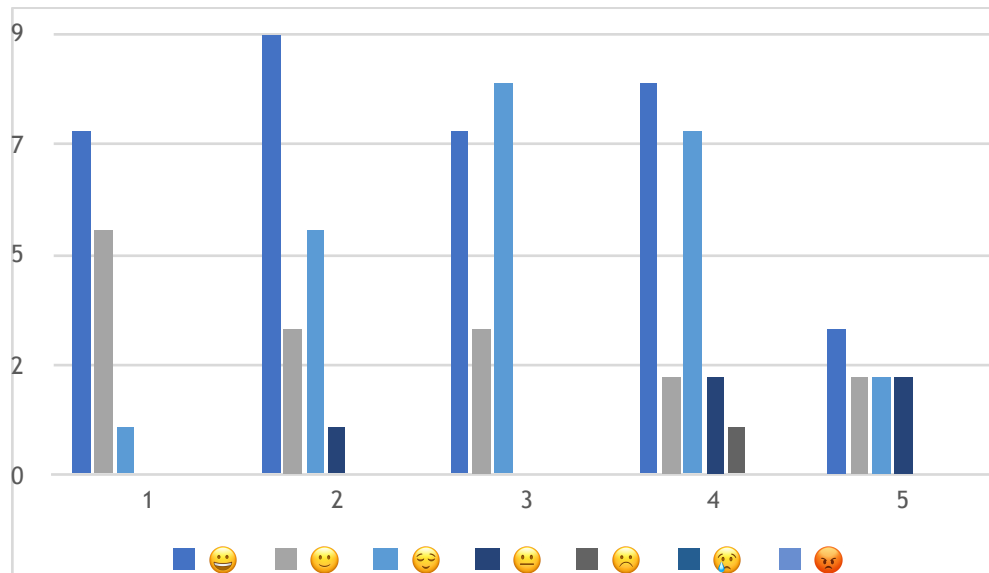


Chart 15. Mood record after the session



The mood records shows that before each session, student would come into the session with a mixture of emotions. Then all students would say they felt better afterwards. On week 4, one student felt angry, but the yoga session had improved their mood as they did not report any more anger after the session.

Across the emoticon responses, the students at Tai O programme seemed to circle the emoticon scale correctly. Most students after each class circled 😊, 😄 or 😁. Like all the previous charts, there is a change in the trend of improved emotions on week 5, we can only assume that exam pressures played a role, because the first weeks show a steady increase of improved moods. It would be important to continue the yoga classes at Tai O school, to see if over a longer term, there is any more stability with increased moods after yoga, and whether yoga can play a vital role in contributing to reduced negative emotions during exam and school pressures. The number of students who felt the happiest emotion improved by around 50% in sessions 1 – 4.

Qualitative Assessment from Instructors

This section provides reflections and observations from the instructors working in the programme. The instructors were asked to think about how the teens received the information and responded in the sessions, what were the challenges and lessons learned for the future.

Instructor Assessment: Hersha Chellaram

The group of form five students were very enthusiastic and energetic. Many of them had never tried yoga before. The majority of students were tight in their legs, hips and lower back — normal for absolute beginners. We introduced the classical Integral Yoga Hatha 1 class in a more lively and engaging manner. At first the students were more reserved (especially when their school principal joined in the classes). As they became more comfortable, they started to open up more, laugh a lot and really enjoy themselves. Many students improved range of motion, ability to hold postures for a longer time, as well as strength and hand-eye coordination.

Each session we had two hours to work with the teens. We started off having a discussion about yoga philosophy and lifestyle, spoke about meditation, however we realised that they were the most responsive when engaged in the yoga class itself, moving around. Our last class we introduced partner yoga, and the students really enjoyed this part. Many wanted to try more poses and engage in this type of activity. So I believe games are the better way to teach the teens. Also in terms of logistics, it makes sense to have the yoga class first, as towards the end of the session, the schools Lion Dance team would have practice sessions and the drum beat was distracting to relaxation and meditation.

Our schedule was a little sporadic. Although we had set the dates beforehand, we had to make a lot of changes and adjustments including a one-month break in between. Obviously this was not ideal. We spoke to the school about setting a schedule which was more regular and structured. Also seeing as students had events and exams, the attendance had dipped for the last three classes.

I believe the students really enjoyed the classes. They expressed an interest to join in again should we offer the programme. The school also expressed an interest to increase the number of classes at the school. I believe that our team at YAMA and the students of BFHMC really bonded.

Instructor Assessment: Katia Bacon

It was a real pleasure to meet the teens and teach them yoga. The primary teacher led the class in English and was assisted by a Cantonese Yoga Teacher who helped translate while the class was taking place. Our primary concerns were to make sure the Cantonese speaking students were able to follow the instructions and had the chance to participate in the discussions. The feedback forms were a good indicator of their feeling of inclusiveness.

Since the programme was established very quickly, we decided to work with the following set up:

- 30min - Introduction and/or discussion to a mindful theme linked to the benefit of yoga and mediation.
- 90min - Yoga practice including 60min Hatha practice (physical practice) 15min Deep relaxation,
- 10min Breathing Exercise, 5min meditation.

The themes introduced were, for example, Perform a Random Act of Kindness, Breathing Benefits, Reflection on Self Worth and Body awareness. The teens feedback forms were a good source on how well the subject were received. Some students approached us the following week telling us how they had used what they learned. Over the weeks, we could see a real improvement on the connection the students were having with their bodies. They became more accepting on how their body worked and less judgmental of themselves when practicing.

The challenge for this first 8 week programme at Tai O was the constant changes in class schedule. The shuffling around to accommodate either holidays, graduation ceremonies and/or exam, led to having to either postpone or shorten the time of the classes. Leaving us with a little bit of frustration on keeping a momentum when working on incorporating specific teachings.

For the next programme, the sessions need to be well planned on dates. Also I would recommend for the team of yoga teacher to meet and prepare a plan of action. For example, use one theme over several weeks so the students have more time to integrate the techniques and feed the teachers back with their progression.

Self-Assessment: Evaluation of the Programme

Here are the results of the feedback provided by the students.

The majority of the teens rated the overall programme as 'excellent' and 'good'. They mostly thought the handouts were 'excellent' and 'good', with one teen responding 'fair'. The assignments were also mostly 'excellent' and 'good', with 1 teen rating them fair. Overall, most students were satisfied with the programme.

The teens rated Hersha 'excellent' and two teens rated her 'good'. Katia also the same rating. Chim Chim received all 'excellent' with three 'good' and one 'fair'. The teens were happy with the instructors and made comments that the instructors were very supportive and helpful during the programme.

Qualitative Feedback

What is the most important thing you learned?

How to calm down when a lot of things are going in my mind. (Since there's been too many things happening.)

How to relax my body

How to clear your mind

To forget about all the negativity and change your mood by doing nothing

To constantly relax the mind

How to work better

Please share with us your highlights of the programme

My favourite would be when we tried different types of meditation methods. They were very helpful.

Mindfulness

Partner poses

I finally touched my toes when I stretch

All activities were great

[During deep relaxation] I was passed out snoring...

Any practices or techniques experienced that you intend to incorporate into your daily life?

The breathing practices & meditation method, "Peace Begins With Me."

I will do the mindfulness exercise when I feel pressure

Mindfulness

I try to reach my toes once in a while

All the breathing exercises

Yes, the relaxation part

The 12-step movement / Sun Salutations

Please share some improvements you feel would make the programme better?

Allowing form 6 students to join, since it will really benefit us with the [upcoming] stressful DSE exams.

More mind learning / clearing activities

More group poses

More exercises that can help relax

More of the buddy yoga practice, shares a lot of great laughs and challenges

If we did a follow up programme, what would this consist of?

More exercises

More stretching to improve our flexibility

More of things that can get us worked up (ie Sun Salutations)

To get more stress out due to us being in Form 6 next year

Everything that can help us become stretchable

Surprise me

The responses show that the teens fully enjoyed the programme and were keen to learn more. The main feedback was that they wanted much more. They found that the yoga classes helped them unwind and feel good in their bodies and minds, this helps reach the objectives of the programme. Perhaps moving forwards we can incorporate more of the teachings from the Urban programme to help them with their mental health.

Teens commented that they would like more to try more advanced yoga postures, working in partners or groups. They enjoyed activities that were more interactive and light-hearted.



“I have learned a lot about my mind and body on this programme, and know that I should never give up on myself.”

“The programme gave great insight on how to understand and approach uncomfortable emotions.”



Press Coverage & Photos

SCMP Link - <https://yp.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/111853/free-yoga-and-mindfulness-lessons-hk-students-co-organised-lululemon>



Challenges, Changes & Lessons Learned

The majority of our instructors and students felt that the sessions were too short. We needed to plan better to allow better time for recruitment. The timing of the programme did clash with public exams, therefore we would suggest running the programme from September to December each year.

One of the things we need to discuss and consider is whether there was any difference in running the programme across all schools versus being in-house at one school. Also, how would we follow up with the students should they wish to go further in their practice and understanding of yoga, mindfulness and/or meditation.

Another main discussion for our team is to see how we can scale this programme to reach a wider group of teens, engage and empower them to help other teens in their schools and communities and open up the discussion about mental health in a more accepting way. One example would be to invite the past participants to come back to be mentors. Another idea was to invite them to our future brainstorming sessions when developing the programme.

In terms of spending, we came in just under the budget and did not tap into our contingency funds. We will use these funds towards continuing the Tai O programme from September to December 2019. (Please refer to the HTB Budget Report on a separate document.)

On behalf of YAMA Foundation and all the staff and volunteers from the Here To Be 2018, we would like to thank lululemon for your kind support and generous contribution.

Thanks to you, we were able to enhance the quality of life for Hong Kong teens, many of whom are suffering from depression, anxiety, trauma and stress.

Many of these teens do not have the opportunity to fully express themselves in such a nurturing and accepting environment, or have discomforts in their bodies addressed. Your generous grant enabled us to make their lives a little more comfortable and happy.

Thank you from everyone at YAMA Foundation!