

THESIS

How Being Mindful and Connecting in Nature Affect Wellbeing

Researching the effects of natural mindfulness towards wellbeing in
'The Journey'

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ABSTRACT

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Connecting in nature mindfully generally brings a higher degree of one's wellbeing. A known process from 'The Journey' by Ian Banyard was followed in order to provide measurable results in the thesis in order to describe how wellbeing is enhanced. This thesis takes the structure from 'The Journey' and further expands the means of growing the understanding of one's wellbeing.

A series of four qualitative and quantitative surveys were employed throughout the program to gather necessary information. This provides confidence that 'The Journey' is useful in promoting wellbeing and self-discovery while also building a supportive community of like-minded people. The data provides further personal insight on how to improve future 'Journey' programs.

Due to inconsistent participation in the surveys throughout my research, ensuring the results were unbiased, proved to be challenging. However, trends in the data were observed. The participants already began with a knowledge and appreciation for nature, wellbeing and mindfulness. Therefore, the full improvement potential of the course may not be as obvious as the participants started with a higher enlightened baseline than the general public.

Keywords: Wellbeing, Mindfulness, Nature, Connection, The Journey, Self-discovery, Community

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1 INTRODUCTION

“Allow nature’s peace to flow into you as sunshine flows into trees.”
-John Muir

The topic I researched is, ‘How Being Mindful & Connecting in Nature Affect Wellbeing’. If you look for a definition of wellbeing online there can be many definitions. Simply put, wellbeing is about feeling well (Davis 2019). Overall wellbeing is described as having a good quality mental health, a sense of purpose and ambition, a sense of meaning, good stress managing skills and a feeling of fulfilment in life (Davis 2019).

Mindfulness also has many definitions. In the article from Positive Psychology.com, Catherine Moore explains that many people may only see meditation as the only form of practicing mindfulness (Moore 2021). Although, meditation is a very amazing form of mindfulness there are actually many other ways out there (Moore 2021). In the article there is a quote from Sharon Salzberg that helps to explain what mindfulness is. She explains that:

“Mindfulness isn’t just about knowing that you’re hearing something, seeing something, or even observing that you’re having a particular feeling. It’s about doing so in a certain way-with balance and equanimity, and without judgement. Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention in a way that creates space for insight.” (Salzberg 2021).

Mindfulness is the practice of being aware of yourself (breathing, movement and emotions) and the things in your surroundings (noises, colours, shapes, smells & touch) in the present moment. Wellbeing and mindfulness are both subjective, meaning they derive from or are affected by personal sentiments, sense of tastes or points of views (Oxford learners dictionaries). Natural Mindfulness is when you combine being mindful in nature. That is why it is called ‘natural mindfulness’. According to ‘Nature-mentor.com’, nature connection is not only about being physically outside but that it is also about the feelings and connection you feel with nature and the level of presence an individual has in their current situation and environment (Nature mentor).

Wellbeing has become an increasingly popular topic during the past two years. Poor psychological wellbeing is a worldwide issue that affects around 1,1 billion people (Kotera & Fido 2021, cited by: Ritchie & Roser 2018) People have begun to do more research and try to find new solutions to increase better wellbeing within themselves, at home at the workplace, school, etc. Living in a fast-paced world with constant distractions mindfulness

can be hard to practice. Being connected to one another 24/7 through technology and being taught that we must be productive and doing things at all times. Usually, we are not living in the present and only focusing on the past or the future. We know already that being outdoors is good for our physical health. Moving our bodies and getting exercise, absorbing vitamin D from the sun, lowers blood pressure, improves cardiovascular health, etc. We don't often think about how mindfulness in nature is beneficial for our mental health. Stress and anxiety are eased by mindfulness in nature. It increases concentration, gives a sense of fulfilment, positivity, promotes creativity, makes you aware of yourself (mentally and physically) and your surroundings, improves sleep, self-awareness, productivity, the feeling of being connected to nature, increase in energy, feeling of empowerment, less aggression and depression, etc. Also, being mindful in nature could potentially lead to improvement in environmental sustainability. Spending time being truly mindful in nature could raise awareness in individuals which may influence their behaviour. For example: if you have a good relationship with a person, one will want to take care of that person and respect them. I believe people can also have a caring relationship with nature. If people spend more time outdoors in nature being mindful it could improve the health of our planet and the health of the people living here. The great thing about practicing mindfulness is that anybody can do it. You may practice mindfulness at any age regardless of gender, race, culture, size and/or physical and mental capabilities. We just need to have the knowledge and awareness to know how to use it to our advantage.

The reason for the sudden increase in attention towards a healthy wellbeing could be due to several factors. Many people began to pay more attention to wellbeing during the global covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions that followed along. Another reason could be due to an increase of time spent on technology devices and less time spent outdoors or with people. According to an article written in June 2020 from Mckinsey.com, the standard of contentment of life in Europe, dropped to its poorest measure since the 1980's in April. Coming from a continent which has normally surpassed the other continents around the world in wellbeing, this is very concerning. (Mckinsey.com 2020). This increase of attention has led to people realizing the importance of having a healthy wellbeing and what methods are out there that we can use to understand and maintain a good wellbeing.

Mindfulness and nature connection are two very powerful and seemingly simple tools to maintain and improve wellbeing. They are relevant to wellbeing because it allows you to live in the present and focus on yourself, your feelings and the life that is around you in that

moment without judgement. It can connect you to something greater like the earth and surrounding nature. As we come from nature it can connect us back to our roots. Another advantage is that it is free, we just need to have the knowledge and the awareness how to use it. The disadvantages are that nature connection and mindfulness may seem too time consuming to individuals, maybe also boring or too ‘spiritual’. Some people, especially those who grew up and still live-in areas where there isn’t much nature, typically have a harder time spending time in nature and finding a connection with it.

My research may help us better understand how being mindful and connecting in nature affect wellbeing. My aim is to observe how natural mindfulness and connection affect wellbeing. I observe the affects through my commissioners’ program ‘The Journey’. Also, by collecting sufficient data for how future ‘Journey’ programs can improve. In my thesis I include information of ‘The Journey’ program, my commissioner, the needs, objectives/goals, my knowledge base, measures, analysis of all four surveys, the results and products and my conclusions.

There are many studies, theories and concepts like the psychoevolutionary theory, attention restoration theory, biophilia hypothesis, ‘study on nature and human emotions’, ‘what is the best dose of nature and green exercise for improving mental health’, ‘30 Days Wild: Development and Evaluation of a Large-Scale Nature Engagement Campaign to Improve Well-Being’, shinrin-yoku/forest bathing, friluftsliv, ‘study of the brain in city’s vs nature’ and MBNT (Mindfulness Based Nature and Forest Therapy). The methodology researched helps to support my topic.

1.1 ‘The Journey’

‘The Journey’ is explained as ‘discovering & releasing your true nature’ (Banyard 2020). It is an online and offline program that runs throughout a period of 8 weeks. Ian Banyard, my commissioner explains that he guides participants along ‘paths’ by using a 3-step process which he describes as very simple. The first step is experience, second is connection and the third is sharing (Banyard 2020).

‘The Journey’ first began in December 2020 and is still active. The original platform for this program was through Facebook but then Ian moved it to a more private and specific platform called ‘Nature Connection World’ which he created. We can interact more easily as a group and find other people or programs who share similar interests about mostly everything nature

related. The switch of platforms made it easier to stay focused, be more interactive with the group and build a nice community together.

The interactive video meetings that we have together once every week is recorded and saved so all members can revisit the video and follow at their own pace. If you follow at the same pace as the 8-week program, we focus on one 'guide' for two weeks. The first week Ian introduces a new guide and shares some mindful and nature connection assignment/activity that participants can do offline on their own time. The assignments are related to each 'guide' to help you 'discover, heal, know, and release' that inner part of you (Banyard 2020).

Afterwards, you have the option to share it within the group as a written post, with pictures or even a short video. All participants are divided into groups where they can interact more closely and get to know each other. Participants are encouraged to engage with one another in their groups which creates a supportive and encouraging community. This is done by commenting under one another's post or simply giving a like. Everyone is welcomed to share either by a written post, adding photos or even a short video. Creativity is welcomed and encouraged. Some participants even make nature art or some crafts with nature. Sometimes Ian refers to certain participants posts in our weekly online video meetings.

There are four 'guides' we explore in this program, that is the hunter/huntress, gatherer, expert and explorer. It is a similar approach to Karl Jung's four archetype theory.

The hunter/huntress is our inner protector. It protects us and the others we care about. It's the side of us that follows our instincts and that holds our temper, courage, confidence and bravery. The hunter can come out when you're tired, stressed, annoyed or irritated. The commissioner explained that it is actually found in one of the oldest parts of our brain, in the cerebellum, which some people may know it as the 'lizard brain' (Banyard 2021). The first assignment for this guide is to channel and explore your inner huntress by hunting things by using your senses and instincts. The week after participants reflect (Banyard 2020). During the reflection, participants are asked to write down what they learned and experienced during the exploration of that guide. They can either write it down publicly on the 'Nature Connection' platform or write in down and keep it to themselves.

The Gatherer is our inner caregiver. It's the part of us that likes community, family, friends and building bonds. The gatherer can make lots of compromises and become very flexible to please the people around them. This guide is influenced by your emotions. Gatherers don't like to feel rejected or alienated. Gatherers may forget to be mindful and care a bit too much for other people at the expense of themselves. Which leads to gatherers easily experiencing a

burn. The first assignment to help explore your inner gatherer involves gathering things that you find in nature (Banyard 2020).

Our inner Expert is the part of us that likes to know everything, makes goals, can be a perfectionist and feels some stress when taking steps out of their comfort zone (which they rarely do). Experts like to be prepared, organized and know their next steps. Ian explained that this course may cause some stress for experts because Ian doesn't tell his participants what is happening next. The first assignment for the expert is to educate themselves about their natural surroundings. Participants can do this by going for a walk and practicing mindfulness and being aware of things that drew their awareness. Be aware of thoughts you may have during your exploration and any questions you may have. Let your inner expert learn about your discovery. Participants can take a picture, write about what they found and later on research about it after their walk.

Lastly, we explore our inner explorer. The explorer is the part of us that likes adventure and follows their intuition. They want to set their true self free into society. The goal in the first week is about being brave and exploring new paths instead of taking the one that is known and comfortable to you. Then we must free ourselves from the fear of what others may believe about your chosen path (Banyard 2020). The assignment for this guide is to go out and explore letting our intuitive sight guide us. You can explore new trails and discover what awaits at the end or re visit a known trail but with a new perspective and awareness for the sounds and sights around you or for the new thoughts that may arise while exploring through it. Instead of letting fear take over, just allow your sense of curiosity to dominate (Banyard 2020).

We are not always consciously aware of these guides within us which doesn't give us the chance to develop them. Ian explains that the parts of us that we ignore or deem as bad never get developed (Banyard 2020). Ian believes that these four guides are all within us but sometimes only one or two is dominant which has been confirmed from all the past groups. The most dominant is explorer and gatherer is second. Ian has a theory for why explorers seem to be the most dominant. It could be because explorers enjoy exploring which the journey is all about discovering and learning things about yourself. Explorers were able to find their way to the 'Journey' and find the necessary approach to uncover new traits about their selves (Banyard 2020).

Ian uses a new approach called 'Mindfulness Based Nature & Forest Therapy' (MBNT). He explains that MBNT:

“is a therapeutic practice that takes place in natural environments such as forests, countryside, parks and gardens, with the aim of improving human health & wellbeing “(Banyard 2020).

During my research I discovered that natural mindfulness and being connected to nature can not only improve wellbeing but also being a part of/having a sense of community impacts our wellbeing greatly as well.

Ian created a community by creating his program and platform. It brought people with similar mindsets, goals and interests together. Community offers so many benefits like improvement in mental/physical wellbeing due to an increase in support which makes people feel cared for and better about their own self (Clarabut 2020). By sharing in a community, it offers encouragement to continue and develops confidence in yourself and can make you feel empowered. By being a part of a community, you begin building relationships with people and it can bring a strong sense of belonging and safety (Clarabut 2020). By relating with one another it helps to offer support to everyone in the group and oneself and brings sense of “being a part of something greater than ourselves” (Clarabut 2020). You can also share all your moments together whether its solving personal obstacles in life, to release your thoughts about something, have a good laugh or take part in a someone’s big accomplishment (Clarabut 2020). Community allows us to educate ourselves and each other by sharing our plans, reflections and helpful tools (Clarabut 2020).

It’s a very valuable and unique program as most conventional education methods force students to be able to always work, learn and study at the same pace as their whole class. Also, to be able to hand in projects on time with no consideration towards the student’s wellbeing or current life circumstances. In our society we are pacing through systems that are made to fit only one type of group of people. The reason Ian named this program ‘The journey’ is because all of us are following our very own journey at our own pace. Each one of our self-paced journeys will not be similar to any other person as its personal and unique (Banyard 2020).

Also, the dividing of the participants into groups. It makes it less overwhelming and allows possible communication and maybe more willingness to share their experiences or thoughts. It helps build community and confidence in each other.

After discovering and exploring a new guide there is time to reflect. Reflection is an important part of ‘the journey’ as it allows participants to take the experiences that they learned from the exercises assigned after the online meetings and get a deeper understanding of what they discovered. Kolb’s learning cycle helps to see the process and importance of reflection and experiential learning (see figure 1).

„what turns experience into experiential learning is the reflection process, as it gives time to look at what one sees, feels and thinks after the event has happened. Reflection is an introspective act in which the learner, individually or in a group setting, integrates the new experience with previous ones, making sense of what happened. “(Paci 2021)

„Most of the time, many of our thoughts and feelings go unobserved, leading to repetitive, negative patterns in our lives. Developing the ability to slow down, observe and reflect is crucial for gaining understanding, transforming actions and finding forward momentum in life and relationships. The more practiced and capable one is at reflecting on thoughts, feelings, sensations and interactions, the better one is at transforming actions and improving relationships. Reflective practice is empowering and, over time, allows one to become skillful in making informed judgements and more accurate decisions (Robins et al. 2003). We are a learning species, and our survival depends on our ability to adapt, not only in the reactive sense of fitting into the physical and social worlds, but also in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds. “ (Paci 2021)

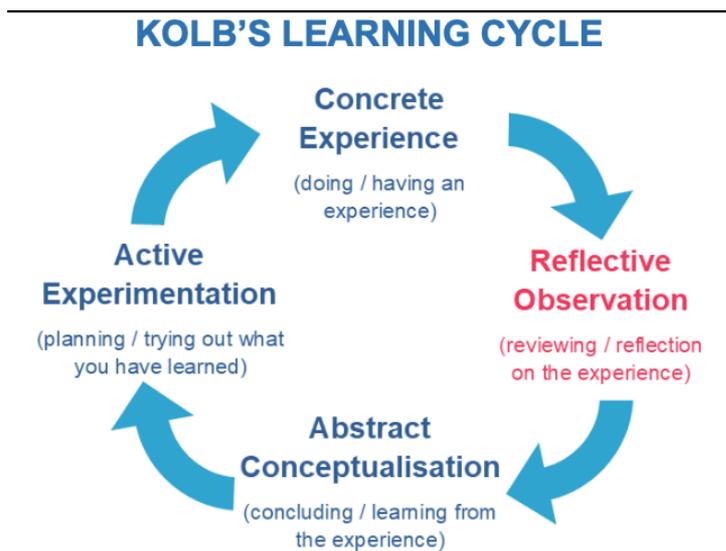


Figure 1

Kolb's Learning Cycle (Paci 2021)

1.2 The Commissioner

My commissioner is Ian Banyard from the UK. He is a wellbeing author, natural mindfulness guide, guide and an 'internet nature-preneur' (Banyard 2021). He developed an 8-week online/offline program to help people explore and discover their true nature (Banyard 2020).

He applies natural mindfulness and nature connection tools to help people through that process. He also got to be involved with “ASICS Movement for Mind – a simple programme of mindful outdoor movement” (ASICS.com).

1.3 Needs

My commissioner's need was to find someone to observe if participants are experiencing a self-therapeutic process known as ‘Mindfulness Based Nature & Forest Therapy’ (MBNT) during ‘The Journey’, ‘A Path to Discovering and Releasing your True Nature’. The process involves “experiencing, connecting and sharing mindful nature connectedness” (Banyard 2020). He would like to know how ‘The Journey’ affects the wellbeing of participants. With further insight into my research ‘The Journey’ could have the potential to be used as a therapeutic method in wellbeing and nature and outdoor studies depending on my research results. I also observed through my research how the program can be more improved and enhanced for the future. Through Ian's needs I developed evidence to support my research about how being mindful and connecting in nature affect wellbeing.

1.4 Objectives/Goals

My objective is to collect sufficient data from participants from the 8-week Journey, ‘A path to discovering and releasing your true nature’ to analyze if participants are experiencing any positive benefits for wellbeing from practicing mindfulness and connecting in nature. The goal is to discover new ways to help improve ‘The Journey’ through my research to create a stronger, more enhanced program. My aim is to corroborate this program so it can have the possibility to be used as a therapeutic method in wellbeing and nature and outdoors studies.

2 KNOWLEDGE BASE

2.1 Studies, theories and concepts

As indicated in the introduction, previous studies, theories and concepts already provide a wealth of information with even more information being presented on a regular basis which are related to the benefits of the outdoors on wellbeing.

2.2 Studies

Previous studies also include a ‘Study on Nature and Human Emotions’ by scientists Ryan Lumber, Miles Richardson, David Sheffield who believe that people who have very close relationships with nature have better mental health.

A study from Professor Helen Lockhart looks at how people are more disconnected to nature these days and about bringing awareness about it.

Jo Barton and Jules Pretty did a study about ‘What is the Best Dose of Nature and Green Exercise for Improving Mental Health? A Multi-Study Analysis’. From their study I found they were using the ‘Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)’ to measure mood. It is apparently, “the most widely used and popular self-esteem measure”. (Barton & Pretty 2010).

Shinrin-Yoku aka forest bathing is a Japanese term and type of ecotherapy that started in the 1980s. (Fitzgerald 2019). The goal of forest bathing is to reconnect with nature mindfully to improve one’s wellbeing and to inspire individuals to protect and respect the nature around them. (Fitzgerald 2019). There have been studies that indicate significant amount of time practicing shinrin-yoku improves not only our physical wellbeing but our mental wellbeing. (Kotera & Fido 2021). It has reduced” depression, anxiety, anger, selfishness, and stress” (Kotera & Fido 2021, cited by: Kotera 2020, McEwan, Park 2012, Pritchard 2019).

There is also some research that has been done analyzing and studying the brain in city/urban environments compared to being in nature. Our brains seem to respond better being in natural environments because there are more natural factors present (Halnon 2022). In city’s there are less fractals in urban buildings and areas. Fractals are sequences that replicate on individual

degrees (Pearce 2018). They are recurring sequences that replicate tinier versions of themselves to develop something larger (Pearce 2018). For example, natural fractals are:

“patterns that repeat smaller and smaller copies of themselves to create the biodiversity of a forest. Each tree branch, from the trunk to the tips, is a copy of the one that came before it. This is a basic principle that we see over and over again in the fractal structure of organic life forms throughout the natural world.” (Pearce 2018).

Another example written and explained by ‘Iternal Technologies’ of how trees are natural fractals:

„Fractals are seen in the branches of trees from the way a tree grows limbs. The main trunk of the tree is the origin point for the Fractal and each set of branches that grow off of that main trunk subsequently have their own branches that continue to grow and have branches of their own. Eventually the branches become small enough they become twigs, and these twigs will eventually grow into bigger branches and have twigs of their own. This cycle creates an “infinite” pattern of tree branches. Each branch of the tree resembles a smaller scale version of the whole shape. “(Iternal Technologies 2020).

Our brains have developed to answer positively to natural fractals due to their commonness and is done so in a heartbeat. “The human brain only needs 50 milliseconds to detect the presence of fractals.” (Halnon 2022) Halnon also mentions some quotes in her article from Richard Taylors where he shares his knowledge on fractals:

“As soon as we look at nature, it triggers a cascade of automatic responses,” says physicist Richard Taylor of the University of Oregon. “Even before we’ve noticed what we’re looking at, we’re responding to it.” And the response is a positive one. Humans experience less stress and better well-being when looking at nature, and this is driven by fractals. Taylor’s research has found that fractals can reduce stress and mental fatigue for the observer by as much as 60%. Taylor also points to research that showed hospitalized patients could heal faster when they had access to a window because looking outside, and at all of the natural fractals, helped patients relax their bodies and heal faster. “People really need aesthetic environments to keep themselves healthy,” Taylor says. But cities and modern architecture have not been designed to incorporate nature or fractals. Instead, urban environments are heavy on box-shaped buildings, simple corridors, and windowless cubicles. “ (Halnon 2022)

There was also a study/large scale engagement campaign done called ‘30 Days Wild’ where they researched if people’s wellbeing improved after spending thirty days in nature. The collected results were successful in showing connections between increased time in nature and one’s wellbeing:

“The campaign asked people to engage with nature every day for a month. 12,400 people signed up for 30 Days Wild via an online sign-up with an estimated 18,500 taking part overall, resulting in an estimated 300,000 engagements with nature by participants. Samples of those taking part were found to have sustained increases in happiness, health, connection to nature and pro-nature behaviours. With the improvement in health being predicted by the improvement in happiness, this relationship was mediated by the change in connection to nature.” (Richardson M, Cormack A, McRobert L, Underhill R 2016.)

2.3 Theories

Theories such as the psychoevolutionary theory and attention restoration theory are directly related to the topic. The psychoevolutionary theory proposes that “our personality, actions, and thoughts are shaped genetically by natural selection.” (Chowdberry 2020). Roger Ulrich, who is the man behind the theory believes that “humans have a deep-rooted affinity towards nature, which is due to the thousands of years that early humans had spent living amid the wild landscapes. According to Ulrich (2008), it is due to this fact that staying close to nature brings a feeling of positivity and happiness in us.” (Chowdberry 2020). Attention restoration theory was initiated by Stephen and Rachel Kapland, they believed that being near nature creates better focus. I believe it is because there is less arousal in nature compared to being in cities.

2.4 Concepts

There is also Biophilia Hypothesis, used in 1973 from psychoanalyst Erich Fromm. Biophilia is described as “the passionate love of life and of all that is alive.” (Fromm 1973). The hypothesis is explained as the “idea that humans possess an innate tendency to seek connections with nature and other forms of life” (Rogers 2019).

Friluftsliv is many things. It’s a concept, a lifestyle and even a study found in Norway. The idea of friluftsliv is not to be an extreme hiker, or to focus on things that people would typically deem as limiting like physical health, age, disabilities, etc. Friluftsliv is about enjoying being outdoors even when weather or conditions don’t seem appealing and without rushing, just taking time to slow down and be mindful. It can be as simple as sitting in the

grass, picking up berries and mushrooms, laying in a hammock outdoors, walking your pet, bird watching, smelling the flowers, etc. According to ‘visitnorway.com’, “In Norway, friluftsliv is the most preferred leisure activity, with higher participation than every other sports activity together” (visitnorway.com).

“Friluftsliv is not connected to a specific activity. For Norwegians, the word has a deeper meaning, like ‘disconnecting from daily stress’ and being part of the cultural ‘we’, which binds us together as human beings as a part of nature”, Lier tells(visitnorway.com)

„Synnevåg Løvoll, who is an associate professor in friluftsliv at Volda University College, has done several studies on emotional, spiritual, and aesthetic experiences when practising friluftsliv. She reveals that sitting quietly in the woods can be as good for our health as running up a mountain top. “(visitnorway.com)

There are five reported methods that can be demonstrated through friluftsliv to wellbeing according to Synnevåg Løvoll (visitnowary.com). The methods mentioned are:

- „connect (through outdoor activities with others)”
- “be active (through hiking, cycling, paddling et cetera)”
- “take notice (by being curious, catching sight of the beautiful)”
- “keep learning (get to know a new activity or try a new path)”
- “give (by helping others to have a good time outdoors) “(visitnorway.com)

„Friluftsliv may help explain Norway’s ranking among the world’s happiest places. In UN’s 2020 World Happiness Report, Norway came in at number five, while Bergen and Oslo made the top ten of the world’s happiest cities. “I think it is fair to say that friluftsliv is a contributor to Norwegians high level of happiness”, says Lier.“ (visitnorway.com)

As my commissioner, Ian Banyard is also a mindfulness author he sent me his book ‘Natural Mindfulness, your personal guide to the healing power of nature connection’ which I read and did all the exercises inside. Detailed information and mindfulness/nature connection exercises are presented throughout ‘seven walks’. He uses MBNT ‘Mindfulness Based Nature and Forest Therapy’ in his programs and exercises. Some of the exercises Ian presents includes, “staying in breath”, “Mindful listening”, “Walking Mindfully”, “Training your senses”, “Relaxing and reflecting”, “Finding the alive-ness inside”, “How to use natural mindfulness on purpose”, which are all ways to practice mindfulness and connection in nature (Banyard 2018). ‘Mindfulness Based Nature and forest Therapy’, aka MBNT is originated from the expertise and knowledge from my commissioner, Ian Banyard. Ian describes MBNT as:

“a modified form of self-therapy that incorporates nature connection guiding and natural mindfulness practices. MBNT combines nature connection practices, present moment awareness using sensory and breathing exercises. This guided therapeutic approach to wellness and wellbeing helps heal the body, relax the mind and lift the spirit. Using Natural Mindfulness practices, clients are guided to connect with nature in the here and now as well as disconnect from negative thought patterns and feelings that can cause a decline into a mood-disordered state. MBNT guidance can also help a person reduce stress levels and ward off a negative frame of mind before it takes hold.” (ianbanyard.com)

3 METHODS

3.1 Webropol Qualitative/Quantitative Surveys

I began applying my research surveys during the summer course in July 2021. I used anonymous online qualitative/quantitative surveys for participants to complete before, during and immediately after and 35 days after the 8-week journey. The four sets of data were used to observe and analyze how the wellbeing of people have changed throughout the course. The data I collected can be used to improve future ‘journeys’ and to substantiate my research. I read other surveys about wellbeing, nature connection and mindfulness to help build my surveys and find useful questions. I read a handbook called “Measuring Well-being a guide for practitioners” (Juliet Michaelson, Sorcha Mahony and Jonathan Schifferes 2012) which included information how to measure wellbeing and also included an example of a wellbeing survey. The handbook gave me inspiration and ideas when creating my own surveys. The “Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale” (Rosenberg, M 1965) that I mentioned in my knowledge base was also helpful in creating my surveys. “ It is described as a:

“ 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be uni-dimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.” (Rosenberg, M 1965)

Since one’s self esteem is important to a healthy wellbeing, reading about the scale was beneficial when creating my survey questions. Another useful source I read was a “Practitioner guide to Assessing connection to nature” (Salazar, G., Kunkle, K. and Monroe, M. C 2020). This guide helped me to create nature connection related questions and understand how to measure one’s connection to nature.

I created my qualitative/quantitative surveys for participants in ‘The Journey’ to fill out anonymously on ‘Webropol’ (the online survey program we learned to use in class). Before I would publish my surveys, I would show it to my commissioner and my supervisor for any advice, ideas and approval. Then I would publish the surveys on ‘nature connection world’ (the platform where my commissioner hosts the program). Personal or identifiable information was not included as part of the data collection for ethical reasons.

In my first, ‘before survey’, I included some background questions. Explanations of the subject’s current feelings, as well as answering how much time they typically spend outdoors would be included. Also, a question where participants can fill out which archetype they

received from Ian's 'True Nature Assessment' that they answered before the program. These include 4 options (Hunter/Huntress, Gatherer, Expert & Explorer). This draws the discussion toward how the subject's feelings are after spending time outdoors and allows them to become aware of which archetype is more present. This helped lead an interest in exploring which archetype they would like to discover in themselves. I asked questions about their current feelings of importance towards nature are at this current moment, also the importance of nature to them and their current knowledge of mindfulness. More questions that I included for my research included questions like where they are coming from and if they grew up in a city town or village. Although, subjects from different countries of origins already have various appreciations for environment, time spent outdoors and wellbeing, the target of the interview was to determine what impacts practicing mindfulness in nature can affect wellbeing.

A follow up survey during the program was conducted. Questions such as how they are feeling and if they are learning anything new about themselves can be asked. Also, if they notice a deeper connection to nature, feel calmer, less stress, etc. Also, if the time they spend outdoors has increased and if they feel an improvement in their level of physical health (sleep, exercise, diet) and questions and reflections from 'The Journey.

The survey after the program and thirty-five days afterwards included questions about if they feel more connected to a different archetype now than the one, they originally identified as in the beginning. Also, if they made any changes in their lifestyle or thinking patterns. For example, how they connect with nature and if they have more appreciation towards nature. Also, how their behaviour is now and if they have gained more confidence, feel more at ease, etc. The data collected helps to observe how practicing mindfulness outdoors could benefit participants wellbeing.

3.2 Analysis

The participants in my research were expected to be participating in Ian's 8 week online/offline program 'The Journey'. There were no requirements or specifications about age, gender, or nationality. There was a total of twenty participants who participated in my first survey and in my last survey there was just a total of five participants.

To analyze all my data, I began by analyzing all the results I got from each survey and afterwards comparing all 4 surveys results together to see how the program affected all participants during the 8 weeks. I analyzed the qualitative data with a thematic

analysis/pseudo coding method, meaning I marked down with different colours similar trends I saw and put them into categories. Some common themes in my surveys would be wellbeing, mental health, physical health, time spent outdoors, connectedness with nature, connectedness with oneself, mindfulness and nature connection. I analyzed the quantitative data with comparison charts and calculating the mean (finding the average). It was important to keep in mind the number of respondents that varied throughout all four surveys. Having a variation of qualitative and quantitative options helps to find answers in all the data. Qualitative is more subjective whereas with quantitative data you can see clear changes.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Before

Before I began researching the group, my commissioner suggested that I join the group as an observer so I can decide whether or not ‘The Journey’ could give me the answers I was looking for in my research question and if the things he was talking about interested me. Then we discussed how I could support him and his needs. We discovered that my research would benefit both of our needs. After participating in the first group as an observer Ian sent me his book, ‘Natural Mindfulness’, in the post so I could research and learn a bit more about natural mindfulness. We decided that I would join the second course as a participant to try out ‘The Journey’ for myself. That allowed me to get a better understanding and knowledge of how the course works and its effects. During this time, I was also researching and gathering up my knowledge base to help me when I begin to research the next group with qualitative surveys. When I released the first survey, I received 20 responses. This survey was to be done after the ‘True Nature assessment’ but before they begin the program. The reason for that was so participants could discover if they are an explorer, gatherer, hunter/huntress or expert. In my first survey there was a total of twenty questions.

In my first question I began by asking questions about how my participants identify (See figure 2). There were seventeen females, two males and one non-binary participant. Meaning this particular course was mainly female dominated. I was not surprised as it is more common

and accepted in our society for women to seek wellbeing services and speak up about personal issues rather than men.

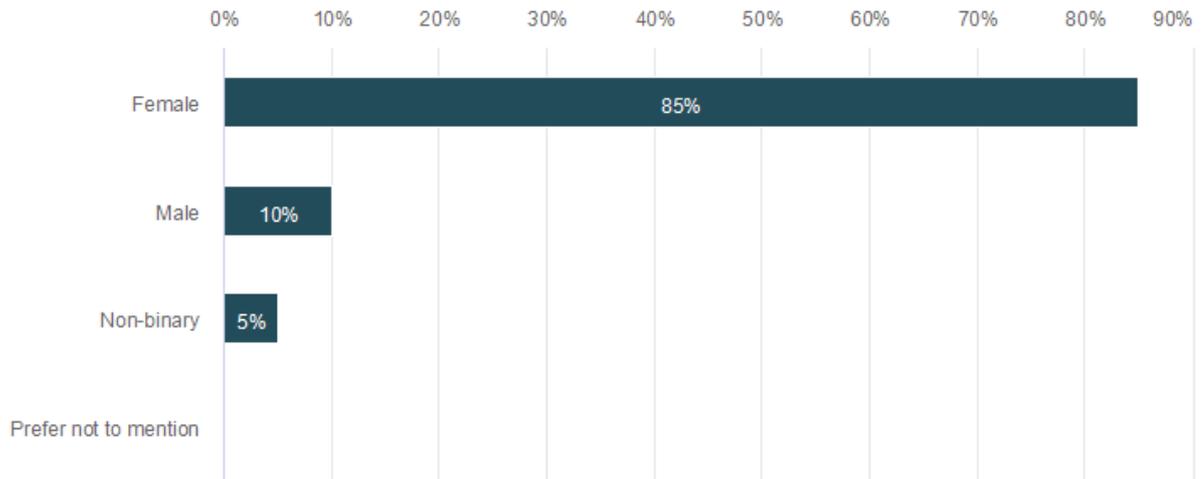


Figure 2: How do you identify?

There were eight participants in the 35-45 age range, six in the 45-55 age range and lastly six participants in the 55+ age range. Meaning 40% of the group was in the 35-45 age range (see figure 3).

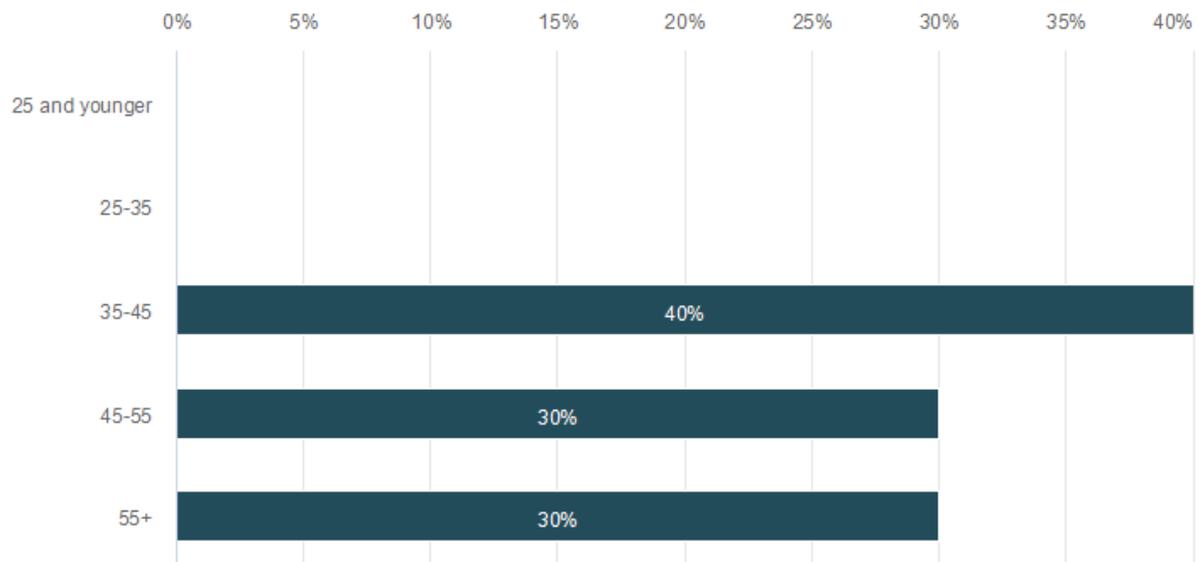


Figure 3: What is your age?

Thirty percent of the twenty participants were living in a village, the other thirty percent in a town, twenty five percent in a city and fifteen percent of the group chose other. Meaning the majority of the group was living in a village or a town (See figure 4). Participants were also

welcomed to write where they are coming from. There were people from Finland, Canada, United Kingdom, United States and in Spain.

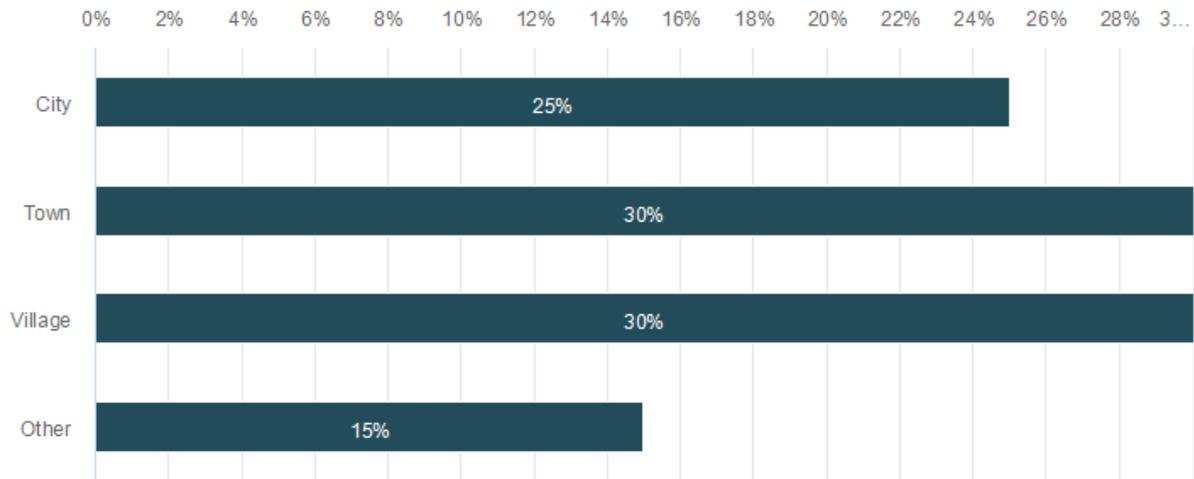


Figure 4: Do you live in a city, town, village or other?

Sixty percent of the participants were working, forty percent chose ‘other’ and there were zero students (See figure 5). I gave the option to elaborate to the question and majority of the people who selected ‘other’ were retired, secondly were mothers, then sick and one individual said they are ‘looking to start a business’. Those who selected ‘working’ were people who are doing all different and various types of work. Some participants were working as a nurse, therapist, police, producer, environmental scientist, social and health care, founder of some youth program, nature connection guide and therapeutic coach, English interpreter, housekeeper and some with their own business.

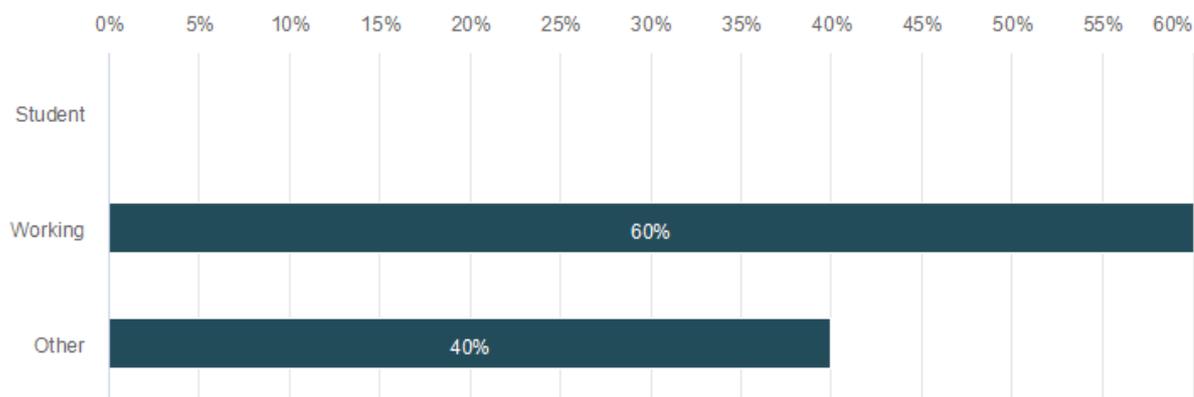


Figure 5: Are you working, a student or other?

Nine of the participants live with family, seven with a partner, three alone, one with a friend and nobody selected other. Forty five percent of the group is living with family which is the majority (See figure 6).

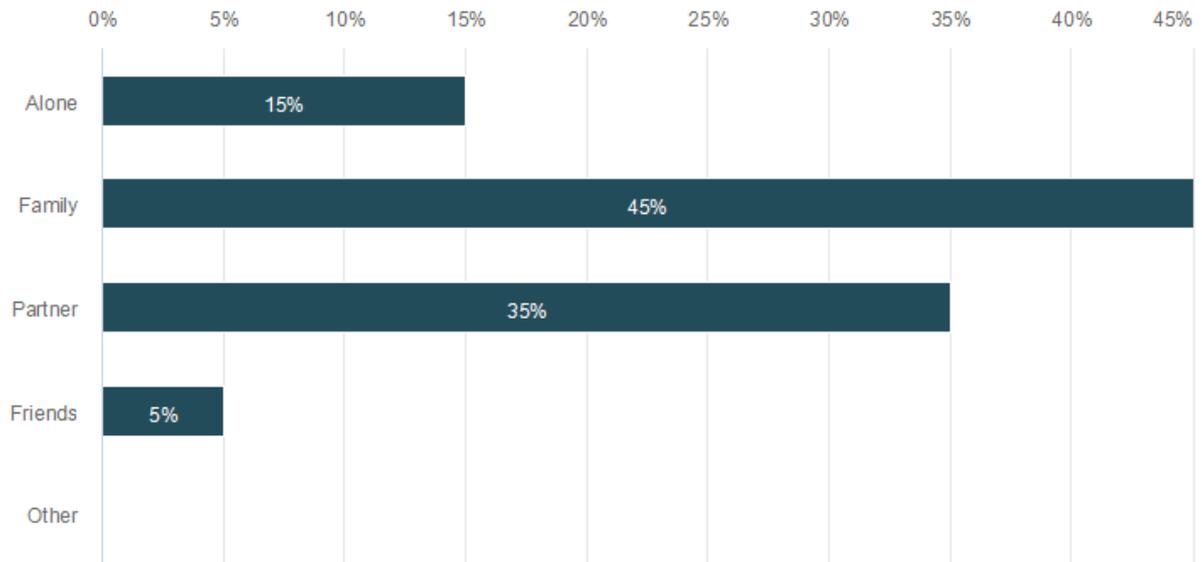


Figure 6: Do you live alone, with family, partner, friends or others?

After completing the ‘True Nature Assessment’ the majority of the participants (12) came out as ‘explorers’ which is sixty percent of the group. The other seven were ‘gatherers’ and lastly only one had not done the assessment yet (See figure 7). I added an option where participants could add any additional comments. One participant selected explorer and said that “this felt very true to me!”.

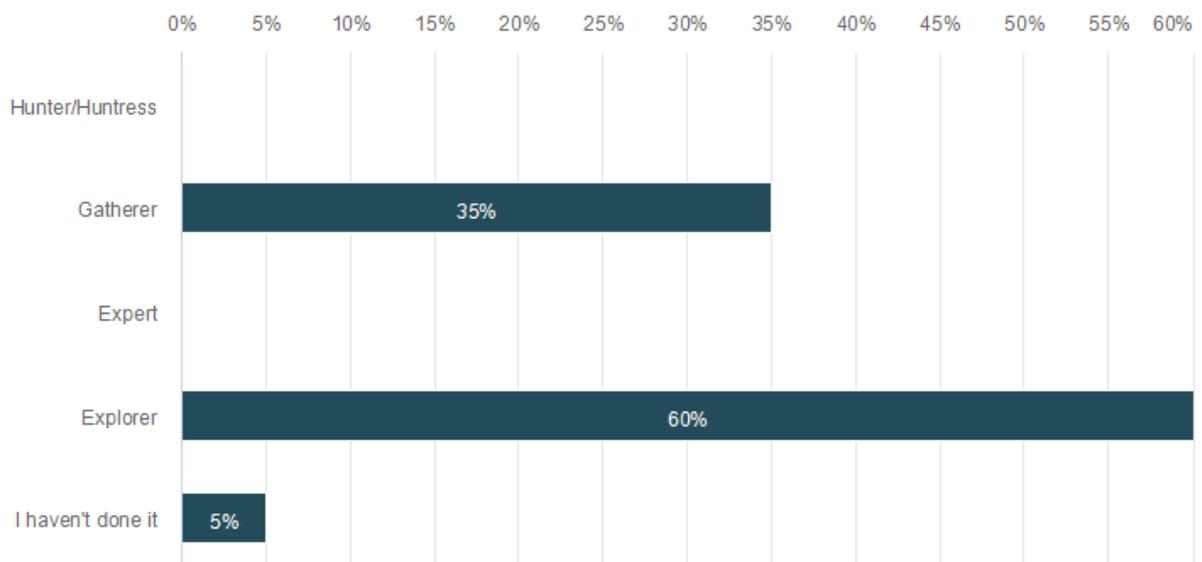


Figure 7: What was your result in ‘The True Nature Assessment?’

I asked if participants were familiar with the practice of mindfulness and nineteen of my participants responded with yes, only one said no (see figure 8).

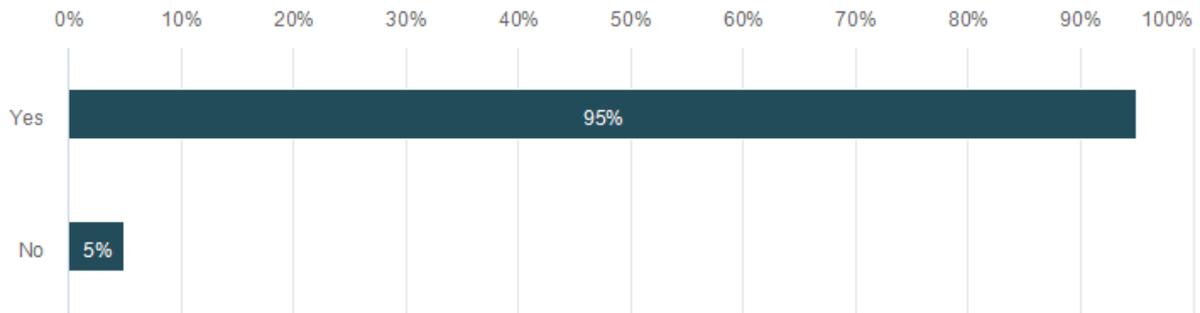


Figure 8: Are you familiar with the practice of mindfulness?

I then asked if anyone has ever participated in any online programs before (See figure 9). Sixteen of the participants had participated in some online programs before and only four participants had never participated in an online program before. Participants were able to elaborate on which programs they participated in before. There was a variety of answers like fitness, speech, woman studies, forest therapy, mindfulness, nature connection, reiki training, tarot circle, spiritual coaching, and a few had already participated in Ian's online mindfulness and nature guide courses. One participant mentioned that they even run their own online programs.

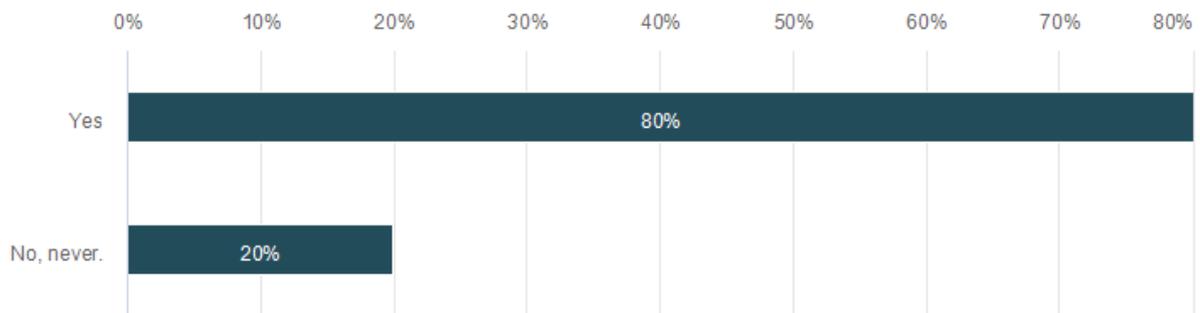


Figure 9: Have you practiced in any online programs before?

The next question I asked was about how they have been feeling lately mentally (see figure 10). On a scale of zero to five (zero being not good at all and five being very good), the average was 3.2. The standard deviation was 1.4.

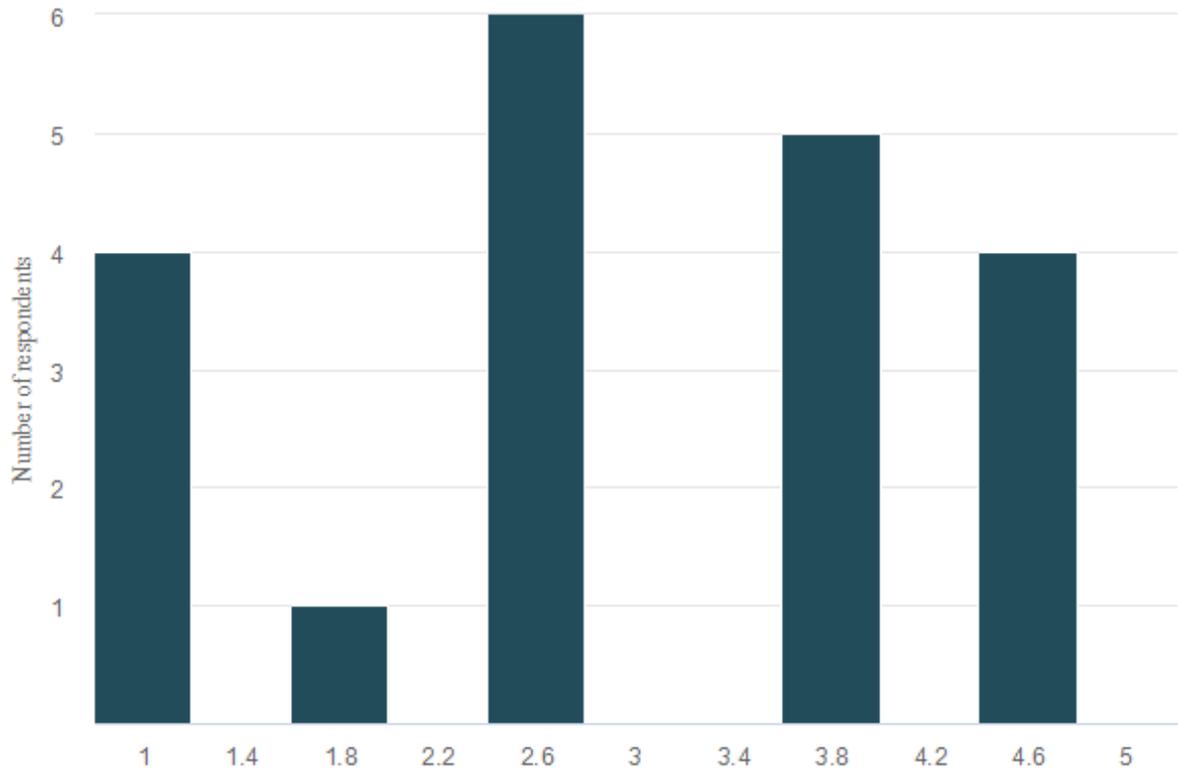


Figure 10: How have you been feeling lately mentally?

I also asked about how the participants current physical health is (meaning sleep, diet, exercise) on a scale of zero to five (zero being 'very bad', three being 'I'm doing alright' and five being 'very good'). The average answer was 3.3 and the standard deviation 1.2 (see figure 11).

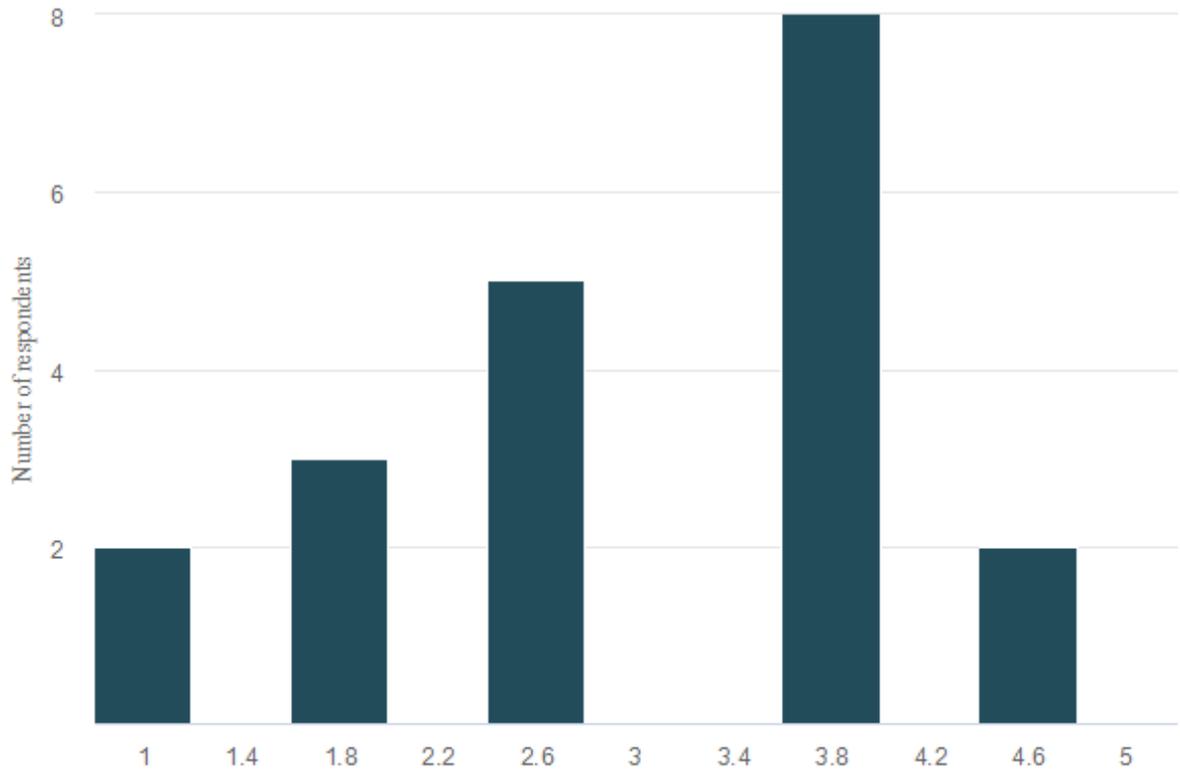


Figure 11: How is your current physical health?

I asked about ‘how much time do you typically spend outdoors in a day?’ and the majority (twelve participants/sixty percent) answered with two hours and more. Seven of the participants chose thirty minutes and one participant chose, ‘I go outside to just run errands/do chores’. Zero participants chose ‘less than ten minutes ‘(see figure 12).

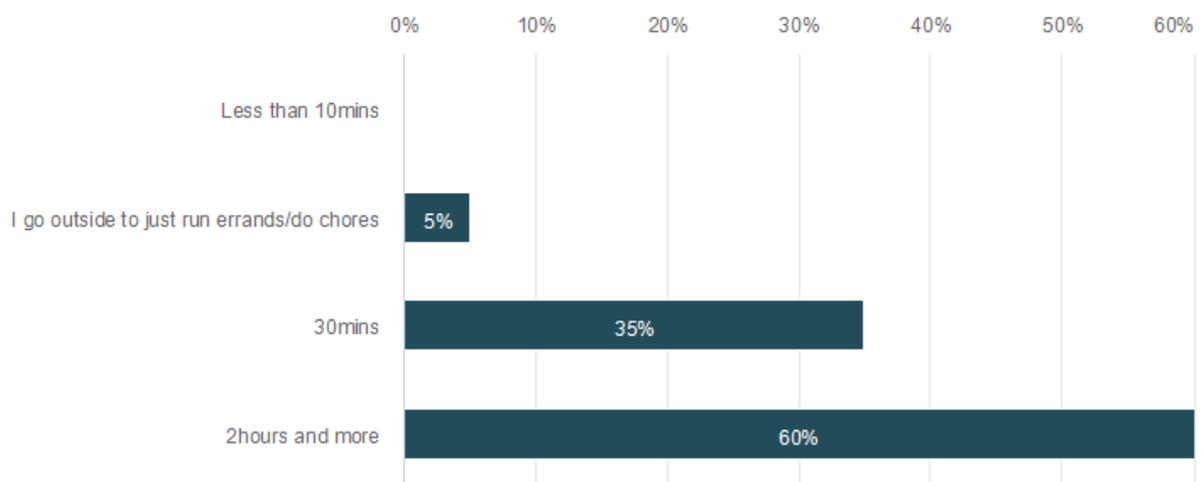


Figure 12: How much time do you typically spend outdoors in a day?

I then asked, ‘how connected do you feel to nature?’, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘I don’t feel any connection’ and five being ‘I have a very deep connection with nature’). The average answer was 4.4 and the standard deviation was 0.8 (see figure 13).

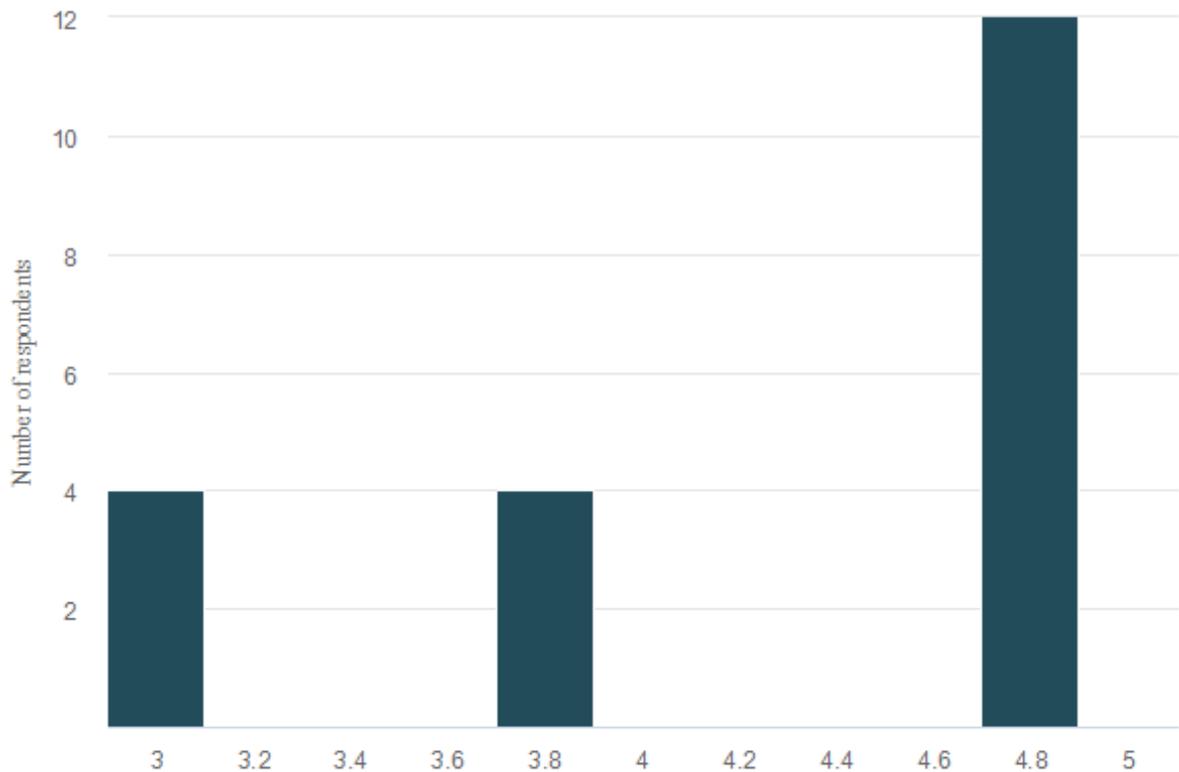


Figure 13: How connected do you feel with nature?

I asked about how important nature is to them, zero being ‘not important at all’ and five being ‘very important’. The average answer was 4.5 and the standard deviation 1.2 (see figure 14).

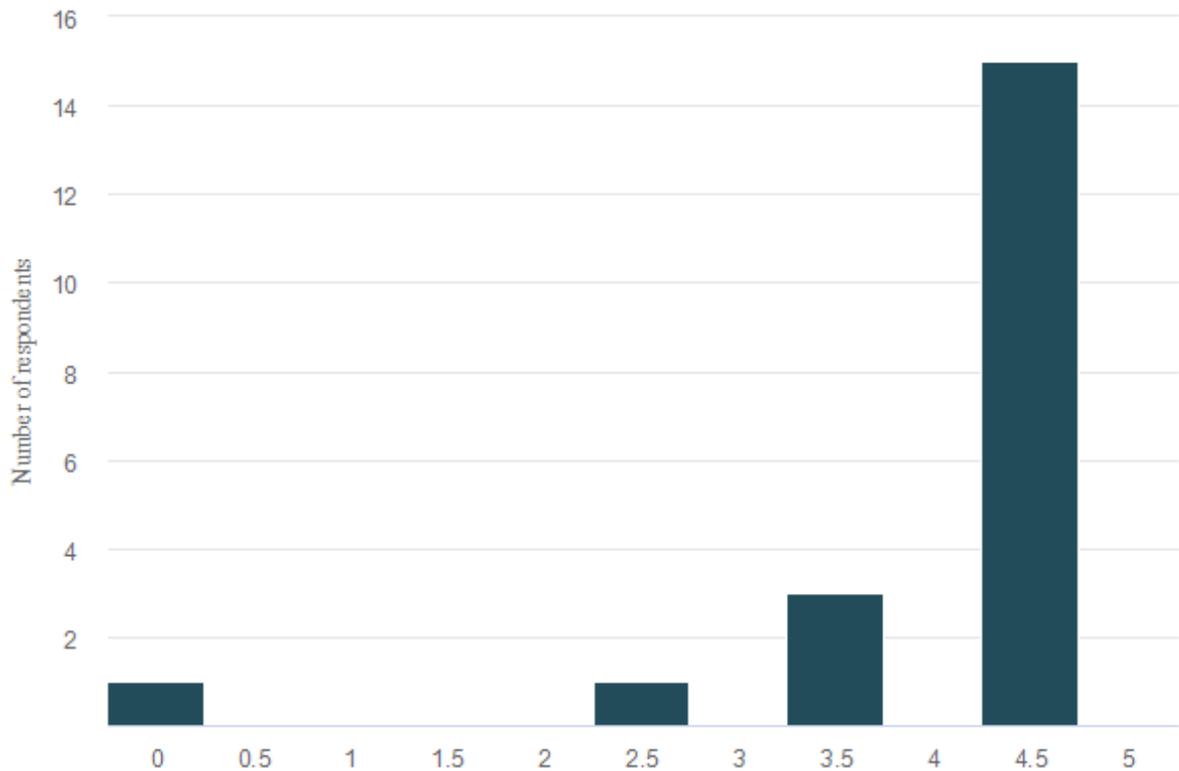


Figure 14: How important is nature to you?

The next question I asked was ‘do you have tools to help through difficult moments in your life?’ and gave the option for participants who selected yes to please share which tools they use. Sixteen participants answered yes, and I got a variety of answers from thirteen participants with different and some of the same tools. Four participants mentioned walking, another four for meditation, three mentioned journaling, three mentioned mindfulness, two mentioned yoga, two mentioned family and friends and one mentioned talking to others and also therapy. There were other answers like “dancing”, “sharing”, “watching birds and beautiful nature spots”, “Buddhism”, “law of attraction”, “nature”, “running”, “painting”, “reiki”, “qi gong”, “self-reflection”, “dog”, “hiking”, “coaching”, “connection with nature”, “passions and core values”, “supervision” and “personality. I noticed that many tools that were mentioned were nature/outdoors and mindfulness related. Four of the participants answered, ‘very few’ and zero participants answered no (see figure 15).

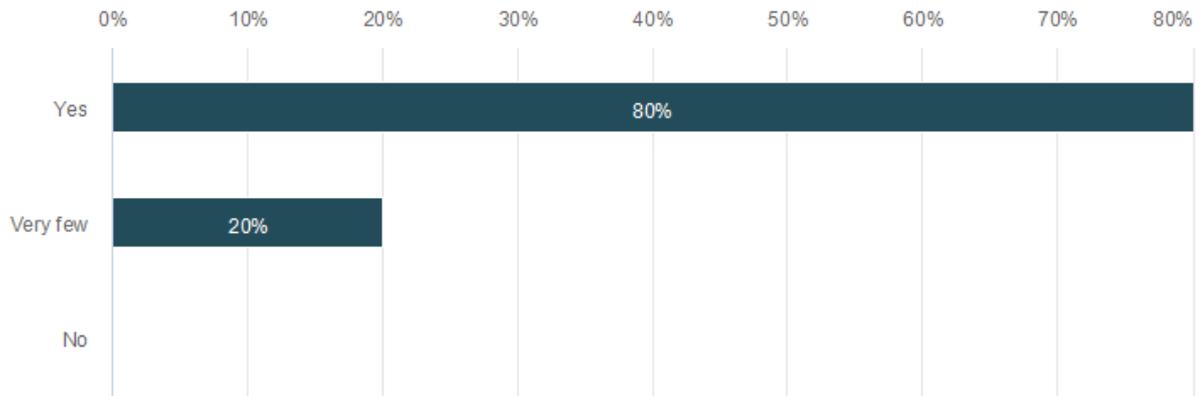


Figure 15: Do you have tools to help you through difficult moments in your life?

I then asked, “have you practiced natural mindfulness before?”, and eighteen participants answered yes, and seventeen participants answered to what type of exercises and/or activities they do. This shows that natural mindfulness can be practiced in many different ways making it something almost everyone has the ability to practice or try. It can suit to different individuals’ passions or interests and also keep things exciting when you would like to try a new way to practice. Five people mentioned “Ian’s courses/activities”, another five mentioned “meditation”, four people mentioned “forest bathing”, another four mentioned “walking”, two people mentioned “connecting/embracing to body and senses”. There were other activities mentioned like “reflection in nature”, “mindful photography in nature”, “short exercise”, “Tai Chi”, “listening to music”, “mindfulness in nature”, “mindful running”, “breath work”, “sit spots”, “earthing”, “nature crafting” and “treasure hunting”. Only two participants answered that they have not practiced natural mindfulness before. So, ninety percent of the group has practiced and only ten percent has never (see figure 16).

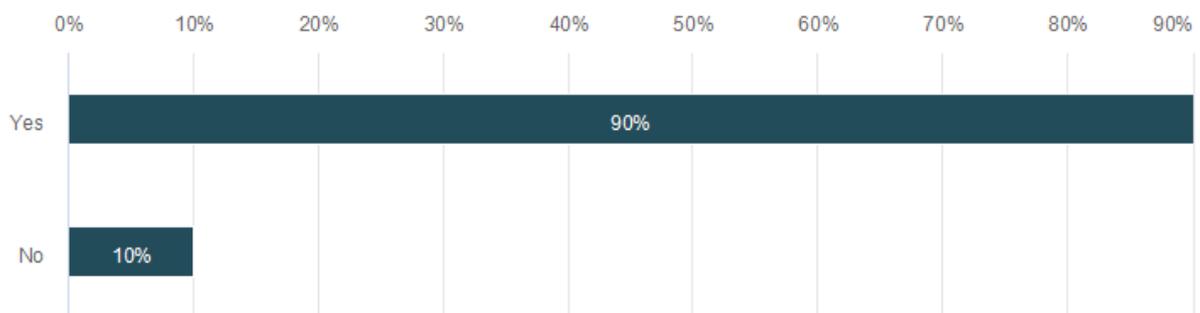


Figure 16: Have you practiced natural mindfulness before?

The next question I asked was “do you find it difficult to find motivation to get outside?”, and the majority of the participants (twelve/sixty percent) selected with “No, I can always find the

motivation to go outdoors”. Seven participants selected “sometimes” and only one participant selected “yes, very often”. No participants selected “I don’t know” (see figure 17).

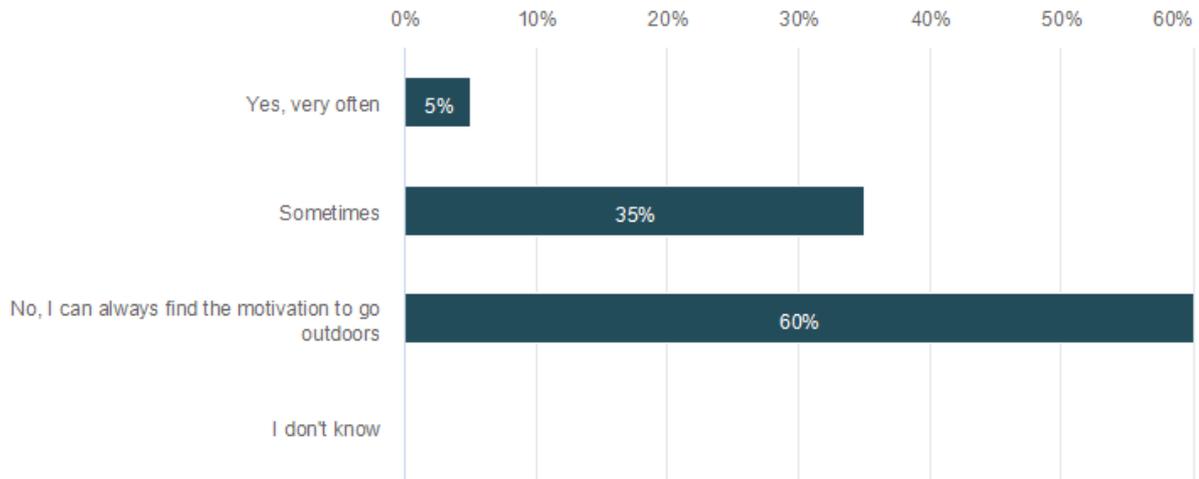


Figure 17: Do you find it difficult to find motivation to get outside?

I then asked participants “what activities do you normally do outdoors?”, and I received twenty written responses with many different and some of the same activities. Seventeen participants mentioned “walking” (one with a dog and one participant mentioned having a goal of 10k+ steps a day). Seven participants mentioned “meditation”, Six people mentioned “wild swimming/swimming” and another six mentioned “hiking”. Five participants mentioned “bird watching”, another five mentioned “gardening”. Three participants mentioned “running”. Two mentioned “sitting”, and also two mentioned “skating”. Another two mentioned “biking”, two more for “paddle boarding/SUP” and another two mentioned foraging. One participant mentioned they are disabled so they use an e-bike to go out in nature. “Observing nature” was also mentioned twice. Other activities mentioned was “camping”, “earthing”, “just being”, “spending time with children”, “canoeing”, “writing poetry”, “singing”, “drumming”, “fitness training”, “yoga”, “eating”, “photography/sound recording”, “forest bathing”, “reading”, “qi gong”, “natural mindfulness”, “picnic”, “paddling on river/stream”, “isolation”, “watching out for animals, plants and insects”, “following tracks and old paths” and “using all senses”.

My next question was “do you typically go outdoors by yourself or with others?”, and thirteen (sixty five percent) participants selected “by myself” and seven (thirty five percent) selected “with others” (see figure 18).

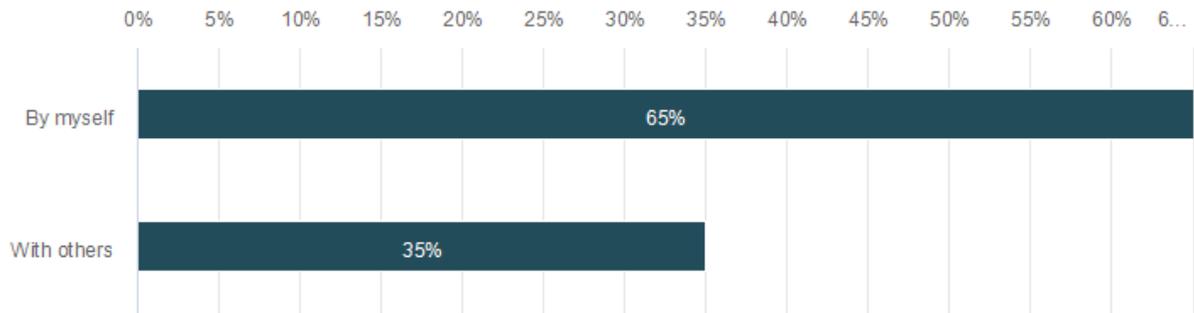


Figure 18: Do you typically go outdoors by yourself or with others?

The next question was “do you look for purpose when going outside? If yes, for what purpose?”, and six (thirty percent) participants selected “I don’t need a purpose to go outside) and another six (thirty five percent) selected, “other (please elaborate)”. All six answered and the majority (three answers) was “all of the above”, another answer was “connect to the earth and myself”, also “usually, to get the kids out” and lastly “can vary, sometimes to think, sometimes to relax and escape and sometimes exercise with a brisk walk to energise”. Three (fifteen percent) participants selected that they “reflect/think” when going outside. Two (ten percent) selected “outdoor chores” and another two (ten percent) selected “exercise”. Only one (five percent) participant selected to “find a quiet place” (see figure 19).

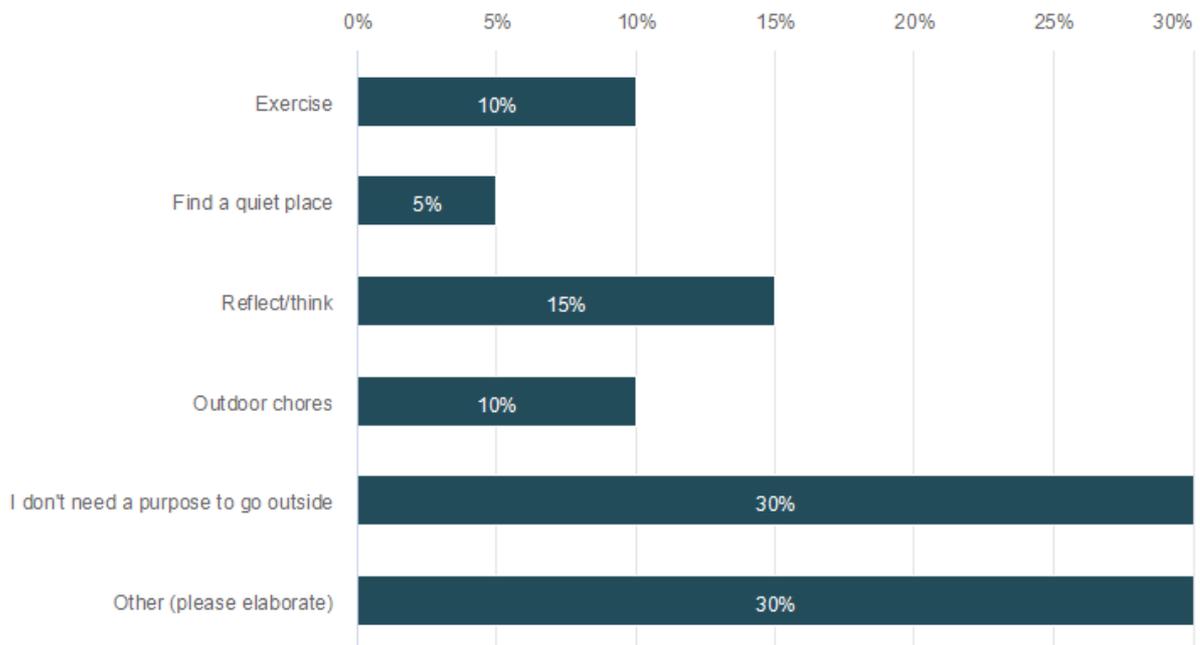


Figure 19: Do you look for purpose when going outside? If yes, for what purpose?

My last question of the first survey was “lastly, what are your expectations for ‘The journey’ 8-week program?”, and I also added that participants are welcomed to add any additional comments that they may have. Nineteen participants gave written answers.

Participant 1: “Hoping to reconnect with my inner self and hold that connection to be able to reach out and stay with it.”

Participant 2: “To be further inspired and to learn more about myself and my connection to nature. I may be wrong, but I imagine it may have something to do with the Hero’s Journey! This is something I teach the young people I work with, so it’ll be nice to go through it myself and to reflect on my own journey and journey with nature.”

Participant 3: “Deeper connection with nature and myself. Tools and new exercises to use for my own wellbeing and for my loved ones.”

Participant 4: “To continue my understanding of the benefits of a nature connection to health and wellbeing.”

Participant 5: “self exploration”

Participant 6: “Learn how to further nurture and develop my longing for connection and relationship with nature for my own health (recovery from CFS) and to rethink how I show up for my community and the world in my future work”

Participant 7: “Explore a deeper part of myself. Grow my connection with nature to expand my career options. Gain confidence to lead/guide others in nature.”

Participant 8: “I don’t think that I have any specific expectations, but I look forward to learning something new and deepening my already strong connection to nature.”

Participant 9: “To learn”

Participant 10: “To learn more about natural mindfulness and hopefully become a practitioner”

Participant 11: “To experience more ways of connecting with nature and myself care. Connection to community. Learning experiencing natural mindfulness. Stepping stone for health and wellbeing.”

Participant 12: “To learn more about connecting with nature and how it helps and affect my well being. Learn how I can share my experiences with others so they can go on their own journey with nature”

Participant 13: “I don’t have a particular expectation. I am just interested.”

Participant 14: “I am attracted to nature; I love being outside in my garden and camping/living outside but I am not active in nature. I am hoping to increase my motivation to walk in nature just for the experience. At the moment I feel walking has to have a concrete purpose for me to do it and I want to change that. I want to walk because I enjoy it, and this is a first step to building that motivation.”

Participant 15:” I would like to fund out more about nature mindfulness and hopefully discover more about myself and the next road I want to take in my life.”

Participant 16: “Further exploration and inspiration for my life and practice.”

Participant 17: “Some time out/away from the everyday stresses & more tips for natural mindfulness”

Participant 18: “Help with anxiety, feel happier with my life mainly as research show nature helps”

Participant 19: “I want to explore these guides to see if/how I embody them and how I can use them more in my day to day life and not just out walking. I am connecting further to my own true nature and hope this will be helpful too and will also enrich my work further with my own clients.”

4.2 During

During the program I was participating, analyzing and then I released the second survey. I received only twelve responses from this survey. That is eight less people than before. The survey had a total of eighteen questions. I asked similar questions to the first survey so I could see and document if there were any changes in participants wellbeing during the program. I also asked questions related to the guides that participants would be exploring those four weeks, which was the hunter and gatherer. This is when I began to be able to start to analyze my data by comparing it from the first survey.

The first question I asked was “has the time you’re spending outdoors in a day increased during these four weeks?”. Four participants (33.3%) selected, ‘yes, an additional hour and more’ and the other four (33.3%) selected ‘yes, an additional 30mins’, three (25%) selected ‘no, it’s still the same’, one (8.4%) selected ‘yes and additional 10mins’ and nobody selected ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 20).

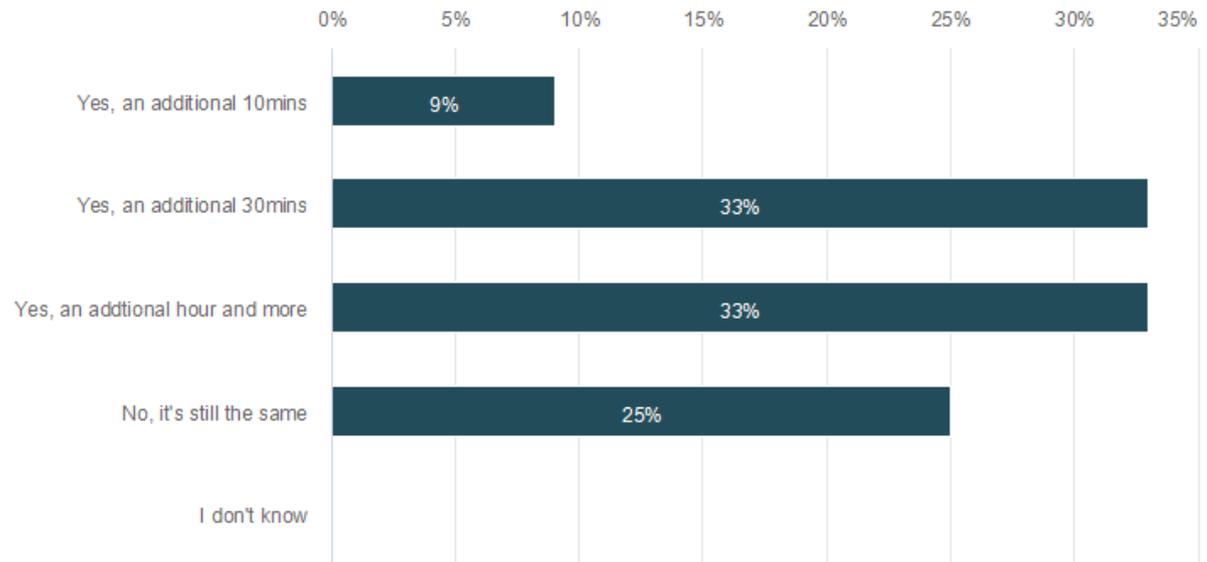


Figure 20: Has the time you're spending outdoors in a day increased during these 4 weeks?

The second question was “Would you say your physical health has improved during these four weeks? (ex: sleep, exercise, diet)”. Participants could select on a scale from zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all and five being ‘yes, very much!’), or I don’t know. The average answer was 2.8 and the standard deviation was 1.4 (see figure 21).

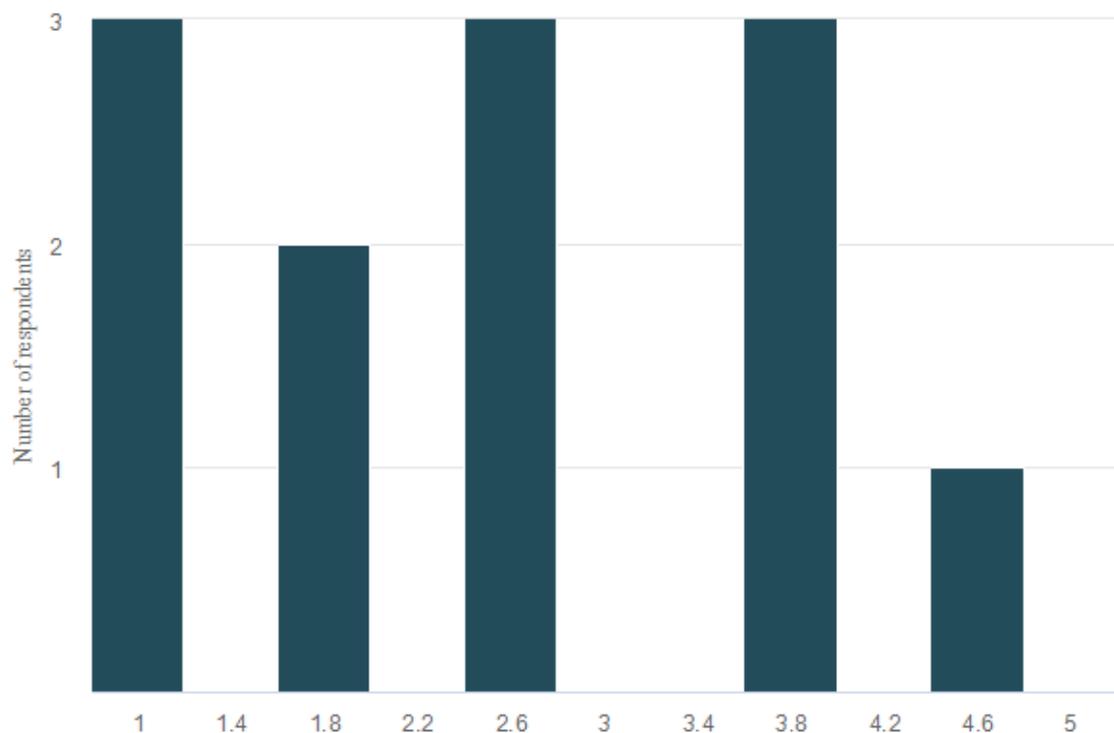


Figure 21: Would you say that your PHYSICAL health has improved during these 4 weeks?

The third question was “Would you say your mental health has improved during these four weeks?”. Again, from a scale from zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.0 and the standard deviation was 1.0 (see figure 22).

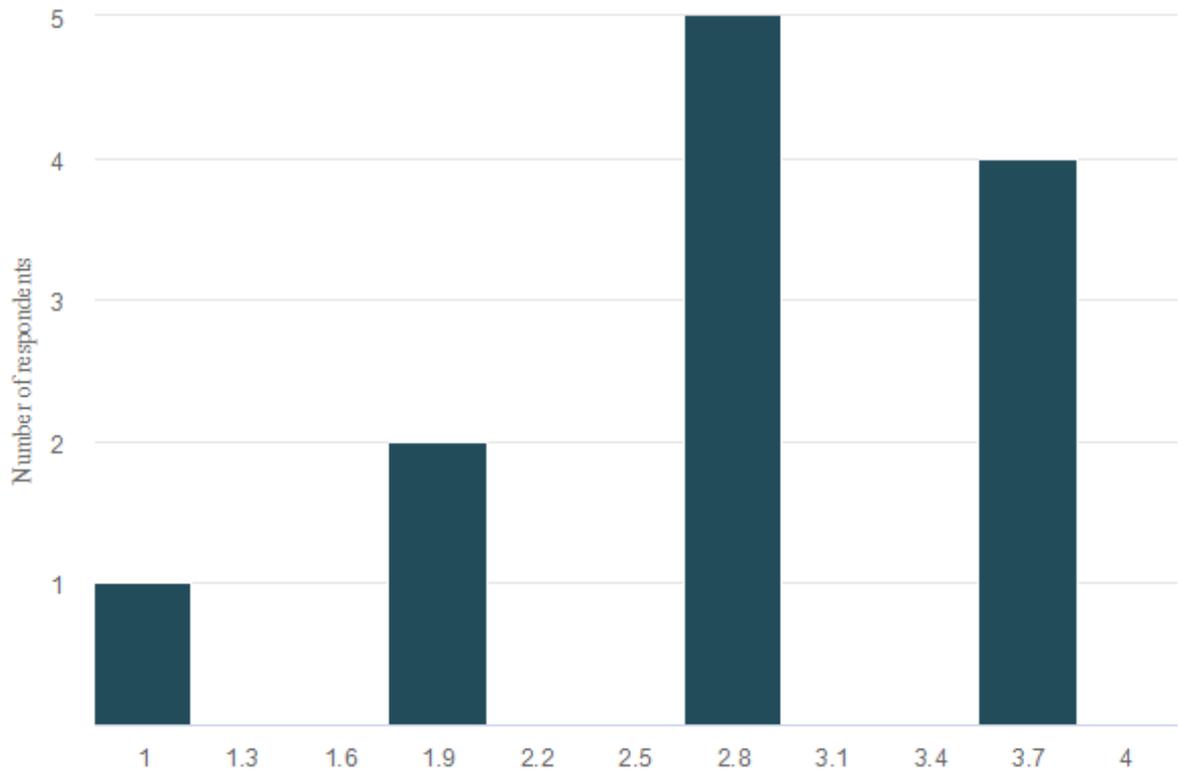


Figure 22: Would you say that your MENTAL health has improved during these 4 weeks?

Next, I asked, “So far, which guide has been your favourite to explore?” and eight (66.7%) of the participants selected ‘hunter/huntress’, four (33.3%) selected ‘gatherer’ and nobody selected ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 23).

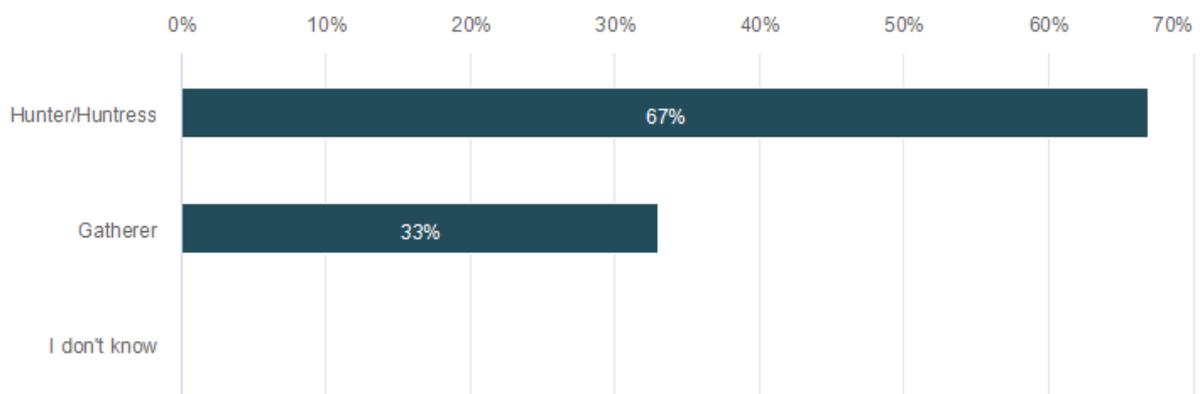


Figure 23: So far, which guide has been your favourite to explore?

The following question was “How easy was it to connect with your inner hunter/huntress?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘I had lots of difficulty’ and five being ‘it was very easy’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 2.5 and the standard deviation was 1.4 (see figure 24).

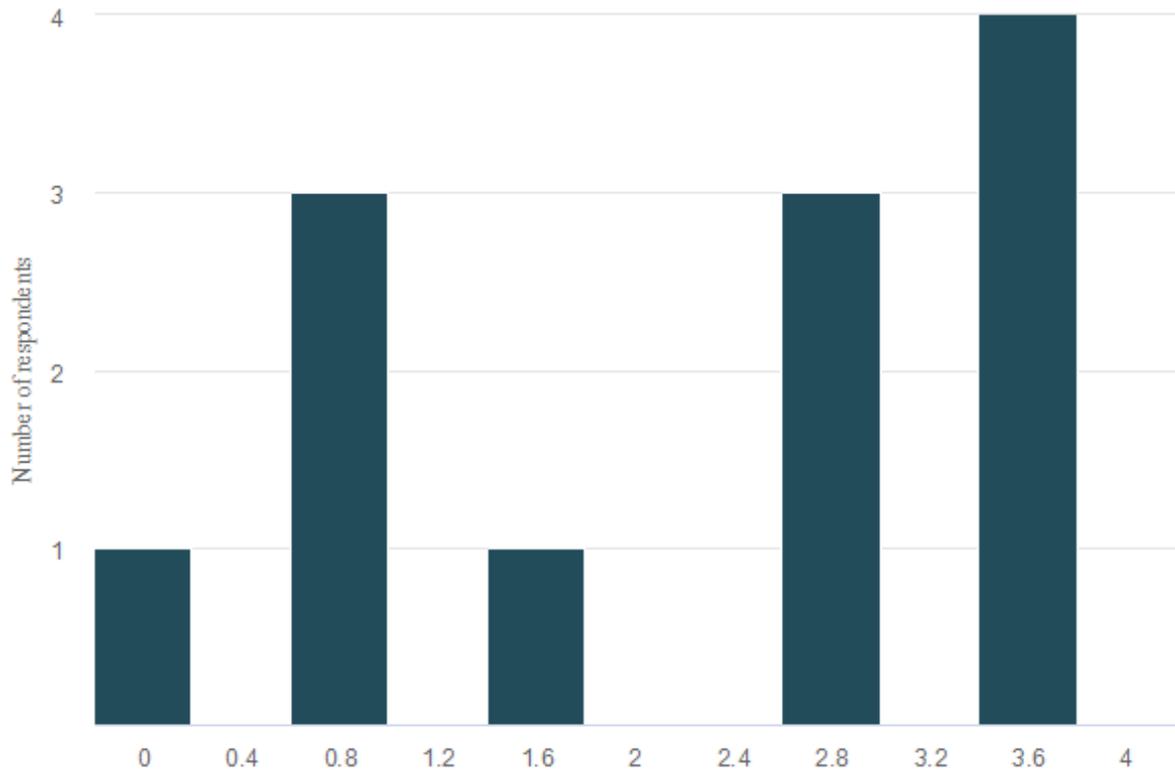


Figure 24: How easy was it to connect with your inner hunter/huntress?

Next, I asked, “How easy was it to connect with your inner gatherer?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘I had lots of difficulty’ and five being ‘it was very easy’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.3 and the standard deviation was 1.3 (see figure 25).

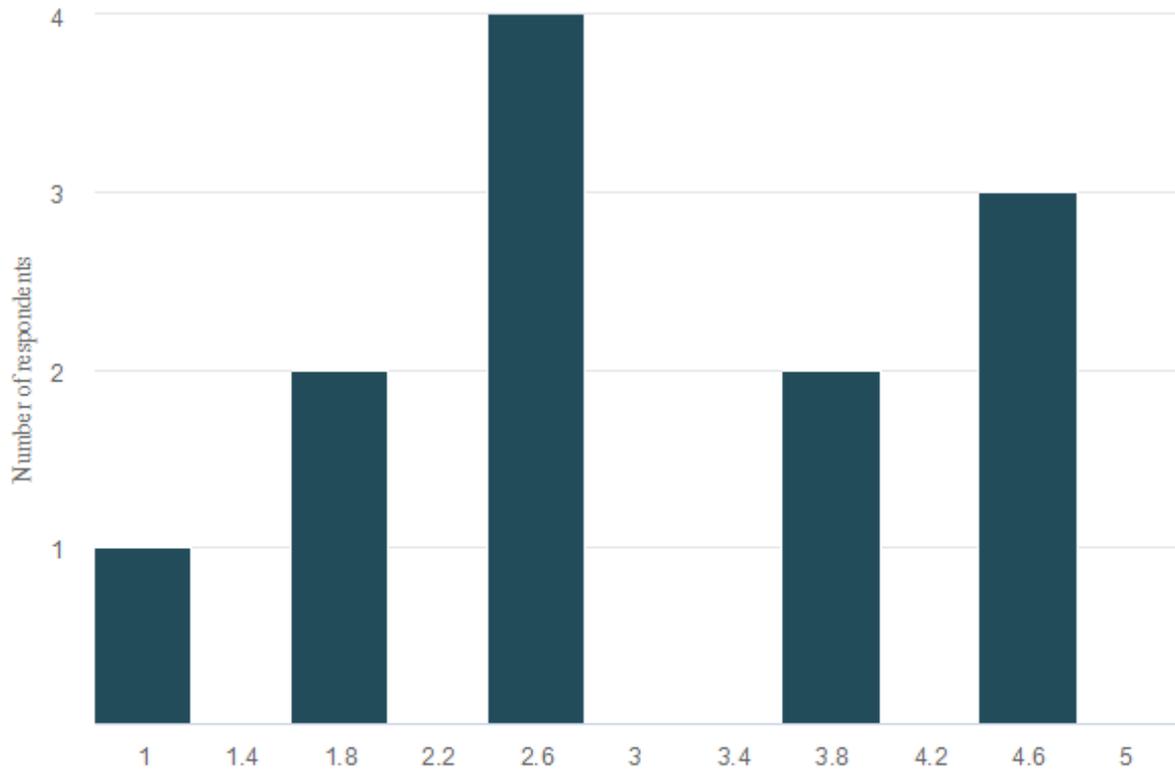


Figure 25: How easy was it to connect with your inner gatherer?

The seventh question was “Have you made any changes in your daily routine? If yes, what?” and the results were 50/50, meaning six participants selected ‘yes’ and the other six selected ‘no’. Nobody selected ‘I don’t know’(see figure 26). The participants who selected ‘yes’ gave many varying answers, some said “exploring in nature”, “stopped smoking”, “taking a walk for the sake of walking and musing each day”, “try to get out at least 10mins to two hours every day to connect with nature, depending what time I have”, “I’ve opened my eyes to exploring things differently, as our ancestors may have in the past. I’m still walking every day, but I’ve realized I need to find a way to do this as a career because the more I walk and I’m outdoors the more I dislike my office time, yet I still want to be sustainable and live a meaningful and useful life. “ and lastly “being outside more and booking on a mindfulness walk”.

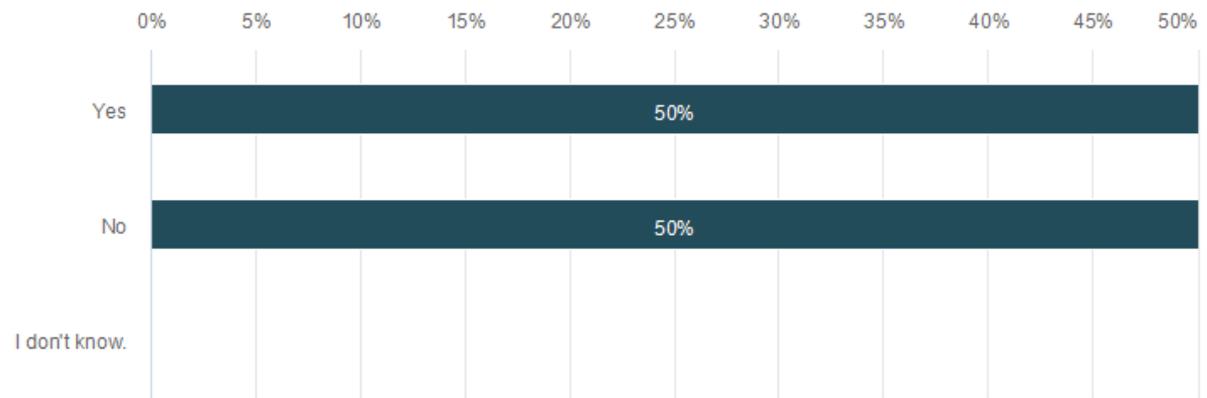


Figure 26: Have you made any changes in your daily routine? If yes, what?

The next question was “Do you feel a deeper connection with yourself?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.3 and the standard deviation was 0.8 (see figure 27).

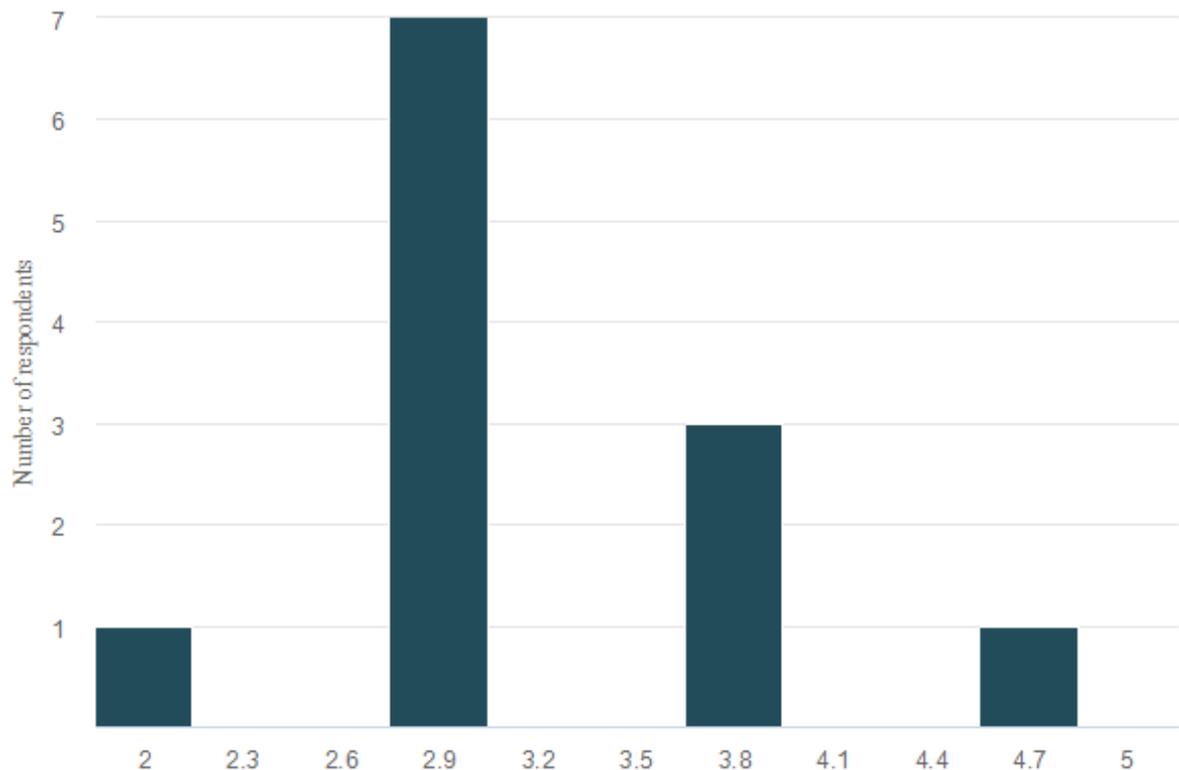


Figure 27: Do you feel a deeper connection with yourself?

The next question was “Do you feel closer to the people around you?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 2.5 and the standard deviation was 1.0 (see figure 28).

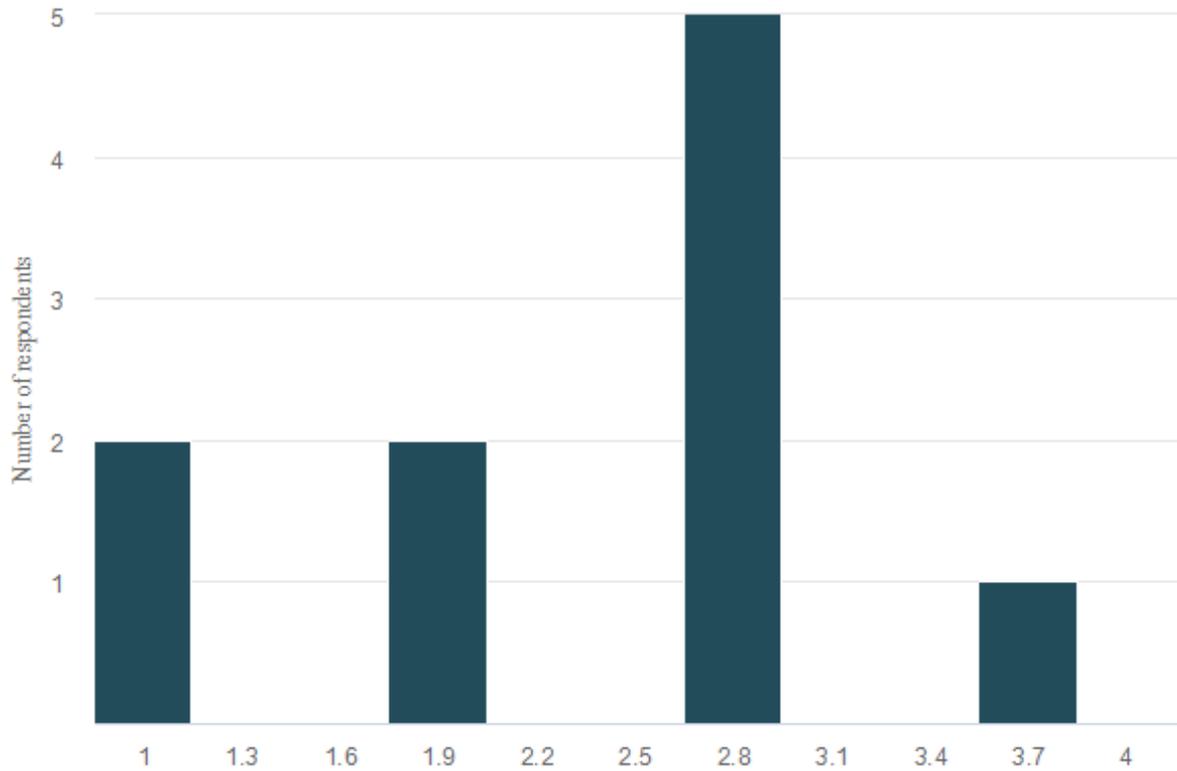


Figure 28: Do you feel closer to the people around you?

The tenth question I asked was “Have you been using your senses more mindfully since beginning your Journey? (Hear, smell, touch, see, taste)”. Eight (66.7%) of the participants selected ‘yes, very much’ and four (33.3%) selected ‘sometimes’. Nobody selected ‘no, not really’ or ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 29).

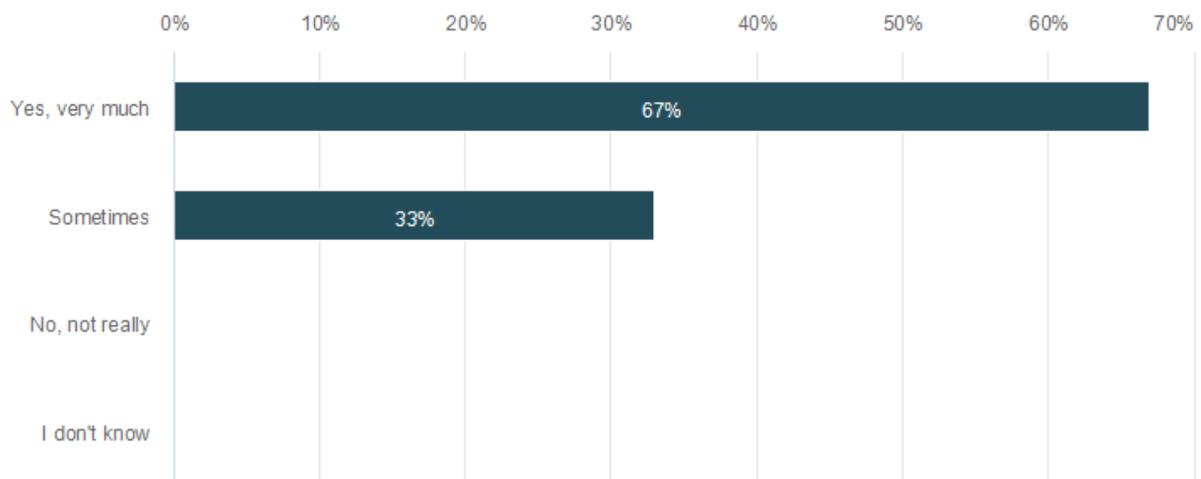


Figure 29: Have you been using your senses more mindfully since beginning your Journey?

The next question was “Do you feel more relaxed since beginning your journey?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very relaxed’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.2 and the standard deviation was 0.9 (see figure 30).

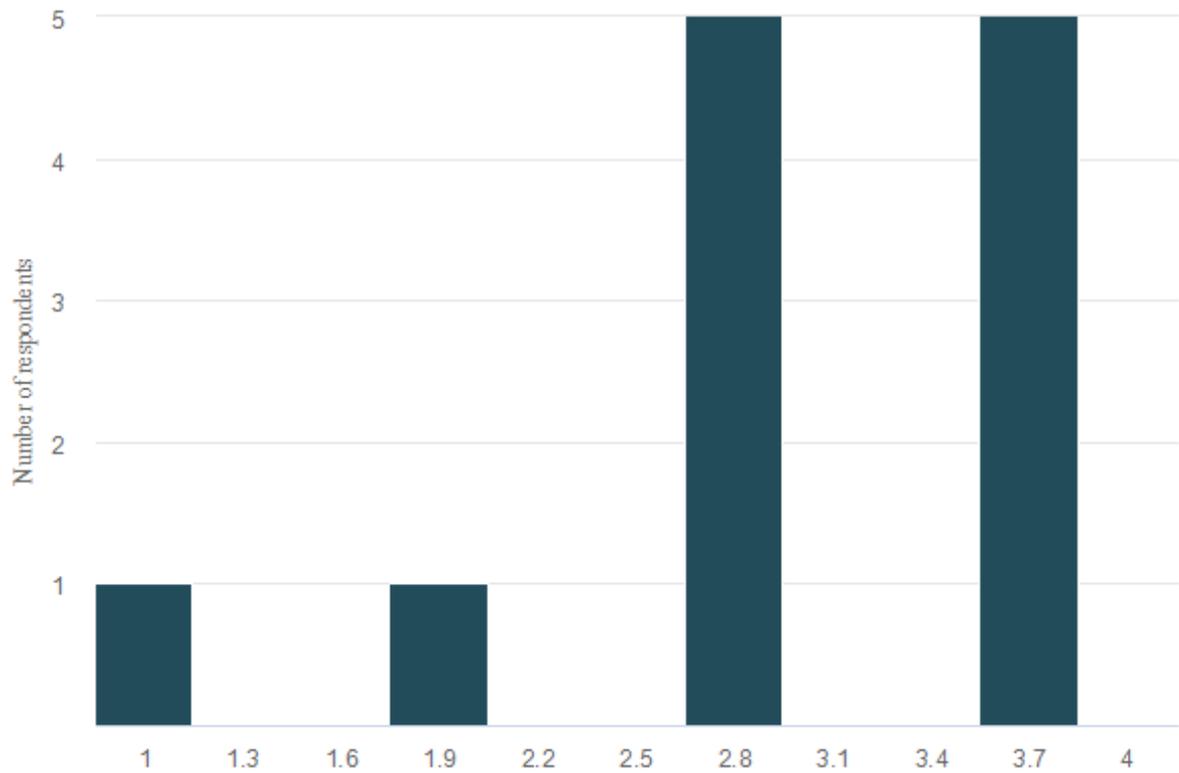


Figure 30: Do you feel more relaxed since beginning your Journey?

The next question was “Do you pay attention to your breathing?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘never’ and five being ‘yes, very often’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 2.9 and the standard deviation was 1.7 (see figure 31).

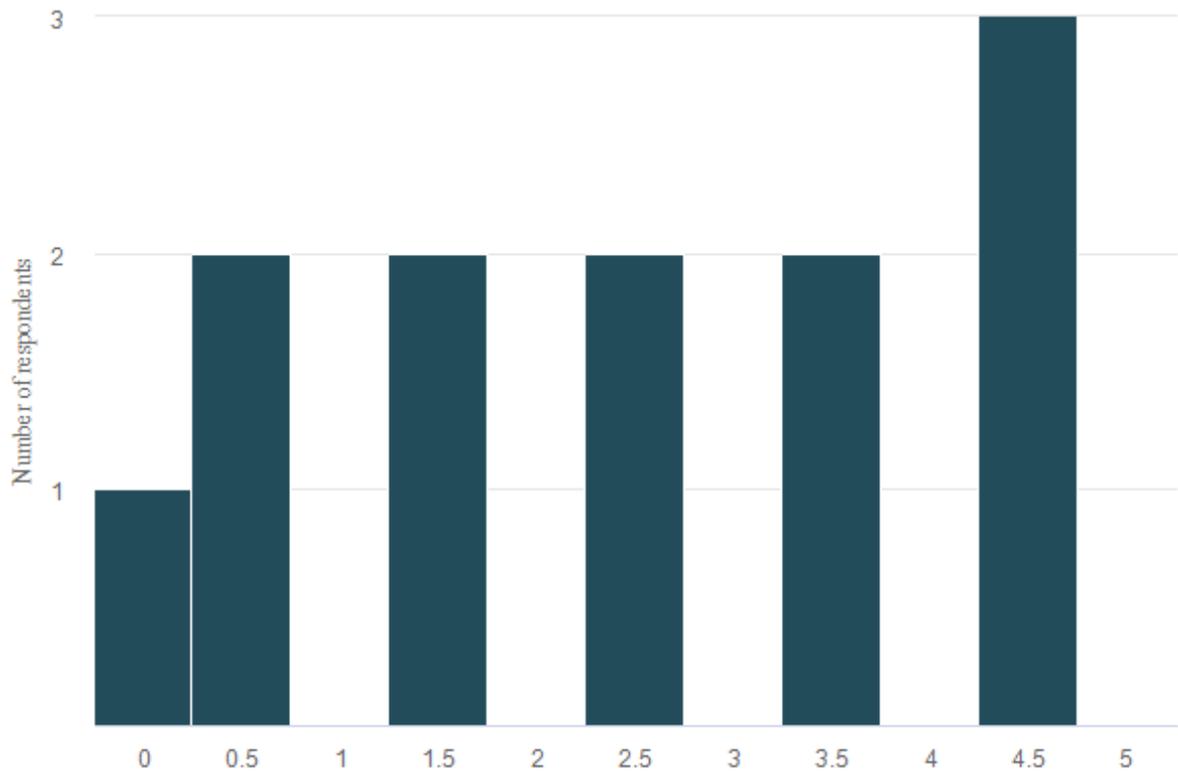


Figure 31: Do you pay attention to your breathing?

The next question I asked was “Do you feel you have control over your life?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, I feel I have lots of control.’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.2 and the standard deviation was 0.7 (see figure 32).

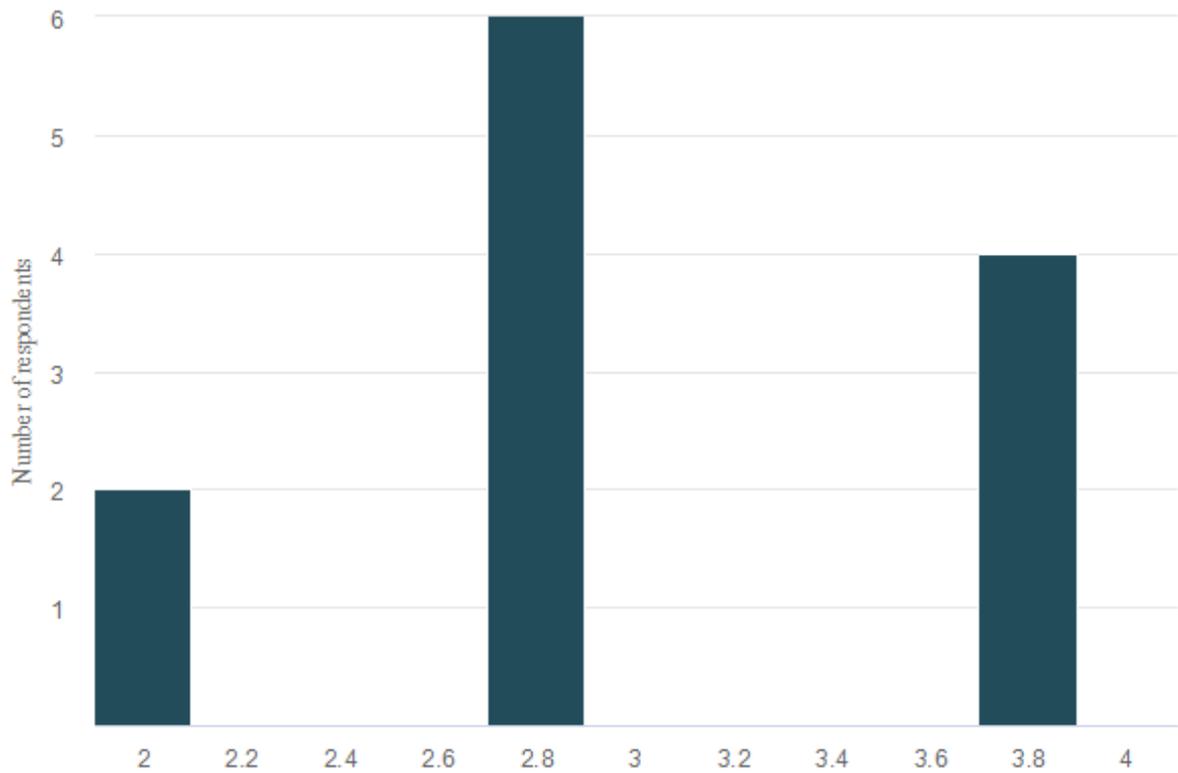


Figure 32: Do you feel you have control over your life?

The next question was “Do you feel you have purpose in your life?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘nope, never’ and five being ‘yes, strongly’), or ‘I don’t now’. The average answer was 3.2 and the standard deviation was 1.1 (see figure 33).

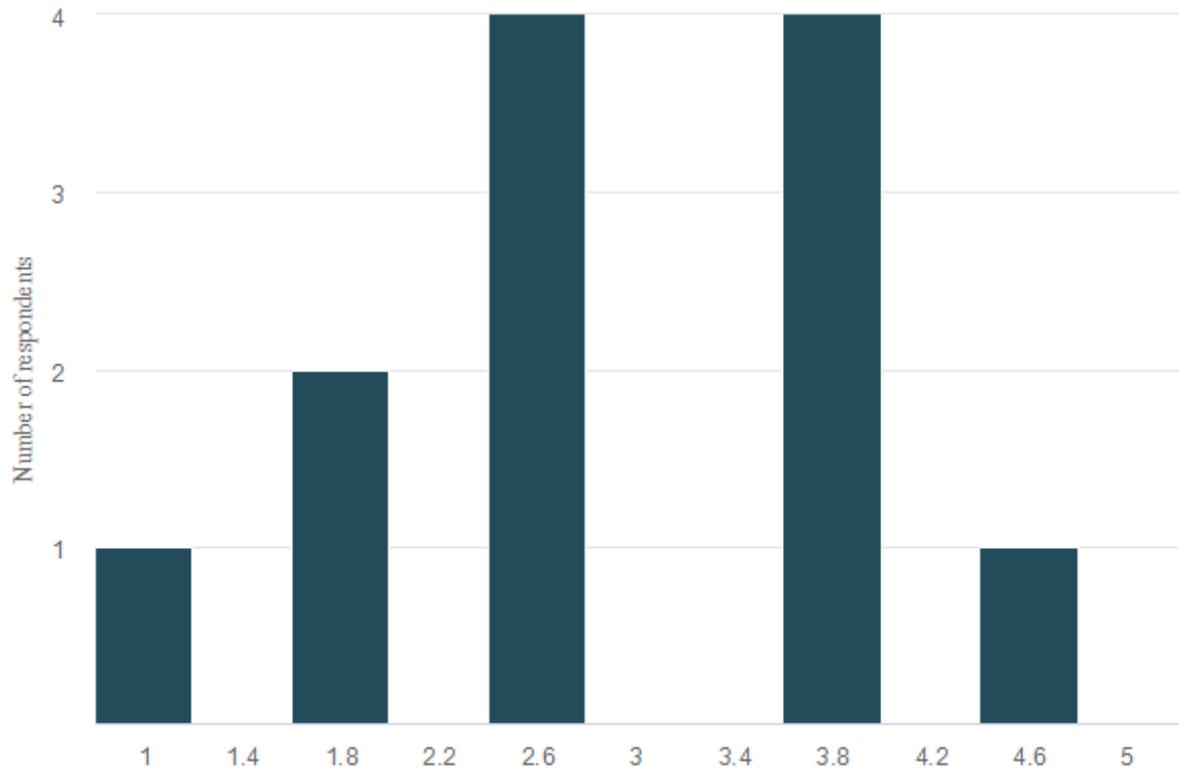


Figure 33: Do you feel a sense of purpose in your life?

Question fifteen was, “Do you feel at home in nature?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.6 and the standard deviation was 0.8 (see figure 34).

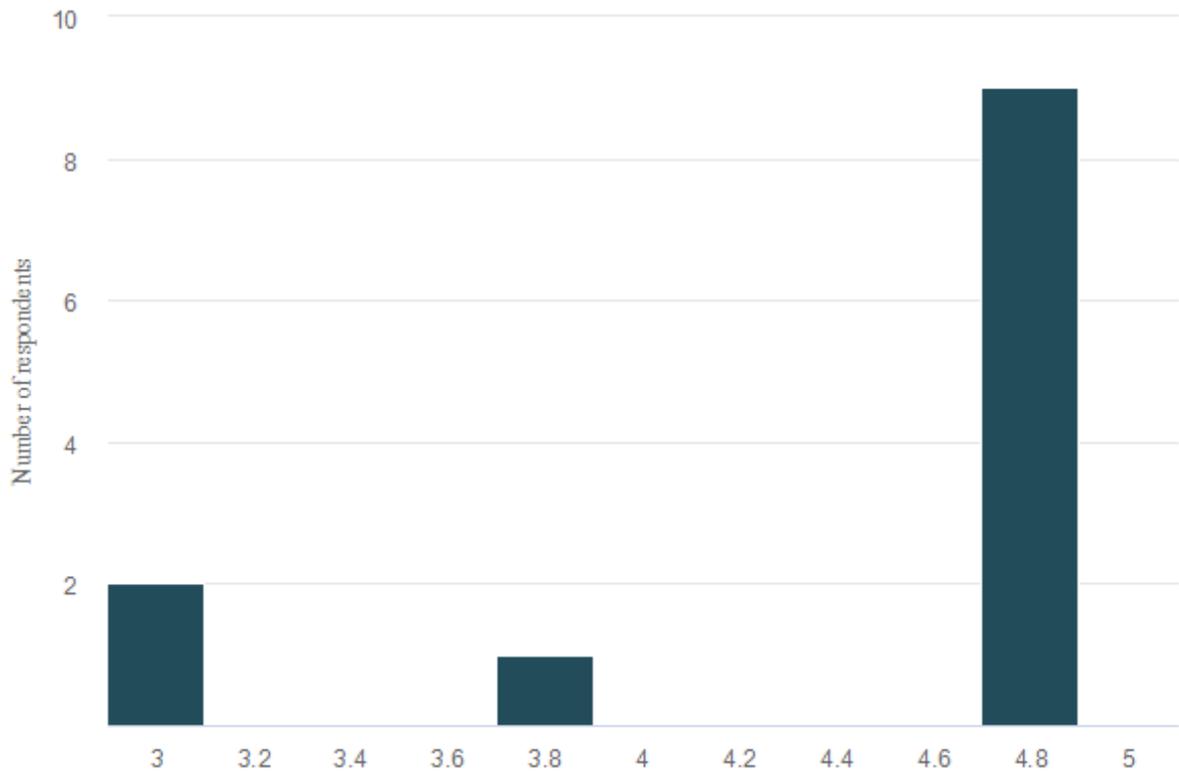


Figure 34: Do you feel at home in nature?

The next question was “Do you feel peaceful and in no rush when spending time in nature?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘I feel lots of pressure and have trouble slowing down ‘and five being ‘I am very peaceful and feel no rush ‘) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.9 and the standard deviation was 1.5 (see figure 35).

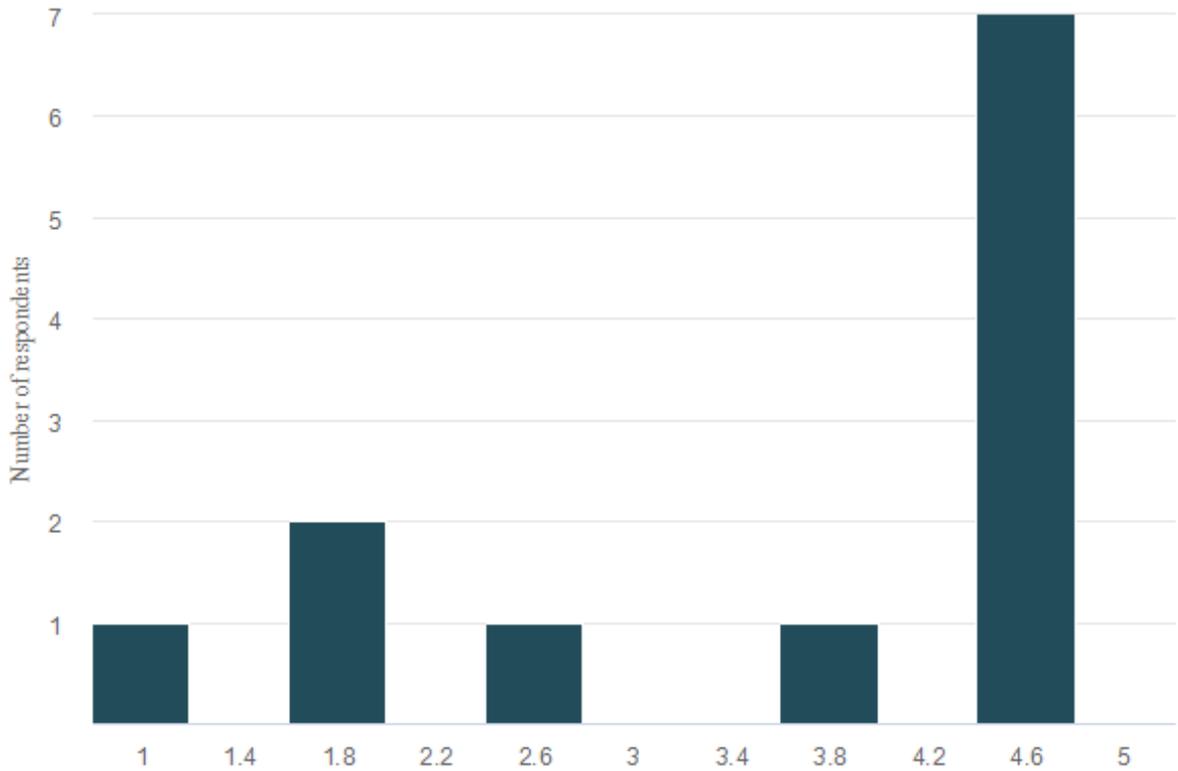


Figure 35: Do you feel peaceful and in no rush when spending time in nature?

Question seventeen was “Have you explored out of your comfort zone during your journey? If yes, where on the circle?” and I included an illustration depicting the comfort zone. All twelve (100%) participants selected ‘yes, I explored into the stretch zone’. Nobody selected, ‘I stayed in my comfort zone’, ‘yes, I reached the panic zone’ or ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 36).

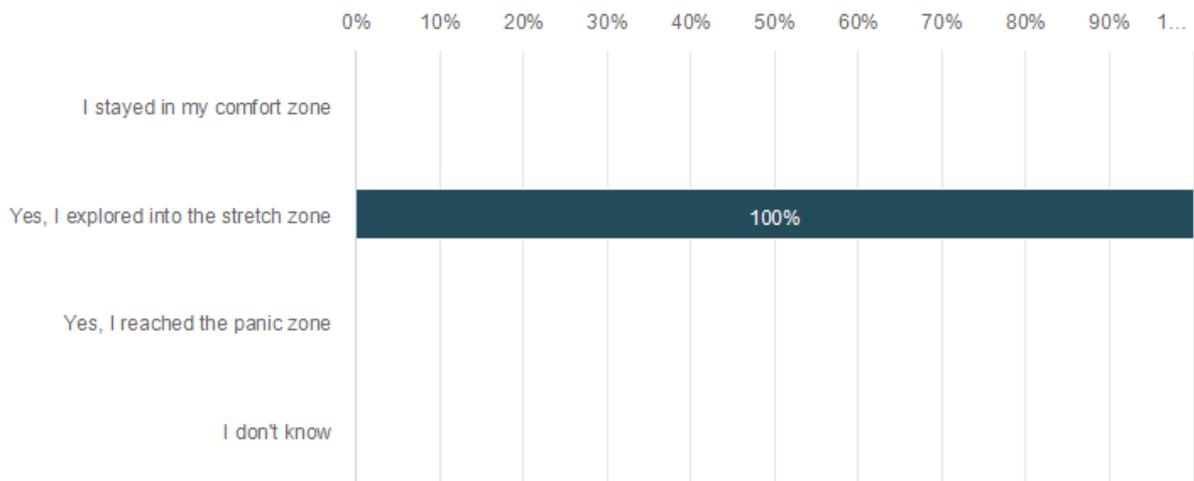


Figure 36: Have you explored out of your comfort zone during your Journey?
If yes, where on the circle?

My last question for the ‘during survey’ was “Do you feel open and comfortable to share your experiences/opinions and comments in ‘The Journey’ group?”, on scale of zero to five (zero being ‘I don't feel open and comfortable to share and five being, ‘I feel very open and comfortable to share ‘) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.8 and the standard deviation was 1.1 (see figure 37).

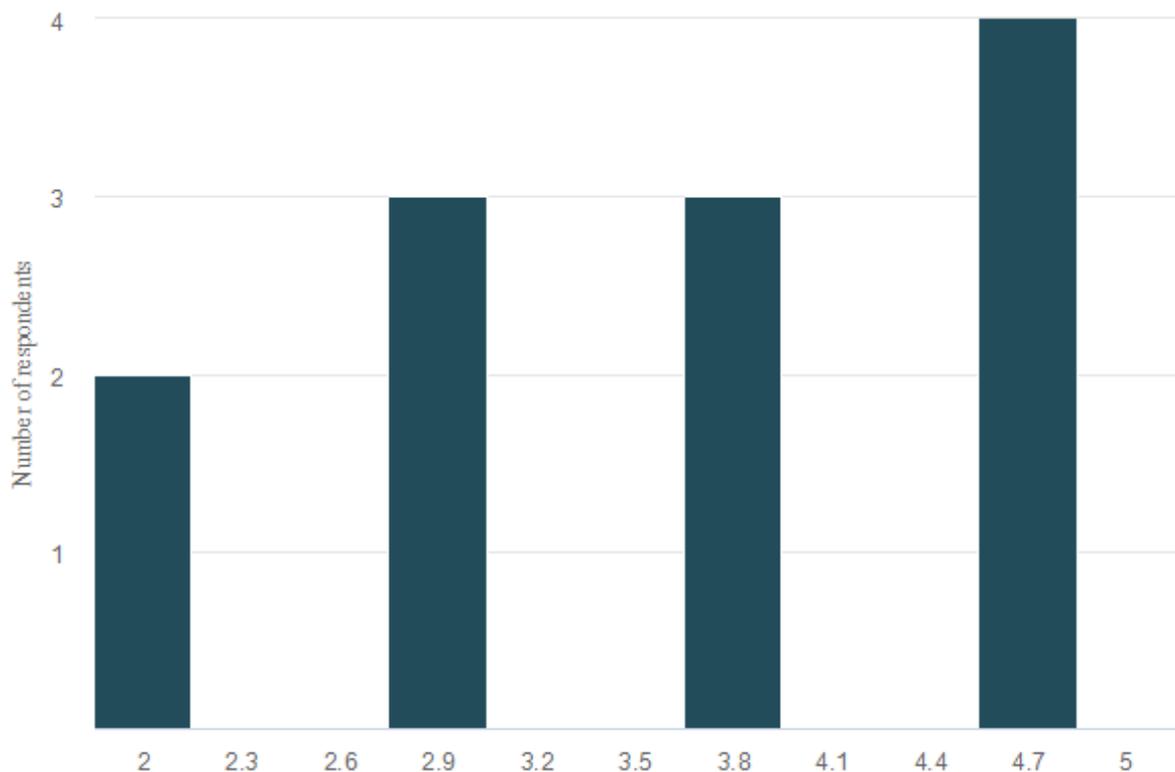


Figure 37: Do you feel open and comfortable to share your experiences/opinions and comments in 'The Journey' group?

4.3 After

After the program, I received only nine answers from the participants. So then there was three less people since the ‘during’ survey. I asked a total of thirty-three questions, making it my longest survey. The reason for the ‘after survey’ being the longest survey is because I wanted to make sure to not miss any important personal changes in wellbeing of the participants that happened during their eight-week journeys. The questions were not only focused on the last two guides (expert & explorer) but also all four guides. I also collected some feedback of ‘The Journey’ for possible future improvements.

The first question I asked was “Which guides were your favourite to explore?”. Majority of participants (six) selected ‘explorer’. Another two selected ‘expert’ and one participant selected ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 38).

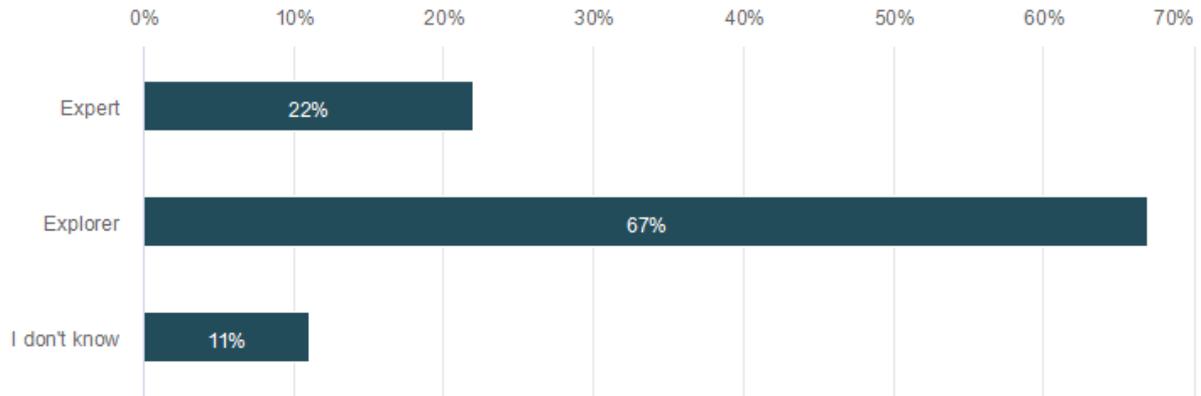


Figure 38: Which guides were your favourite to explore?

The second question I asked was “How easy was it to connect with your inner expert?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘it was very difficult ‘and five being ‘it was very easy’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.8 and the standard deviation was 1.8 (see figure 39).

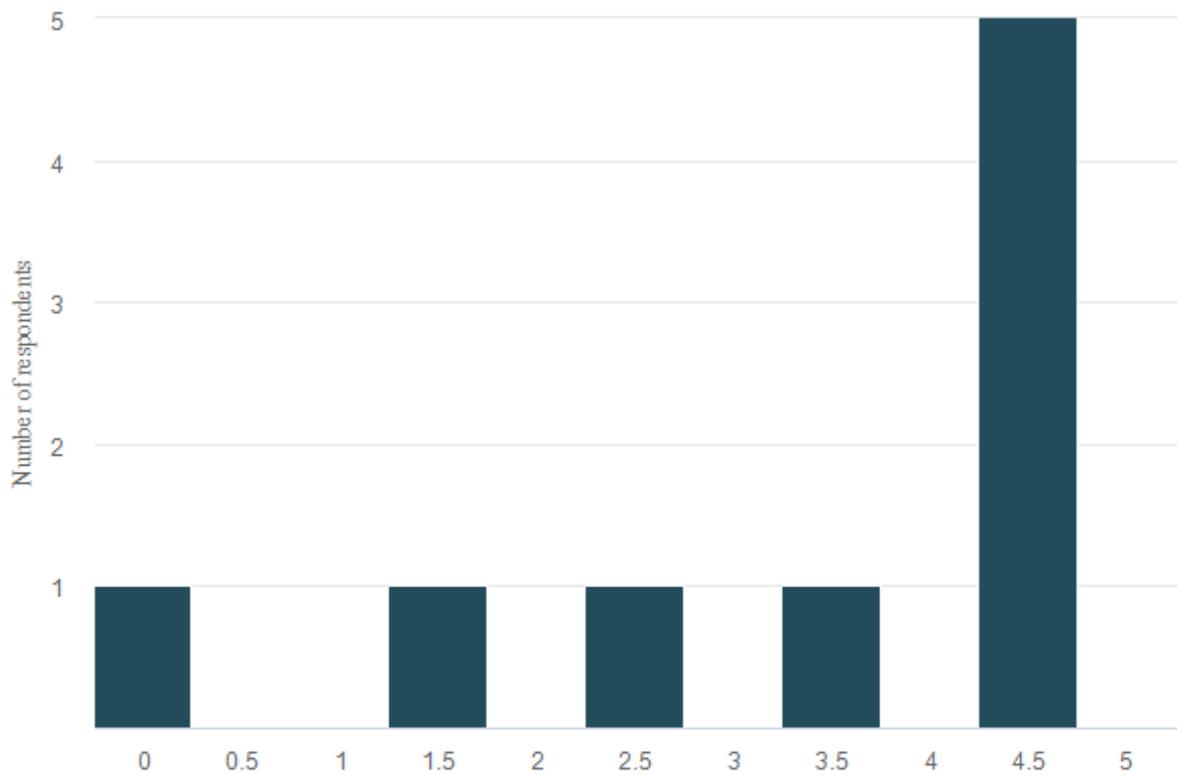


Figure 39: How easy was it to connect with your inner expert?

The third question I asked about “How easy was it to connect with your inner explorer?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being it ‘it was very difficult and five being ‘it was very easy’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.1 and the standard deviation was 0.9 (see figure 40).

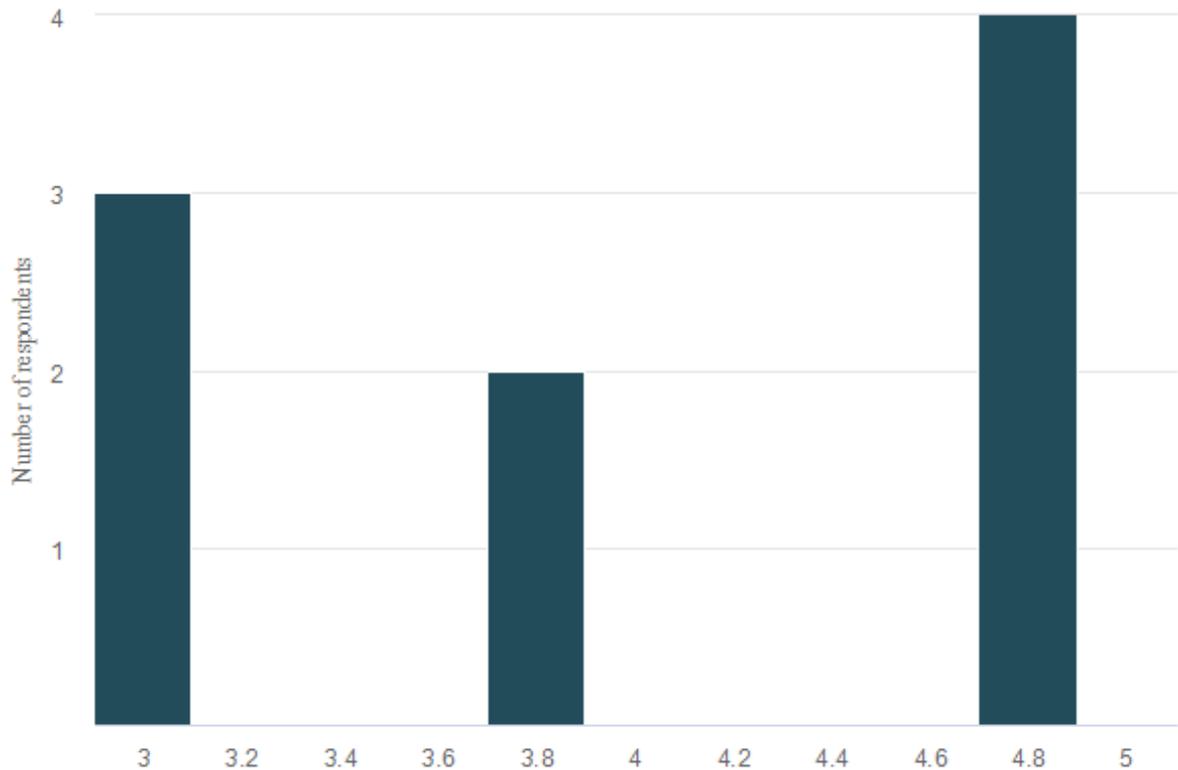


Figure 40: How easy was it to connect with your inner explorer?

The fourth question was “How safe and comfortable do you feel to explore in nature?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘not safe/comfortable at all and five being ‘very safe!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.7 and the standard deviation was 0.5 (see figure 41).

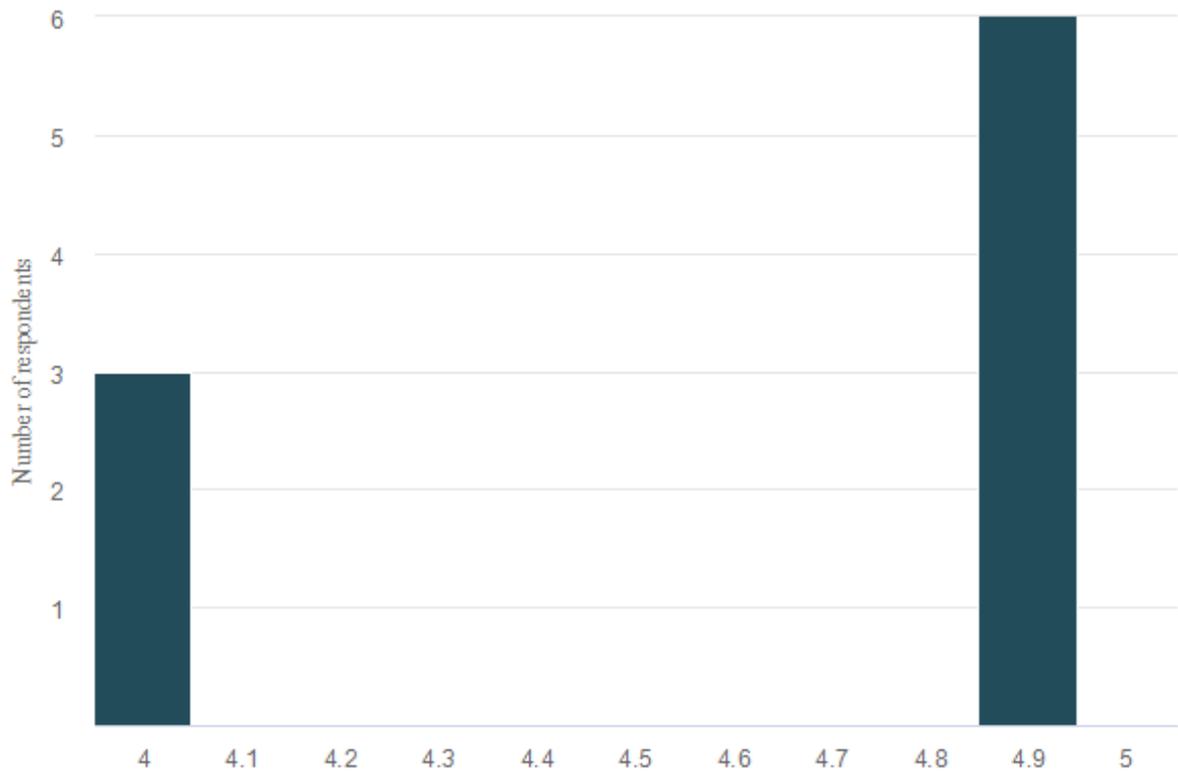


Figure 41: How safe and comfortable do you feel to explore in nature?

The fifth question was “Have you learned some new tools to help you through difficult moments in your life?” (see figure 42). All nine participants selected ‘yes’ and wrote down the new tools they learned.

Three participants mentioned breathing and in five of the answers there is a common theme of self-awareness/realization.

Participant 1: “Breathing, confidence, growth mindset”

Participant 2: “Breathing, tapping”

Participant 3: “Even with my broken leg now I smell nature through the car window, I enjoy the feeling of the wind through my hair through the car window...”

Participant 4: “Time in nature as healing power”

Participant 5: “Have a language that helps me to be aware and understand myself better. A process for making decisions in line with my true nature. Breathing to put space between reacting and acting.”

Participant 6: “To stand back and explore which guide is popping through and to flow through each guide to help me move forward. To also recognize my reactions, feelings and thoughts through the variation of guides.”

Participant 7: “I’ve learned to give voice to -and listen to- all aspects of my true nature before making decisions or responding to situations.”

Participant 8: “Useful model for integration and self realization”

Participant 9: “learning how to use nature in a more in depth way in order to deepen self awareness”

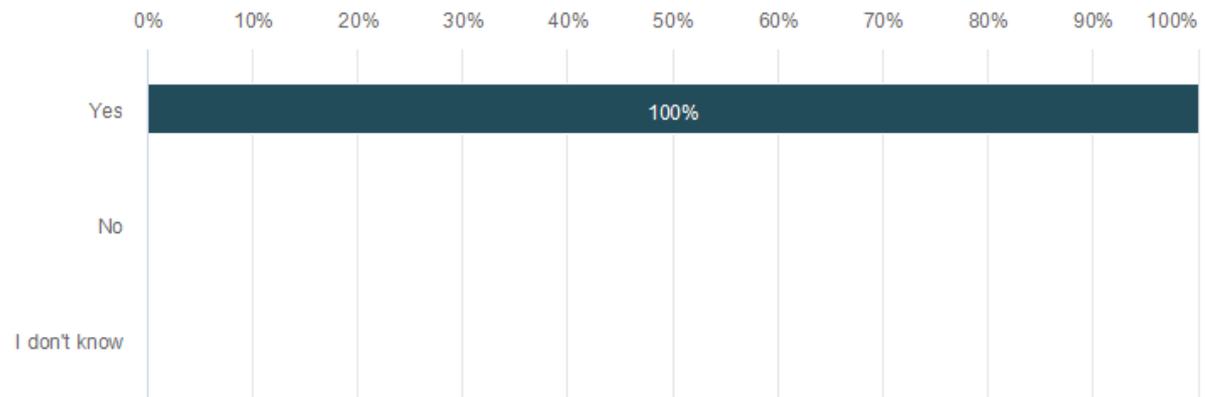


Figure 42: Have you learned some new tools to help you through difficult moments in your life?

The sixth question was, “After finishing this program, do you feel your mental health has improved?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.6 and the standard deviation was 1.3 (see figure 43).

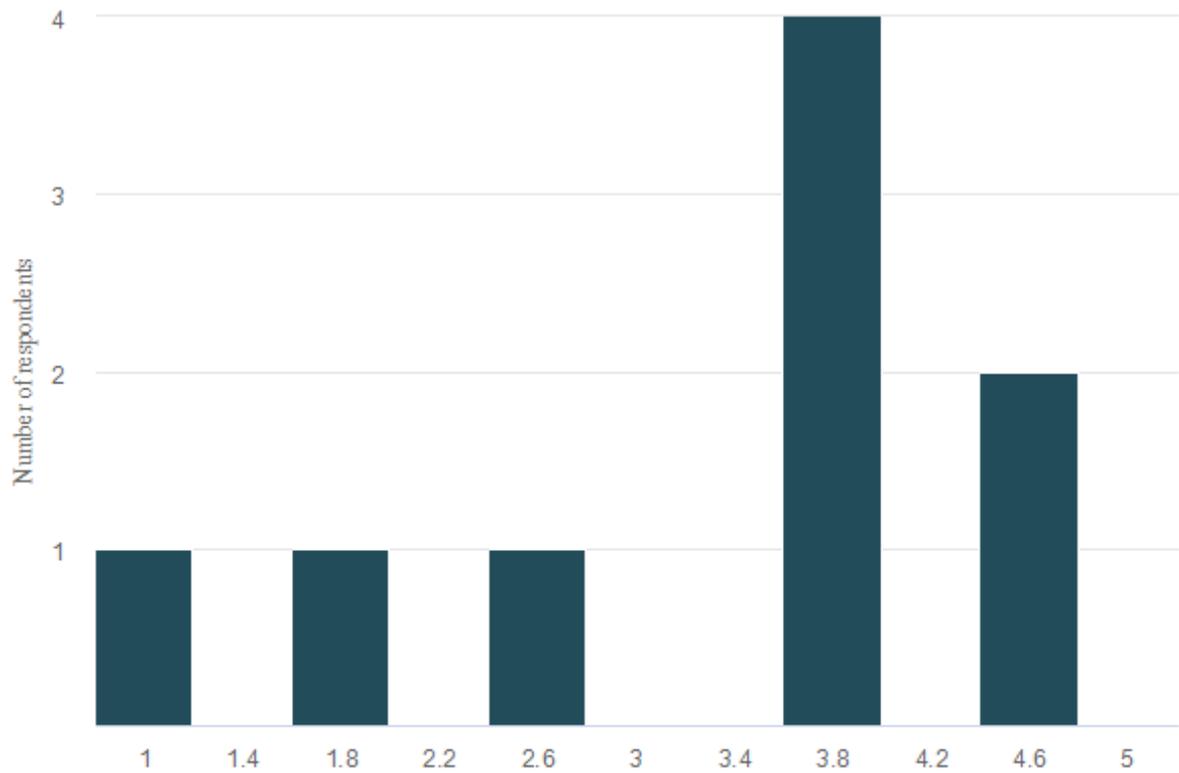


Figure 43: After finishing this program, do you feel your MENTAL health has improved?

The seventh question I ask, “After finishing this program, do you feel your physical health has improved?” Ex: sleep, diet, exercise, etc.), on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 2.6 and the standard deviation was 1.9 (see figure 44).

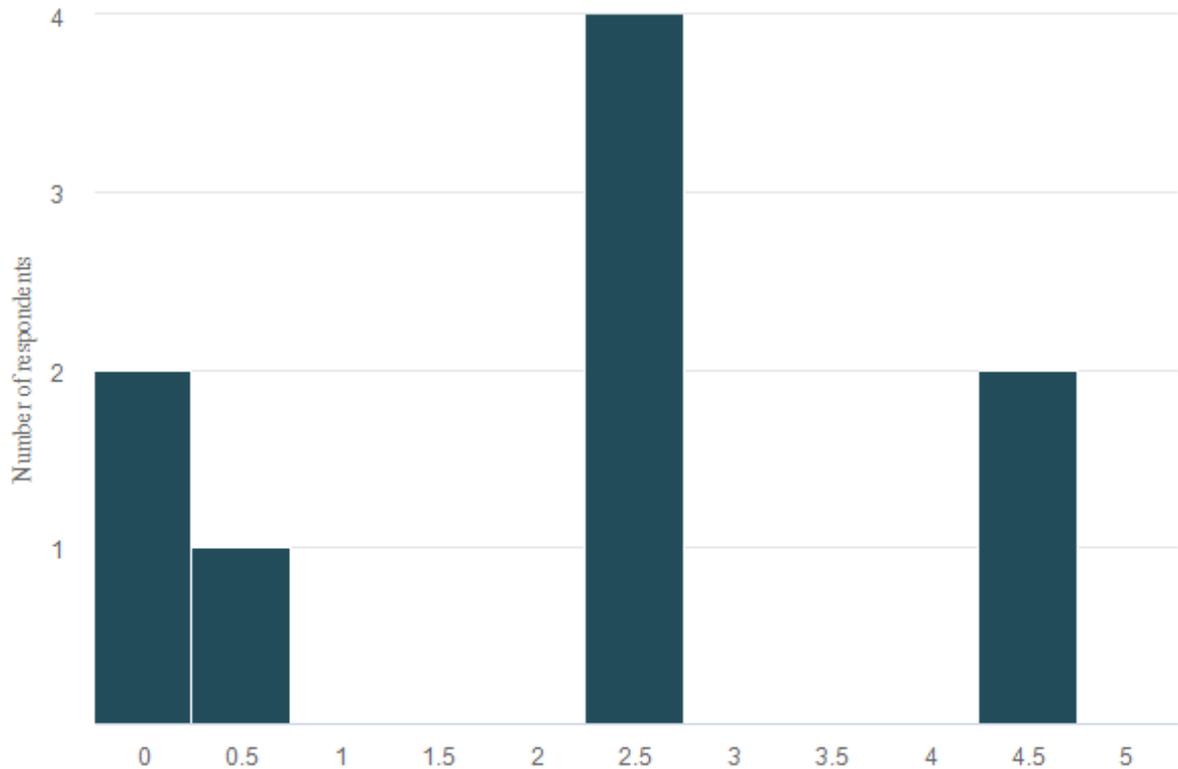


Figure 44: After finishing this program, do you feel your PHYSICAL health has improved?

Next, I ask, “Where would you place yourself in the comfort zone after exploring your expert and explorer?” and I included a photo of the ‘comfort zones’ so participants could identify their level. The majority of participants (seven) selected ‘yes, I explored into my stretch zone’. One participant selected ‘yes, I stayed in my comfort zone’ and another one had selected that ‘yes, I reached my panic zone’. None of the participants selected ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 45).

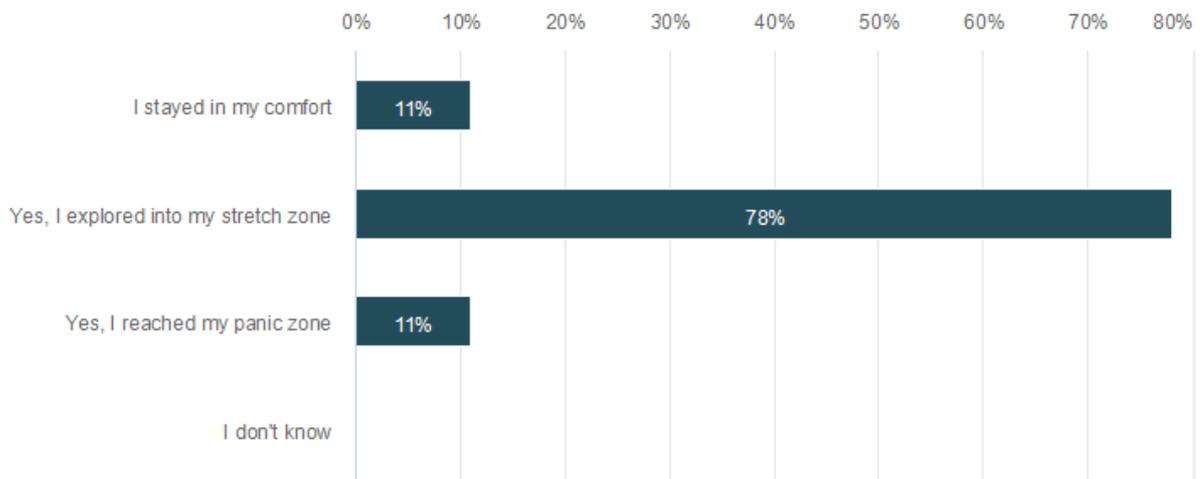


Figure 45: Where would you place yourself in the comfort zone after exploring your expert and explorer?

The next question asks, “How much time have you spent outside in a day after finishing this program?”. Majority of participants (five) had selected ‘30mins’ and secondly four participants selected ‘2 hours and more’. Nobody selected ‘less than 10mins’, ‘I go outside to just run errands/do chores’, or ‘I don’t know’(see figure 46).

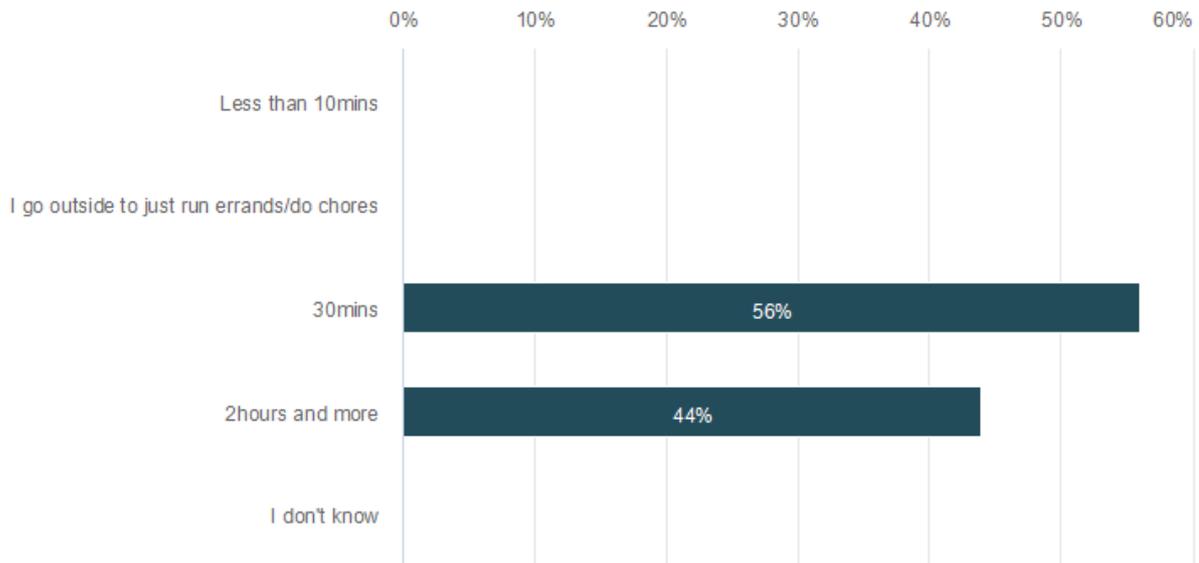


Figure 46: How much time have you spent outside in a day after finishing this program?

The tenth question is “I feel the need to control things in my life”. Majority of participants (five) selected ‘sometimes’, and three participants selected ‘No, I let things happen’. Only one selected ‘yes, all the time’ and nobody selected ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 47).

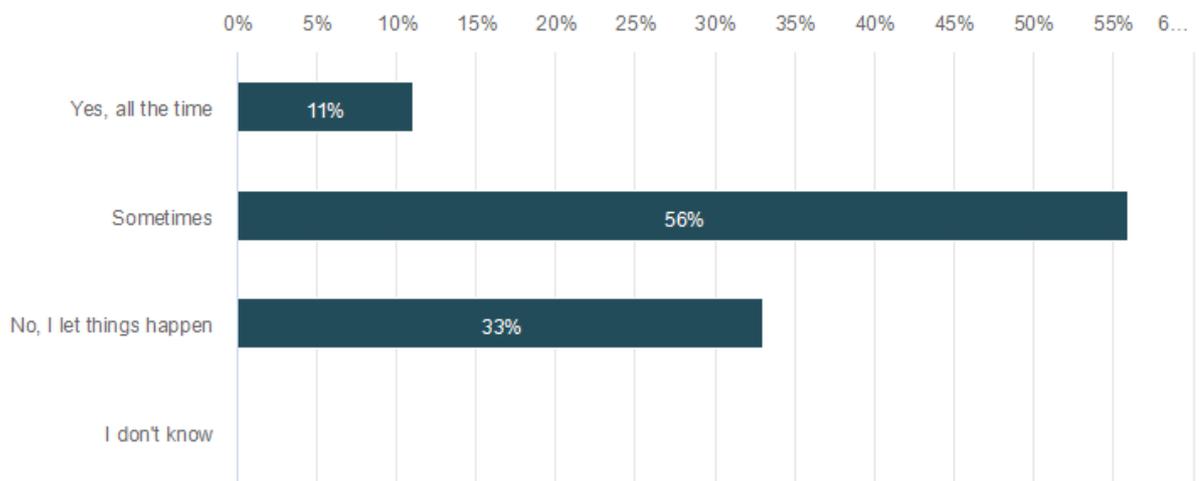


Figure 47: I feel the need to control things in my life?

Next question was “Do you feel peaceful and in no rush when spending time in nature?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘I feel lots of pressure and have trouble slowing down’, and

five being 'I am very peaceful and feel no rush') or 'I don't know'. The average answer was 4.6 and the standard deviation was 0.7 (see figure 48).

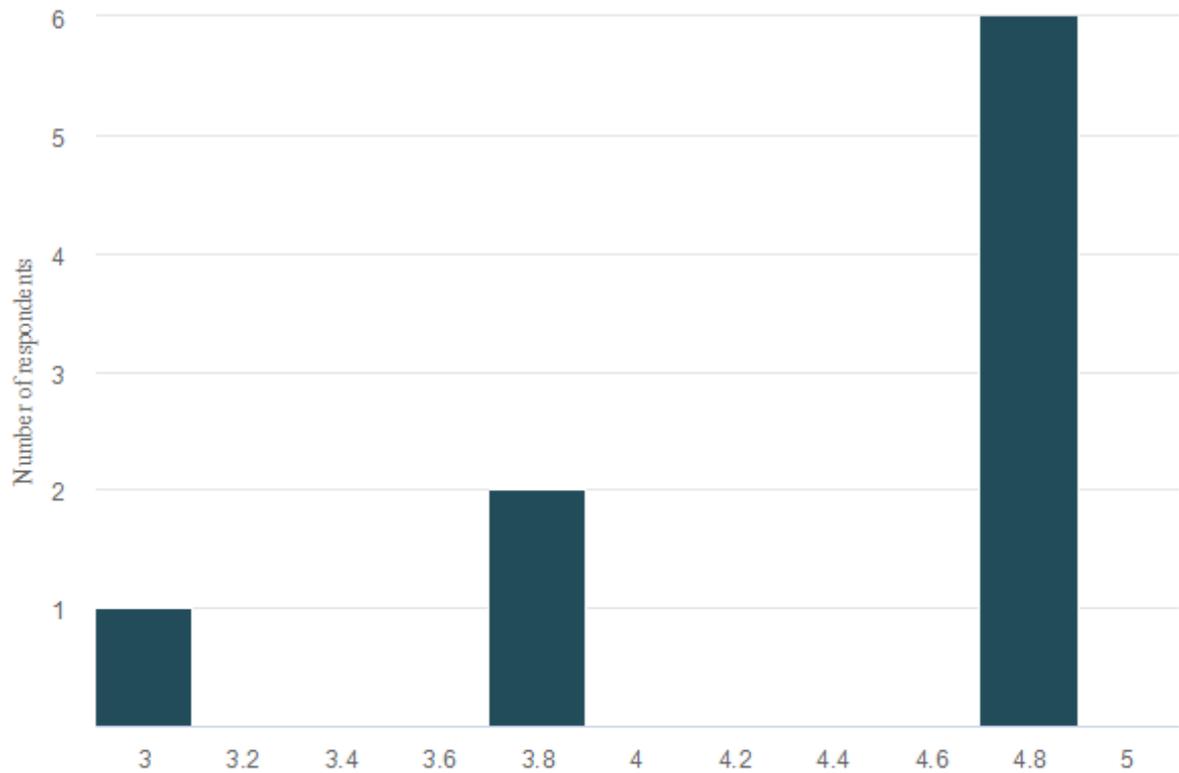


Figure 48: Do you feel peaceful and in no rush when spending time in nature?

Next question was "Do you feel a deeper connection with yourself?", on a scale of zero to five (zero being 'no, not at all' and five being 'yes, very much!'), or 'I don't know'. The average answer was 4.7 and the standard deviation was 0.7 (see figure 49).

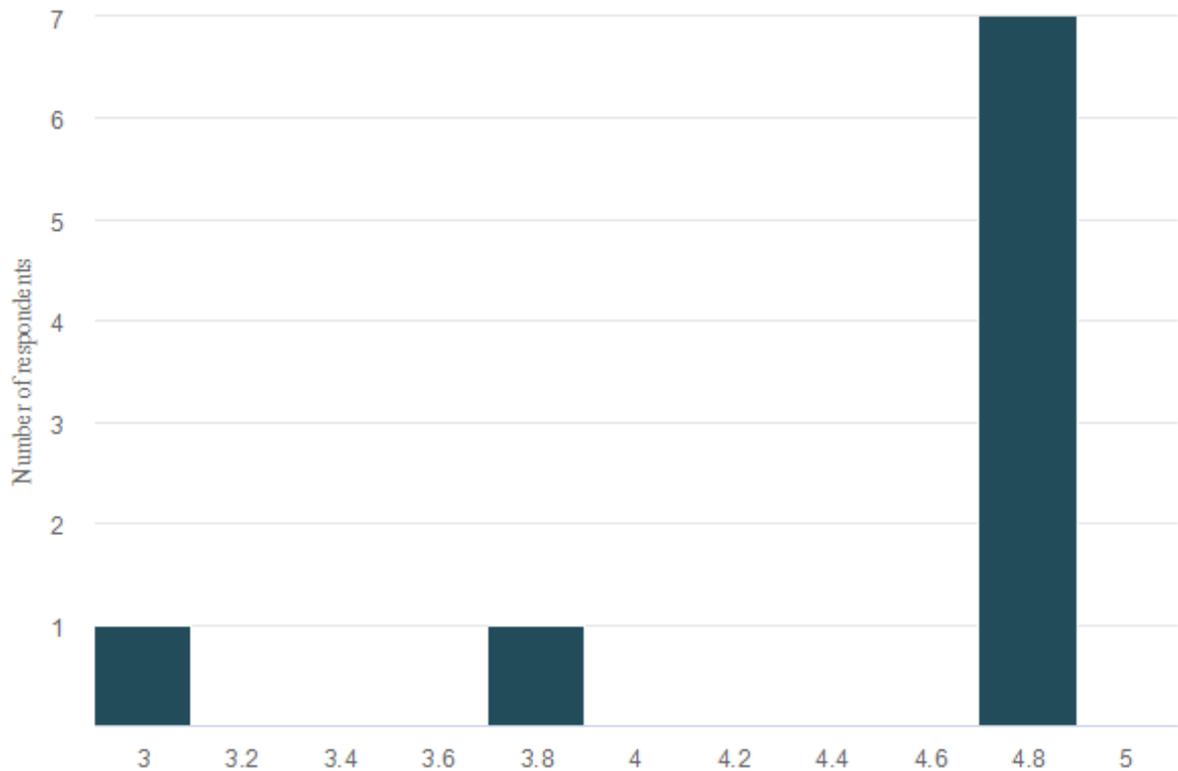


Figure 49: Do you feel a deeper connection with yourself?

The following question was “Is there anything that you learned from the Journey that you will apply in your daily routine?” Example: new outdoor activities, hobbies, healthy habits, etc. Majority of participants (eight) selected ‘yes’ and only one selected ‘I don’t know’. Nobody selected ‘no’(see image 50). All eight participants who selected ‘yes’ included written answers of the things they learned from the journey that they will be applying in their daily routine.

Participant 1: “combining my love for nature as a career path”

Participant 2: “being more aware of my senses, especially smell and touch. Being aware of the love I have for nature and the enjoying I feel when I am in nature.”

Participant 3: “Early morning walk when commitments allow”

Participant 4: “Meditation, walking”

Participant 5: “To explore the deeper possibilities of nature and to think like our ancestors may have in their deeper connection to nature in the past”

Participant 6: “Coming alive inside”

Participant 7: “Remembering to pause and ask all 4 guides”

Participant 8: “refresh on the 4 paths in order to sharpen my instincts and intuition”

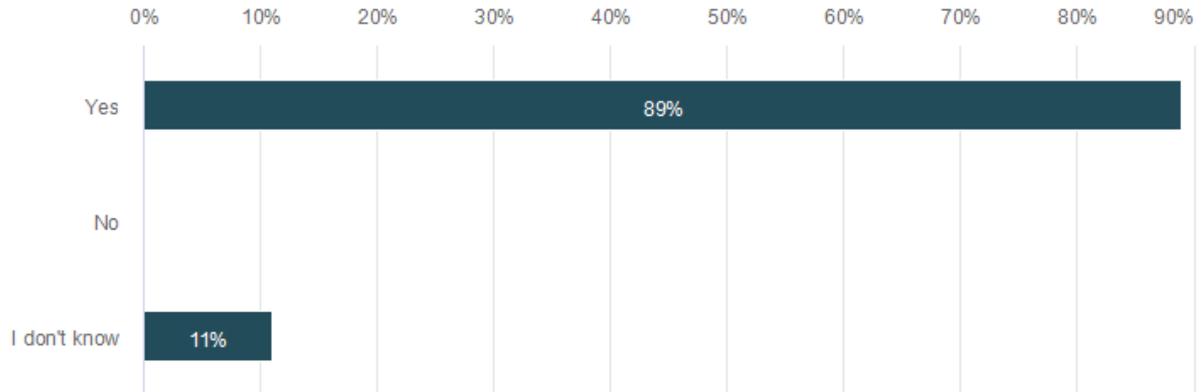


Figure 50: Is there anything that you learned from the Journey that you will apply in your daily routine?

The next question was “How connected do you feel with nature?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘Not connected at all’, and five being ‘very connected!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.8 and the standard deviation was 0.4 (see figure 51).

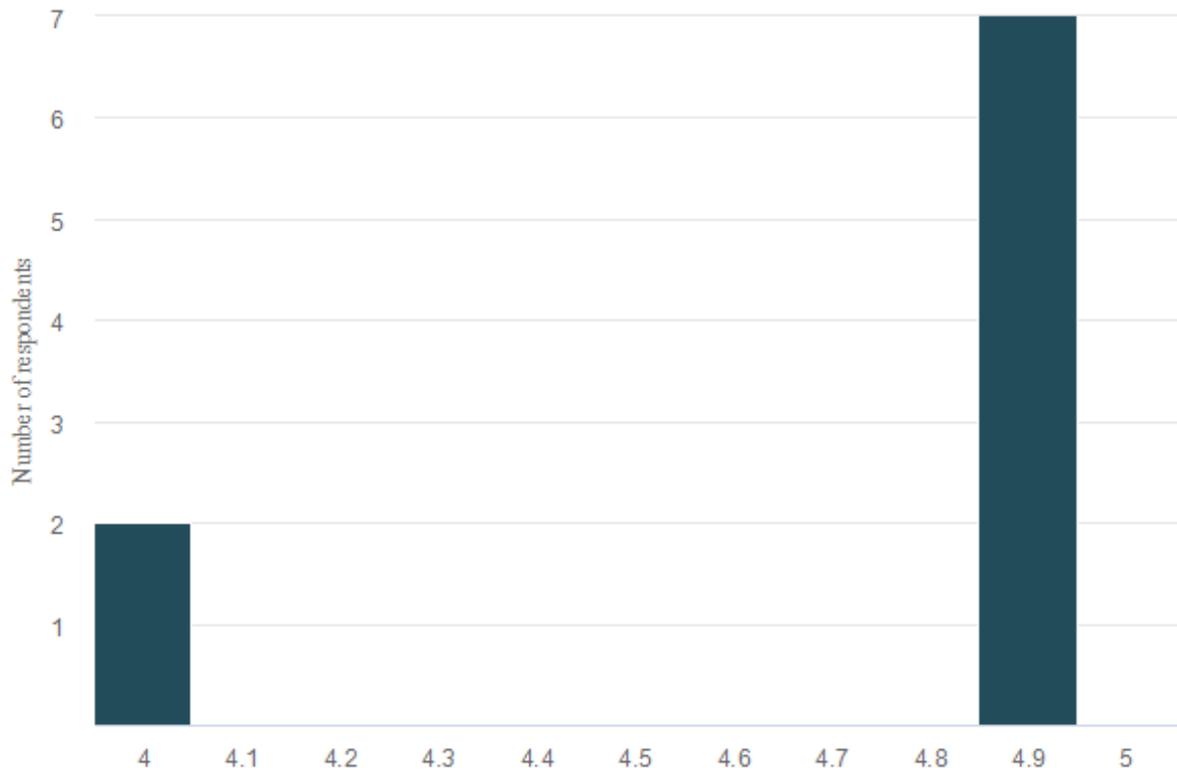


Figure 51: How connected do you feel with nature?

The fifteenth question was “I feel more confident and self-love towards myself”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not all’, and five being ‘yes, very much!’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.1 and the standard deviation was 1.1 (see figure 52).

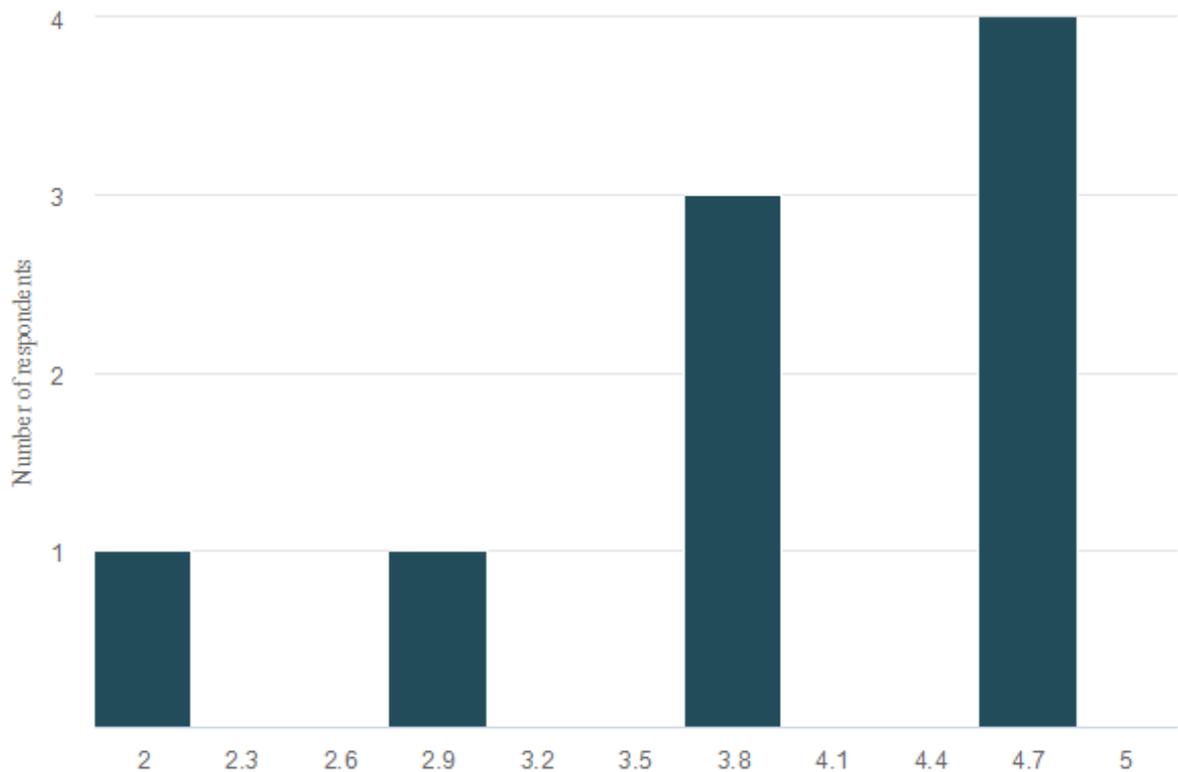


Figure 52: I feel more confident and self-love towards myself

Next question was “How satisfied do you feel in your life?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘I don’t feel satisfied about my life’ and five being ‘I feel very satisfied in my life!’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.7 and the standard deviation was 0.7 (see figure 53).

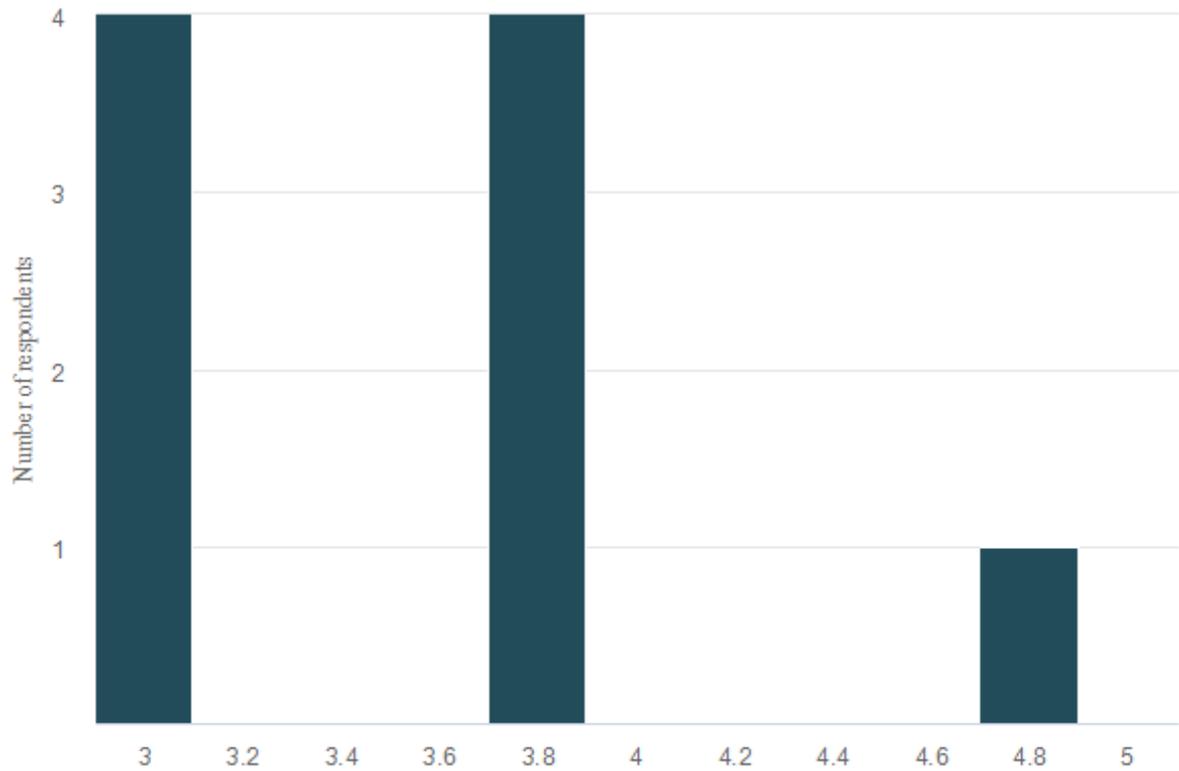


Figure 53: How satisfied do you feel in your life?

Next, I asked “I feel a stronger connection to my community, friends and family”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’, and five being ‘yes, very!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.1 and the standard deviation was 1.5 (see figure 54).

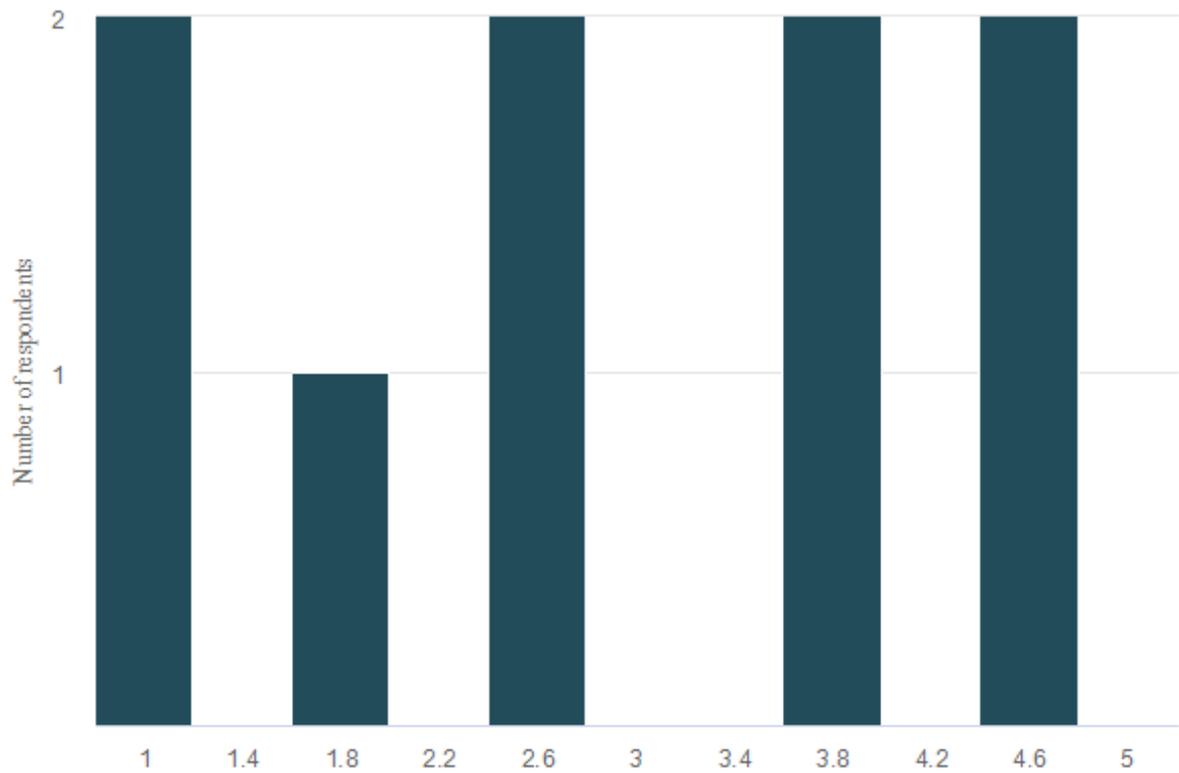


Figure 54: I feel a stronger connection to my community, friends and family

The next question was “My mind feels calmer and I feel like I understand myself”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very!’, or ‘I don’t know’). The average answer was 3.9 and the standard deviation was 1.3 (see figure 55).

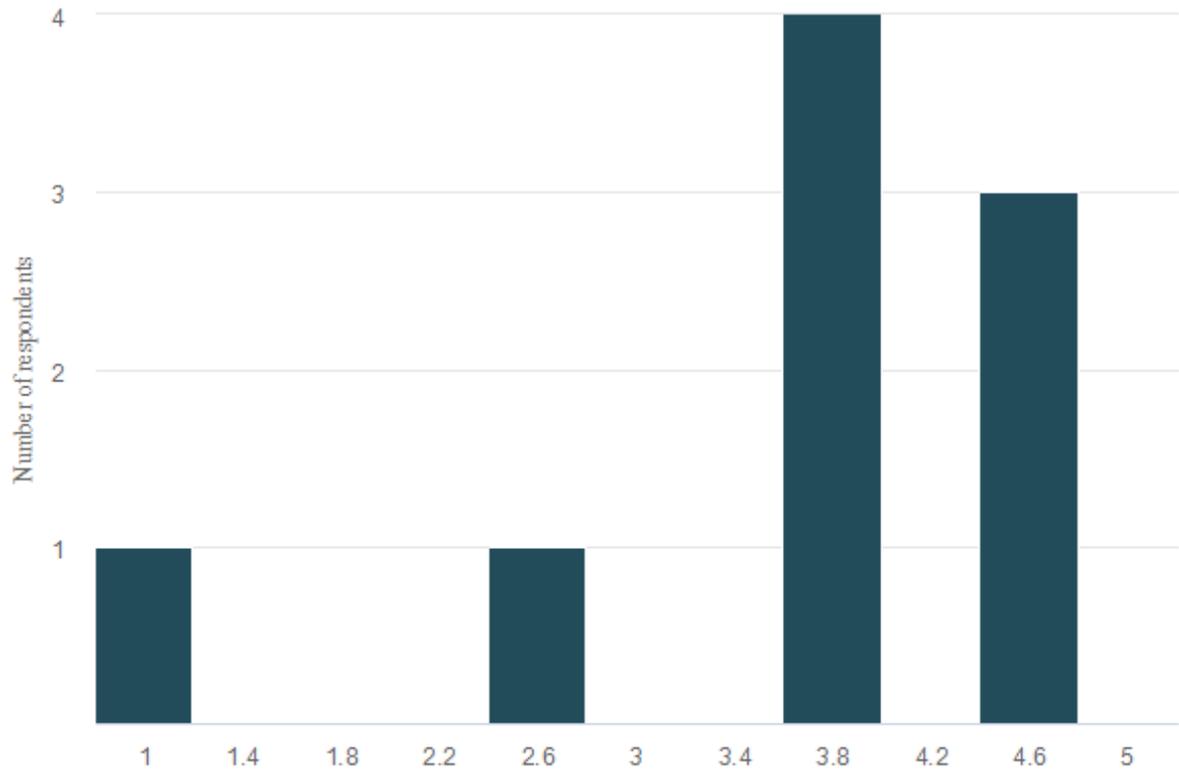


Figure 55: My mind feels calmer and I feel like I understand myself

Next question was “How important is nature to you?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘not important at all’ and five being ‘very important’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.9 and the standard deviation was 0.3 (see figure 56).

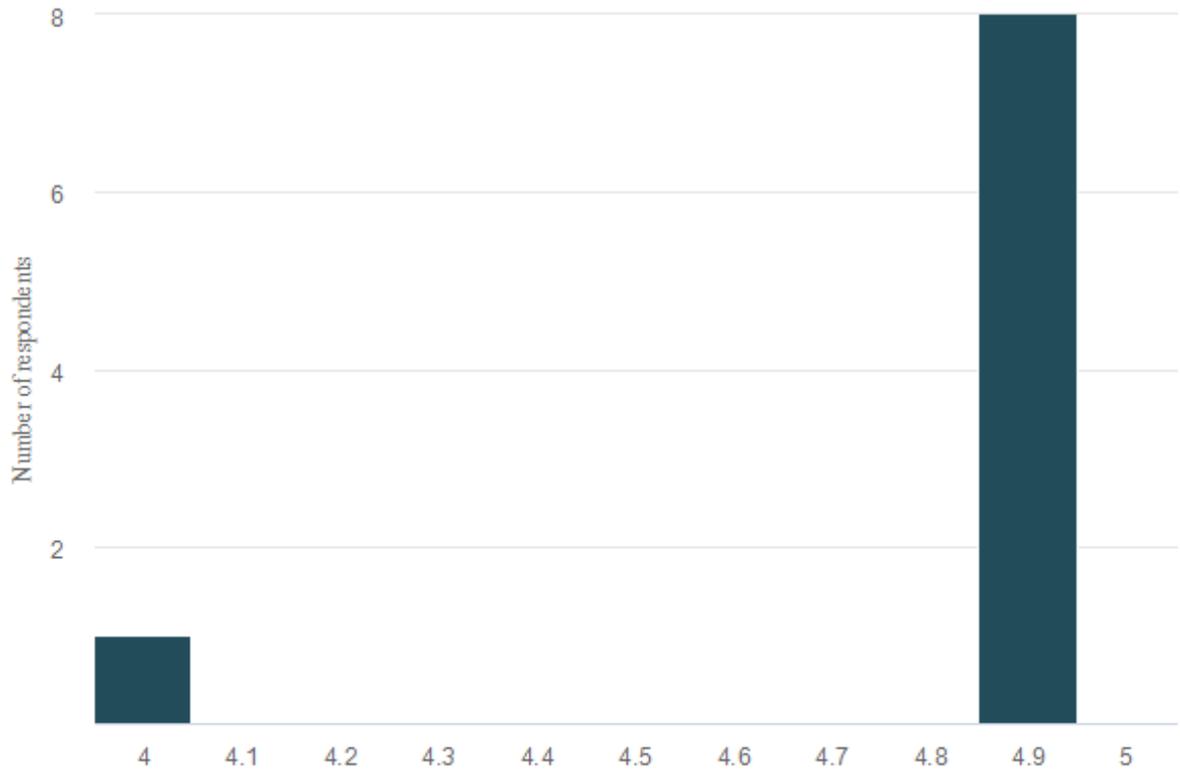


Figure 56: How important is nature to you?

The twentieth question was “Do you feel more connected to a different guide now at the end of the program?”. Majority of participants (four) selected ‘No, I still resonate with the same’ and three selected ‘explorer’. One participant selected ‘expert’ and another one selected ‘hunter/huntress’. Nobody selected ‘gatherer’ or ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 57).

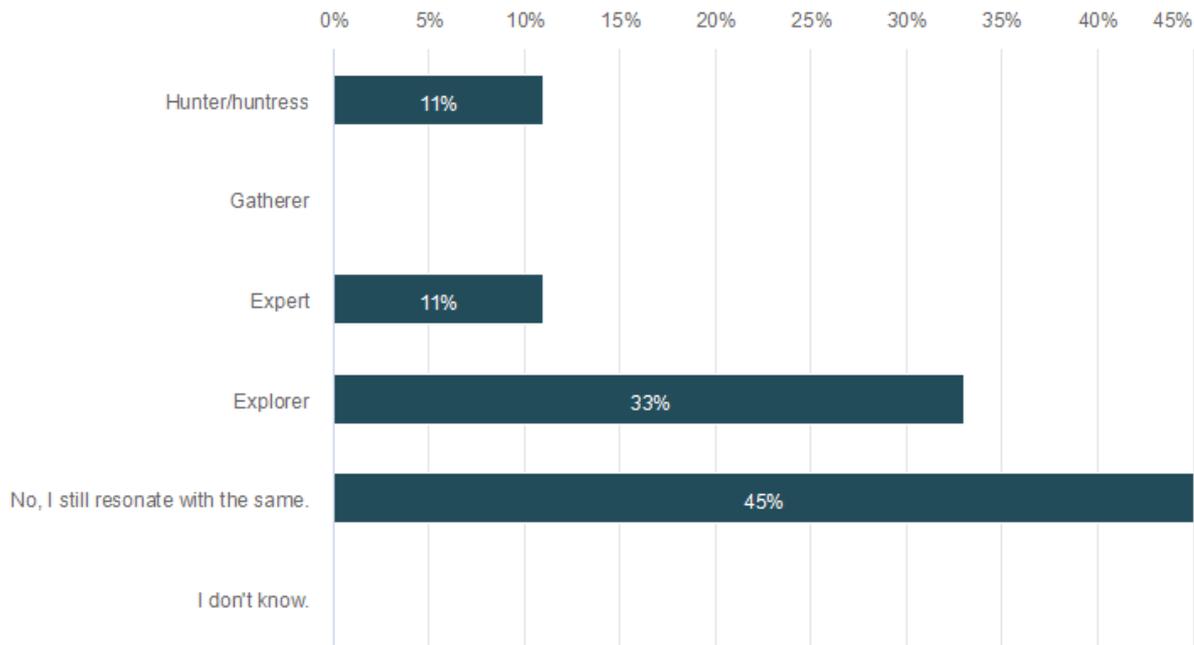


Figure 57: Do you feel more connected to a different guide now at the end of the program?

Next question was “Do you pay attention to your breathing?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘never’ and five being ‘yes, very often’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.4 and the standard deviation 1.1 (see figure 58).

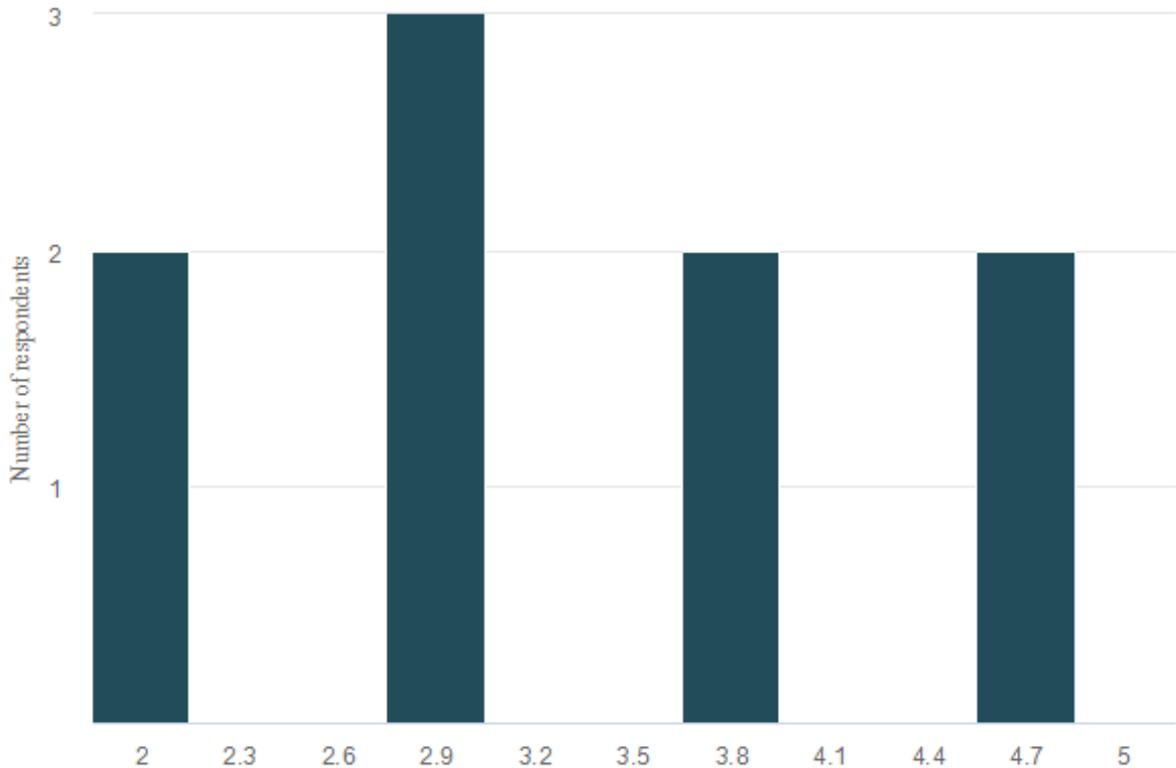


Figure 58: Do you pay attention to your breathing?

Next question was “Do you find it difficult to find motivation to get outside?”. The majority of participants (seven) selected ‘No, I can always find the motivation to go outdoors’ and two selected ‘sometimes’. Nobody selected ‘yes, very often’ or ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 59).

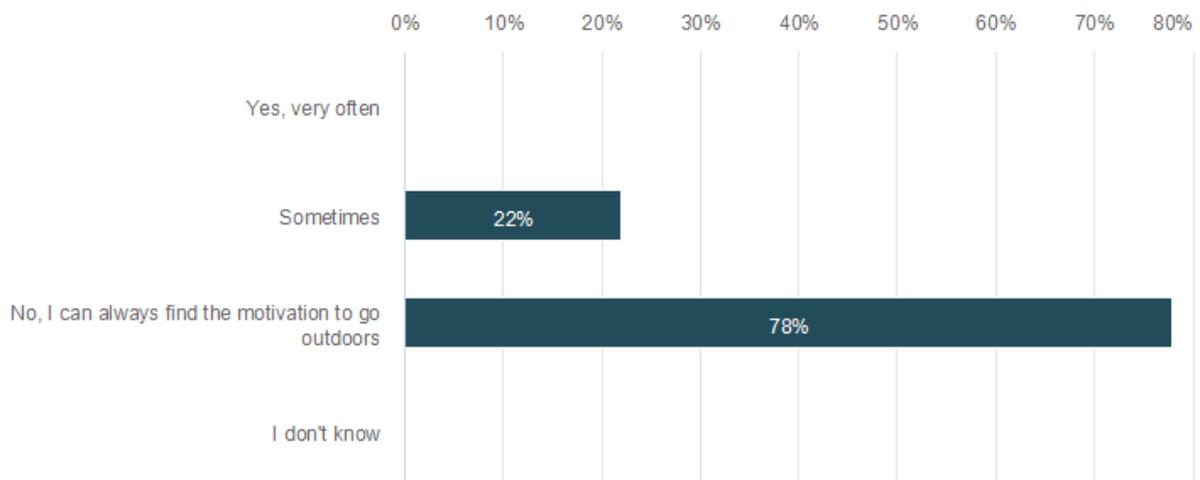


Figure 59: Do you find it difficult to find motivation to get outside?

The next question was “Do you look for purpose when going outside? If yes, for what purpose?” (see figure 60). Majority of participants (five) selected ‘find a quiet place’. Four participants selected ‘exercise’ and another our selected ‘reflect/think’. Three participants selected ‘outdoor chores’ and another three selected ‘I don’t need a purpose to go outside’. Nobody selected ‘Other (please elaborate)’.

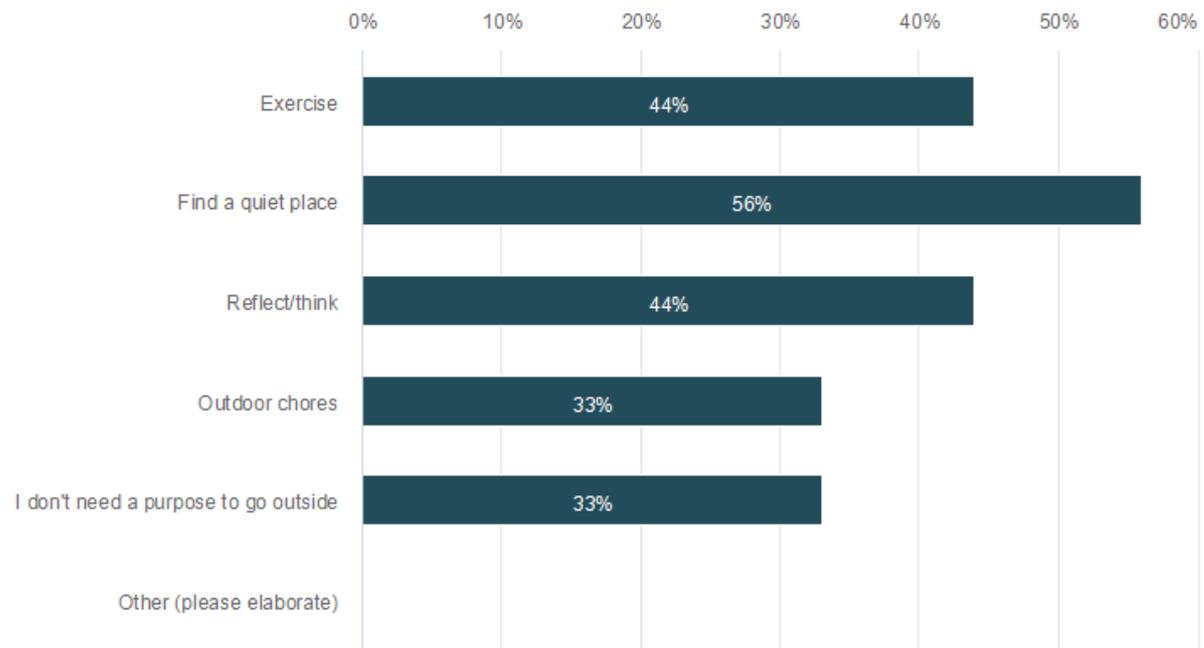


Figure 60: Do you look for purpose when going outside? If yes, for what purpose?

Next question is “Have you been spending time outdoors by yourself or with others?”. Majority of participants (eight) selected ‘by myself’ and only one participant selected ‘with others’ (see figure 61).

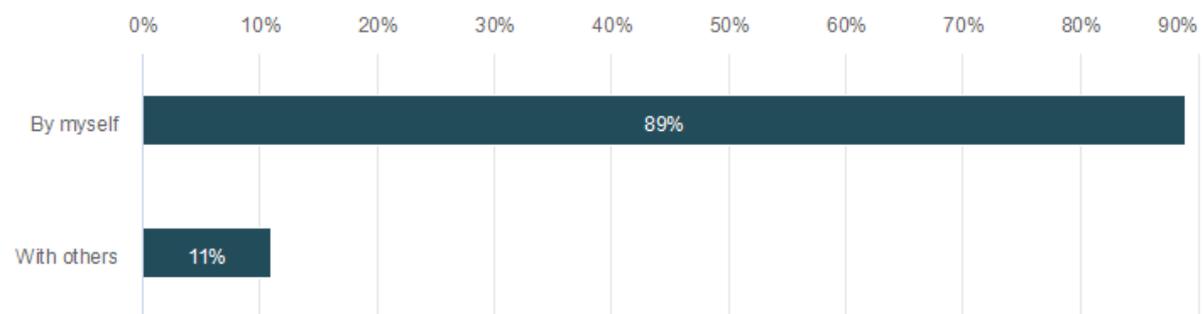


Figure 61: Have you been spending time outdoors by yourself or with others?

Question twenty-five asks “Do you feel a sense of purpose in your life?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘nope, never’ and five being ‘yes, strongly’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.8 and the standard deviation was 1.3 (see figure 62).

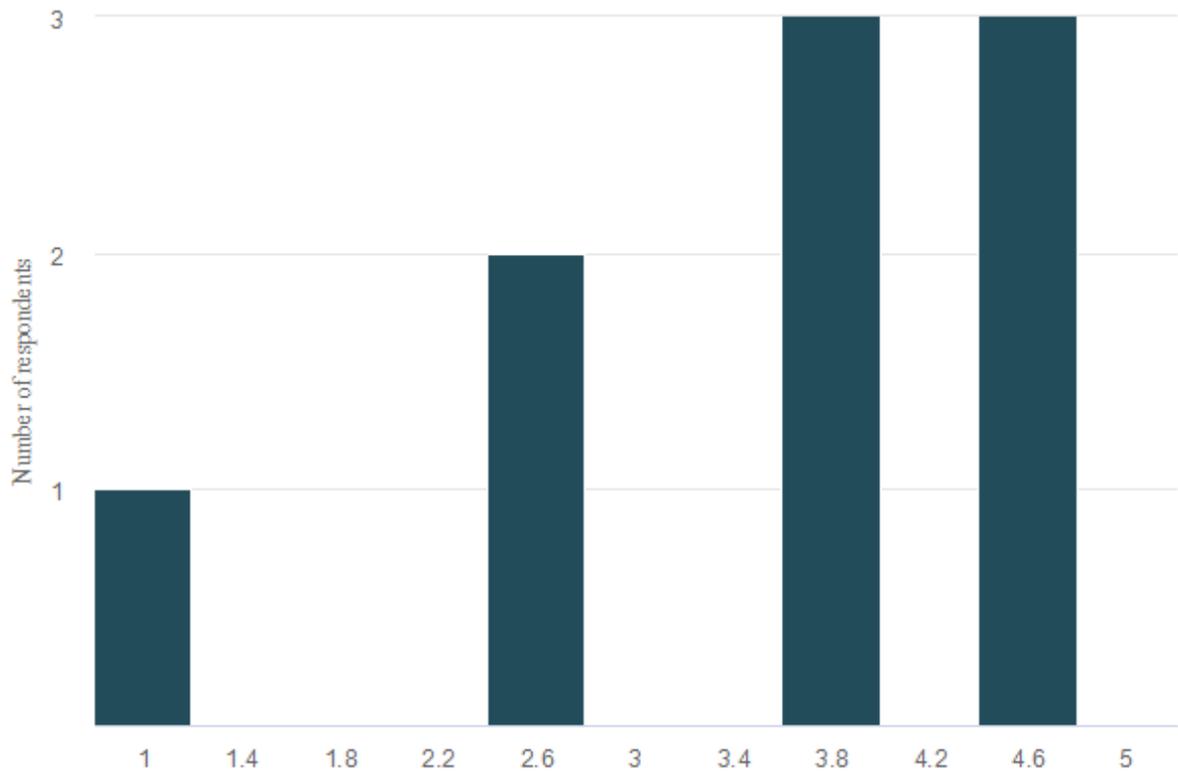


Figure 62: Do you feel a sense of purpose in your life?

The next question was “Have you been using your senses more mindfully since beginning your Journey? Hear, smell, touch, see, taste.” The majority of participants (five) selected ‘yes, very much’ and four selected ‘sometimes’. Nobody selected ‘no, not really’ or ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 63).

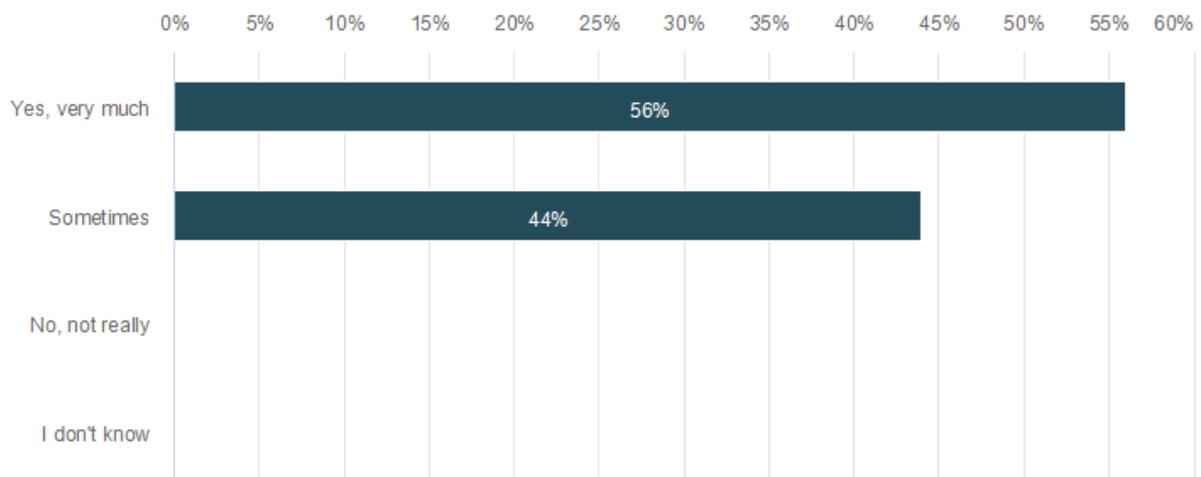


Figure 63: Have you been using your senses more mindfully since beginning your Journey?

The next question was “Was Ian clear and concise when explaining the 4 guides and assigning the exercises?”. The majority of the participants (seven) selected ‘yes, very clear

and concise I understood what I need to do' and two participants selected 'sometimes'. Nobody selected 'no' or 'I don't know'(see figure 64).

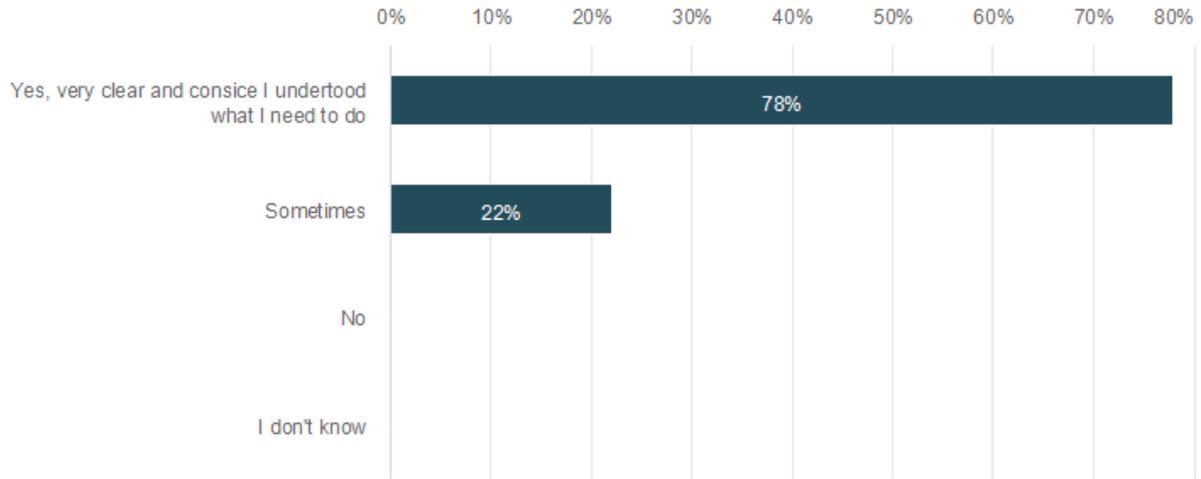


Figure 64: Was Ian clear and concise when explaining the 4 guides and assigning the exercises?

The next question was “Were the meetings interactive enough?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘Not, interactive at all’, and five being ‘very interactive!’) or ‘ I don't know’. The average answer was 3.7 and the standard deviation was 0.9 (see figure 65).

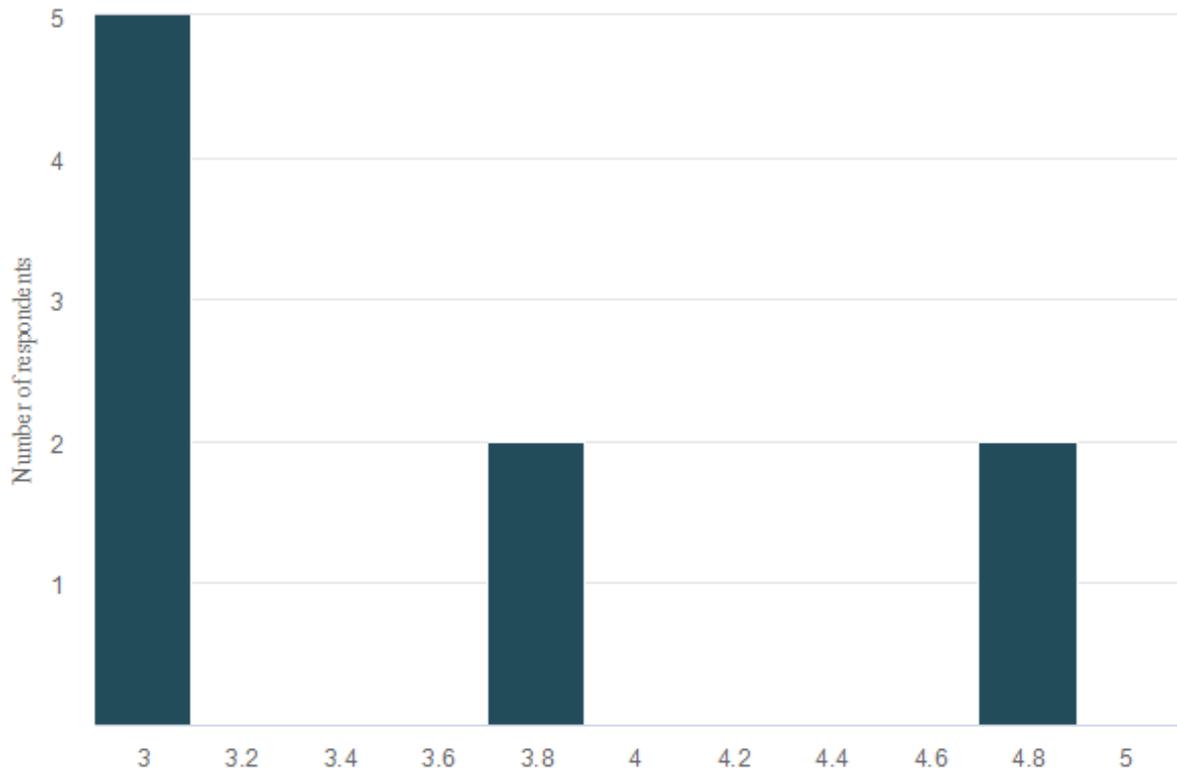


Figure 65: Were the meetings interactive enough?

Next question was “Do you feel open and comfortable to share your experiences /opinions and comments in ‘The Journey’ group?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘I don’t feel open and comfortable to share’, and five being ‘I feel very open and comfortable to share’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.2 and the standard deviation was 1.1 (see figure 66).

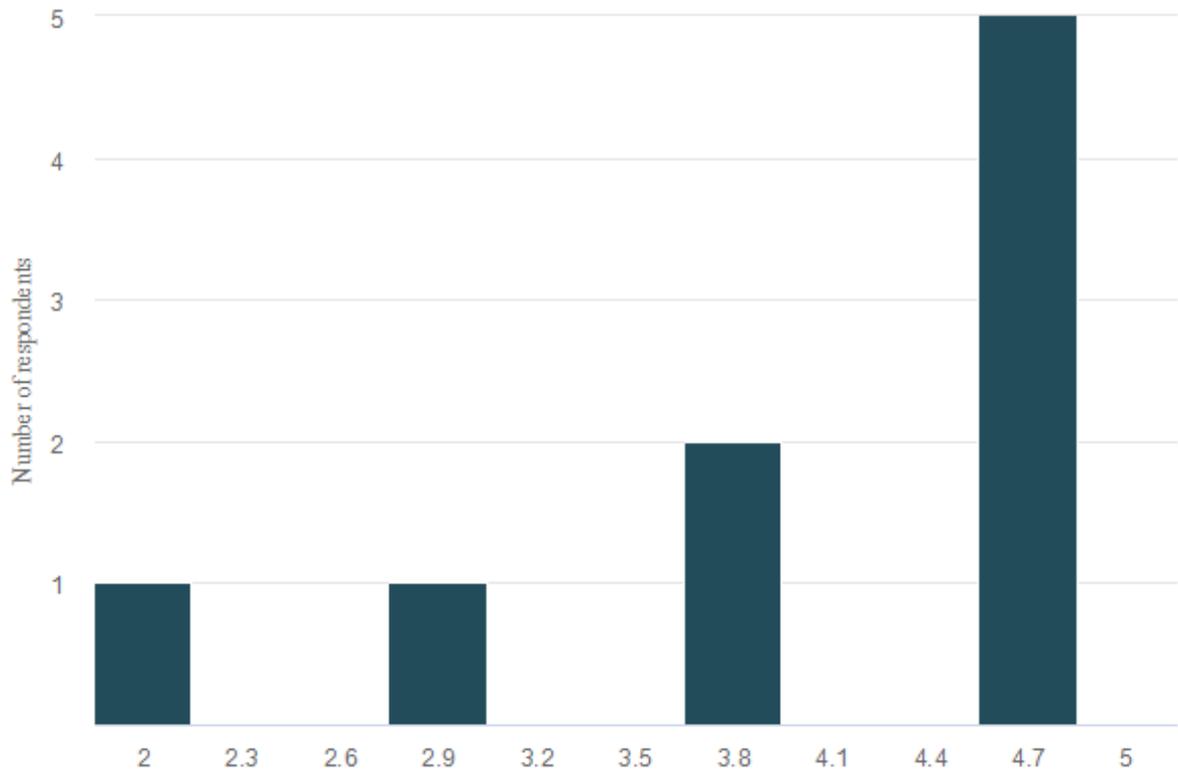


Figure 66: Do you feel open and comfortable to share your experiences/opinions and comments in 'The Journey' group?

The thirtieth question was “Would you recommend ‘The Journey’ to a friend or family member?”. The majority of participants (eight) selected, ‘yes, definitely!’ and one participant selected ‘maybe’. Nobody selected ‘no’ or ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 67).

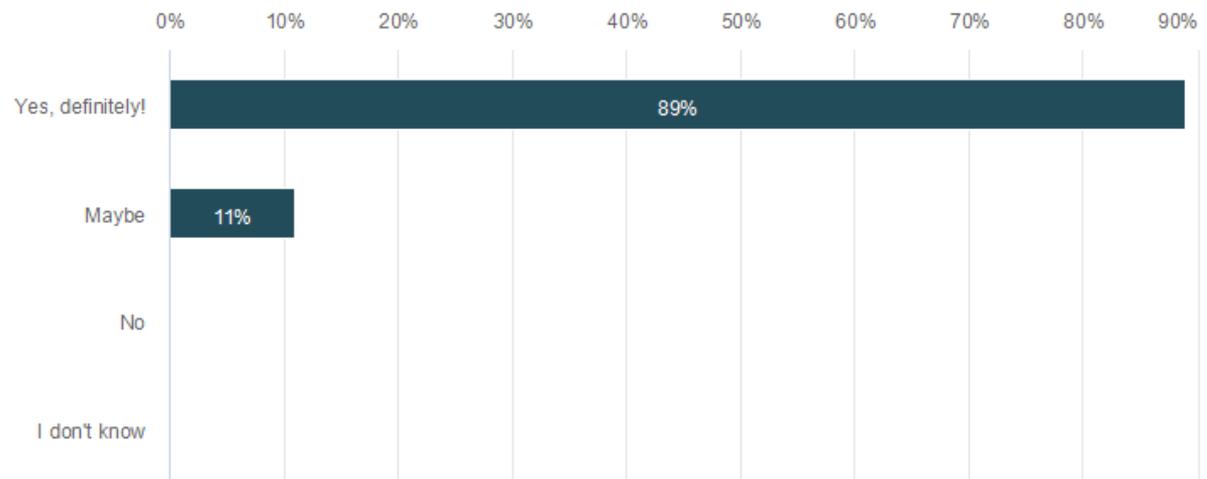


Figure 67: Would you recommend 'The Journey' to a friend or family member?

The next question was “Did the Journey fulfill your expectations that you had before beginning?”. The majority of participants (five) selected, ‘yes’ and four selected ‘I don’t know’. Nobody selected ‘no’ (see figure 68).

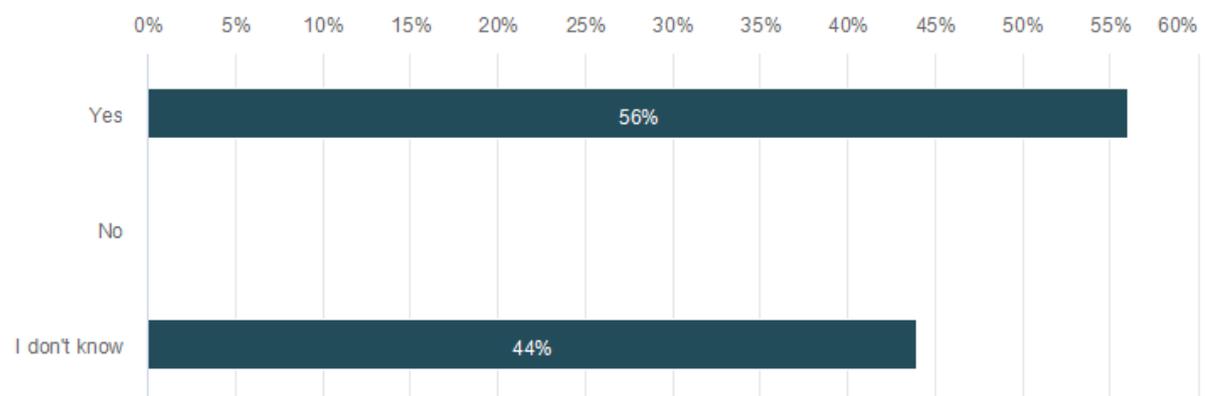


Figure 68: Did the Journey fulfill your expectations that you had before beginning?

The second last question was an opened ended question asking, “What was your favourite part during your Journey?”. All nine participants responded with varying answers.

Participant 1: “Confidence in sharing in safe community like minded people. Inspiring I oved live sessions.”

Participant 2: “Learning about the paths”

Participant 3: “My favourite part was the hunter and the explorer. To learn more about them.. think and feel like a hunter in nature, and just follow new paths with the explorer made me happy. I felt discomfortable with the expert: I really feel as if I skipped that part and jumped over it to the explorer.

Participant 4: “Just taking time to understand myself better. As a mother, I usually put myself at the bottom of the pecking order.

Participant 5: “Sitting on my own bench people-watching myself. Gaining insights-love that.”

Participant 6: “Connecting to guides id never even thought of and then connecting them to our ancestry and reflecting on how to bring this into modern day life.”

Participant 7: “Going outside just to play or to wander and wonder- rather than to get exercise or to get to somewhere”

Participant 8: “Exploring the wounded hunter”

Participant 9: “tapping into my own senses which I have never noticed before, and some of the delightful results I gained in a surprising way.”

The last question was “If you could change something in ‘The Journey’ what would it be?”. All nine participants responded with their feedback. Two participants mentioned they would like to have the option to have a space on the platform for separate groups where they can discuss, listen and share further about each other experiences. Another two respondents mentioned that the program doesn’t really have much to change. Two participants mentioned about having more live sessions. One of them suggested about having a ninth session at the end of the program to continue to encourage participants to ‘continue finding their true self. Some other answers were to have more question time with Ian, ‘more focused zoom calls’ and to have the group on Facebook so it’s easier to share multiple pictures and videos. One respondent mentioned that it would be nice to have the exercises written below the uploaded videos on the platform which she explained that Ian already included that after the asked about it. Lastly, one respondent said they were not sure. Overall, very good constructive feedback with the potential to improve the program.

4.4 35 Days After

Thirty-five days after the program I only received five answers form the participants. So that is four less participant since the ‘after’ survey. I asked a total of twenty-two questions. The first question I asked was “How safe and comfortable do you feel to explore in nature?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘not safe/comfortable at all ‘and five being, ‘very safe!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.8 and the standard deviation was 0.4 (see figure 69).

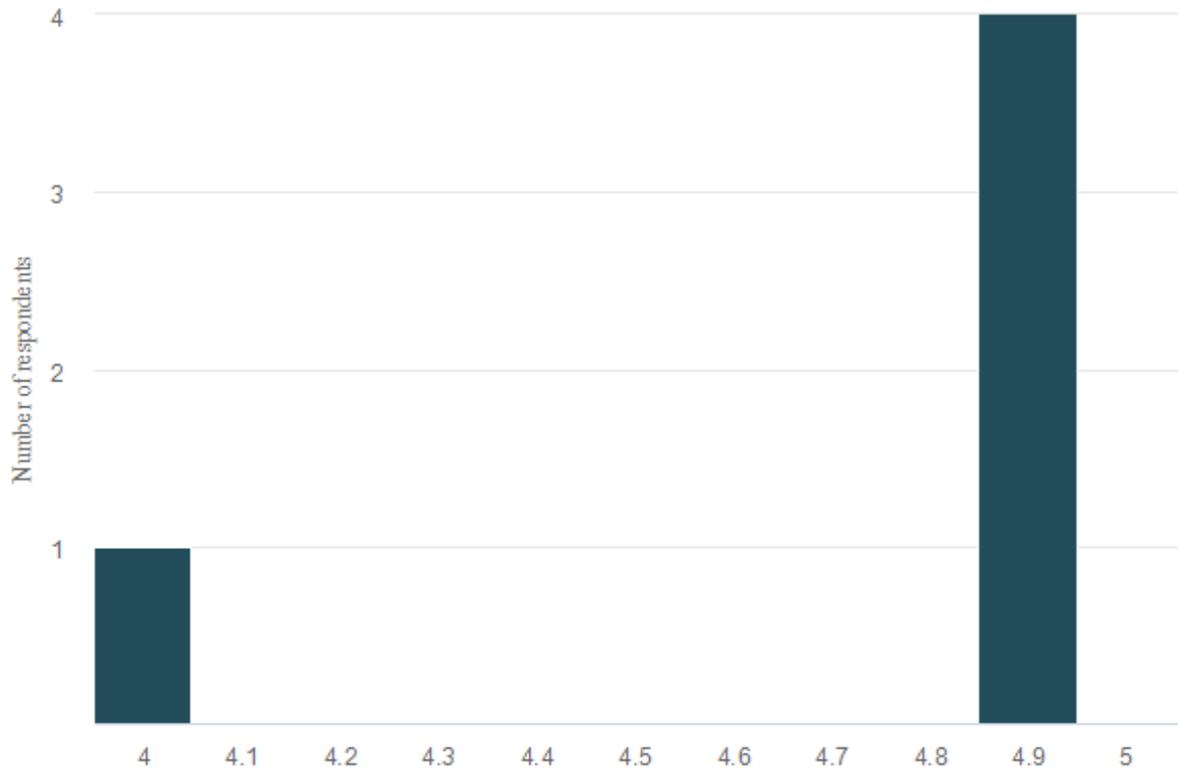


Figure 69: How safe and comfortable do you feel to explore in nature?

The next question was “35 days after finishing 'The Journey' do you feel you've connected more strongly with a different guide now? “. Two participants selected ‘yes, my explorer’ and another two selected ‘yes, my gatherer’. One participant selected ‘yes, my expert’. Nobody selected ‘yes, my hunter/huntress’ or ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 70).

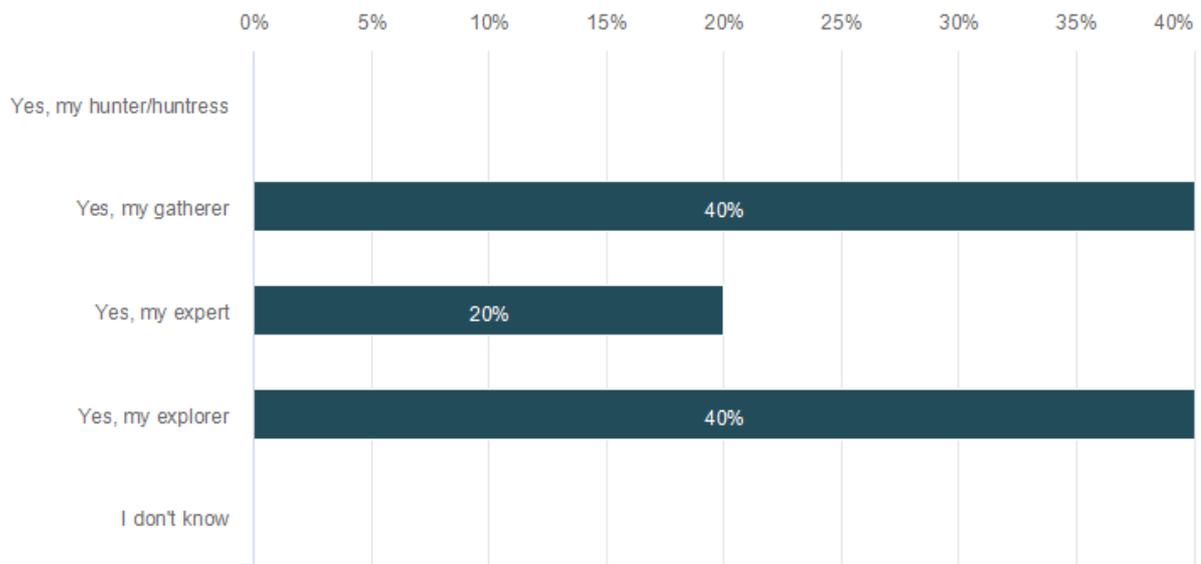


Figure 70: 35 days after finishing 'The Journey' do you feel you've connected more strongly with a different guide now?

The following question was “35 day after finishing this program, do you feel your MENTAL health has improved? “, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.6 and the standard deviation was 1.5 (see figure 71).

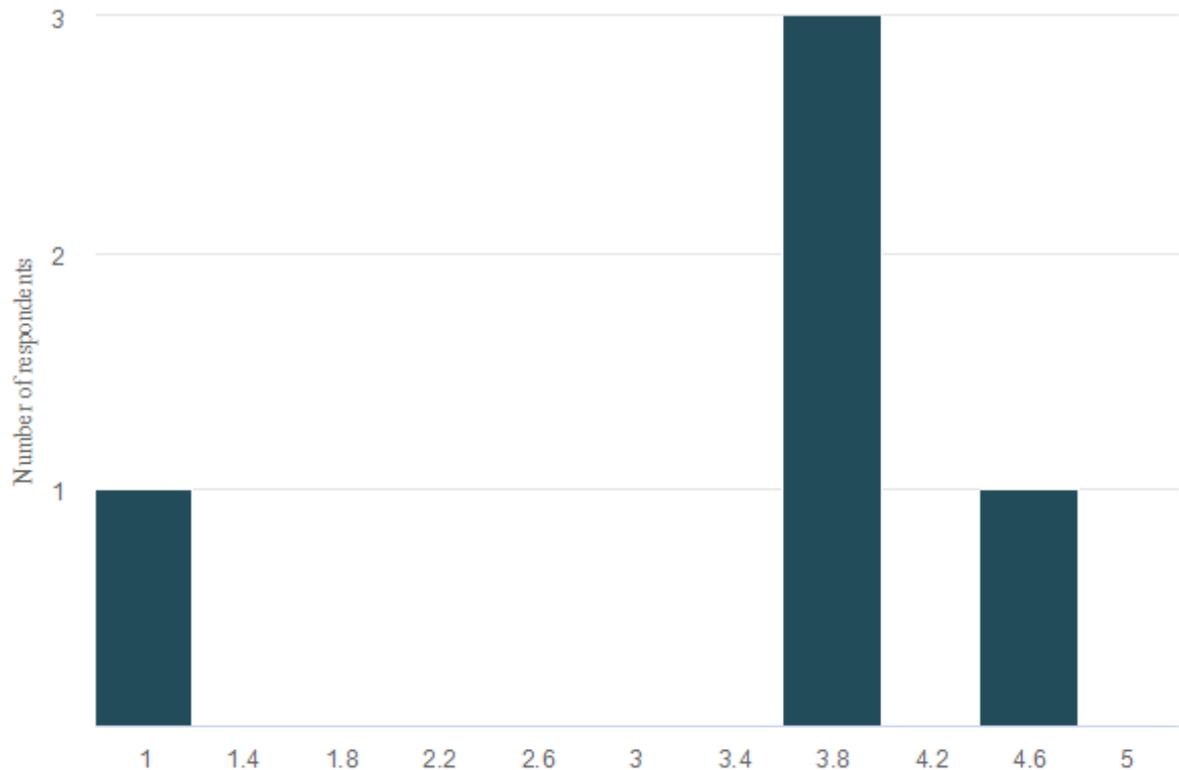


Figure 71: 35 day after finishing this program, do you feel your MENTAL health has improved?

The next question was, “35 days after finishing this program, do you feel your PHYSICAL health has improved? “, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 2.8 and the standard deviation was 1.7 (see figure 72).

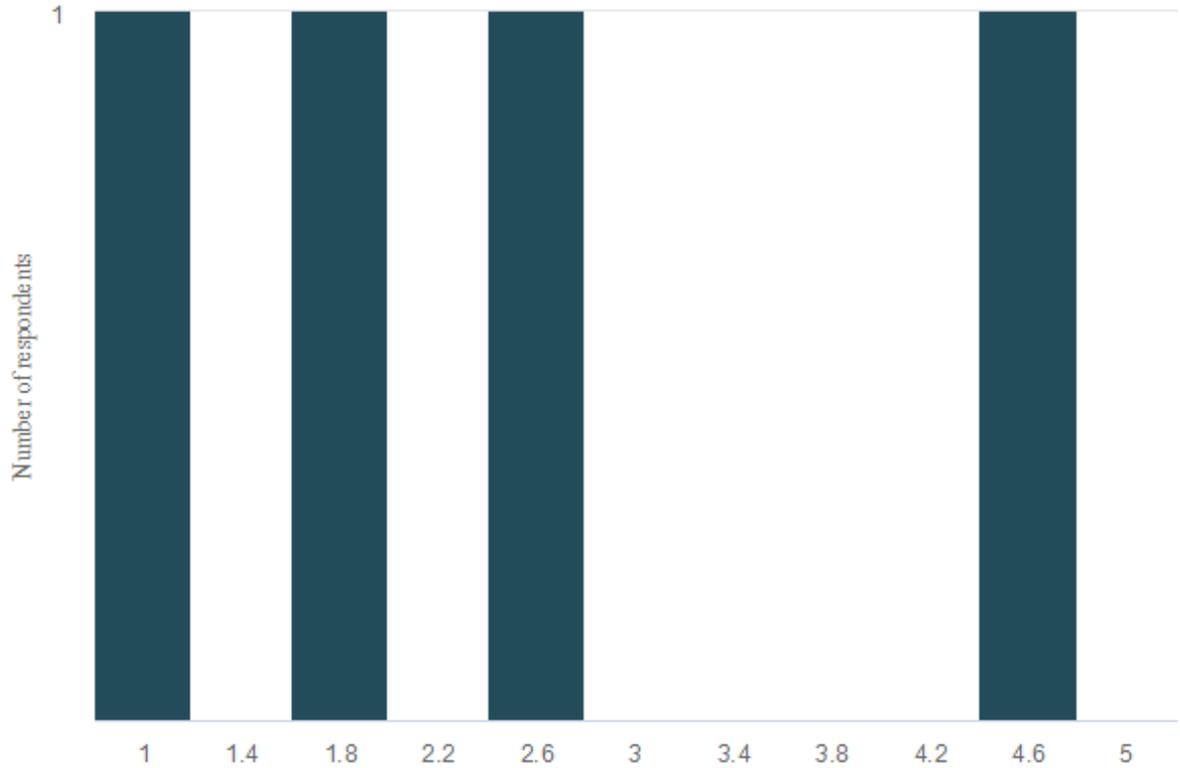


Figure 72: 35 days after finishing this program, do you feel your PHYSICAL health has improved?

The next question was, “How much time do you spend outside in a day, 35 days after finishing this program? “. The majority of participants (three) selected ‘2hours and more’ and the other two participants selected ‘30 mins’. Nobody selected ‘less than 10mins’, ‘I go outside to just run errands/chores’ or ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 73).

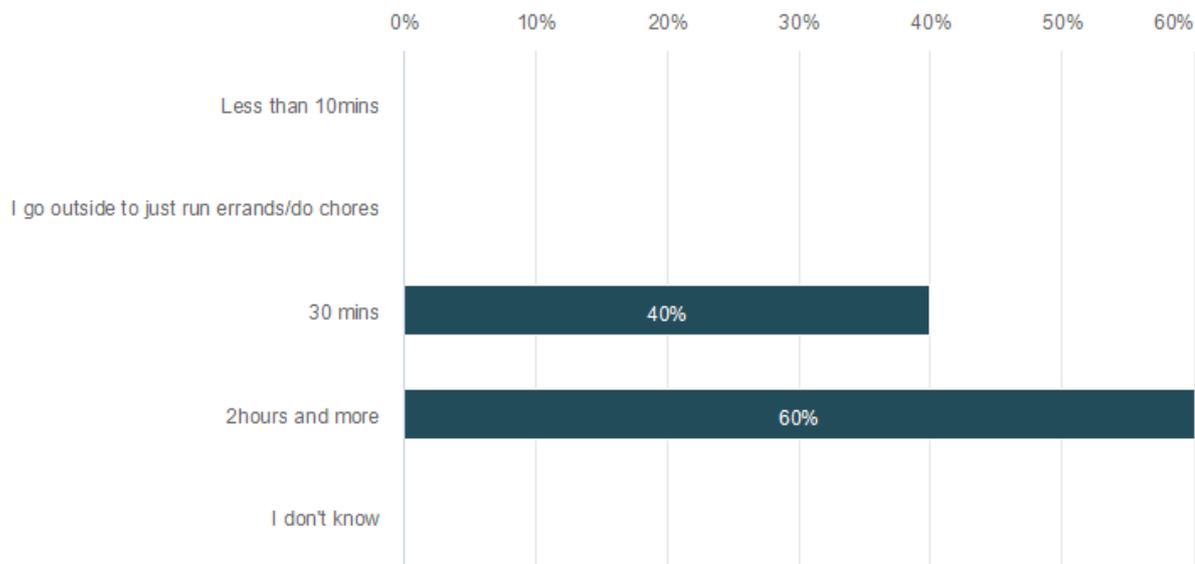


Figure 73: How much time do you spend outside in a day, 35 days after finishing this program?

The next question was, “I feel the need to control things in my life “. Two participants selected ‘Sometimes’ and another two selected ‘no, I let things happen’. Only one participant selected ‘yes, all the time’. Nobody selected ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 74).

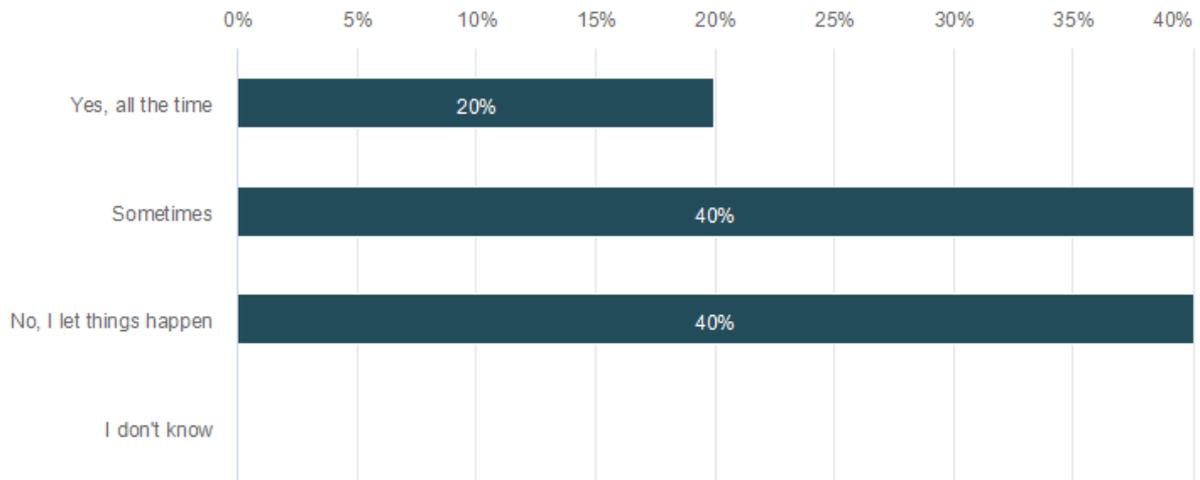


Figure 74: I feel the need to control things in my life

The next question was “Do you feel peaceful and in no rush when spending time in nature?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘I feel lots of pressure and have trouble slowing down ‘and five being ‘I am very peaceful and feel no rush ‘), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.4 and the standard deviation was 0.5 (see figure 75).

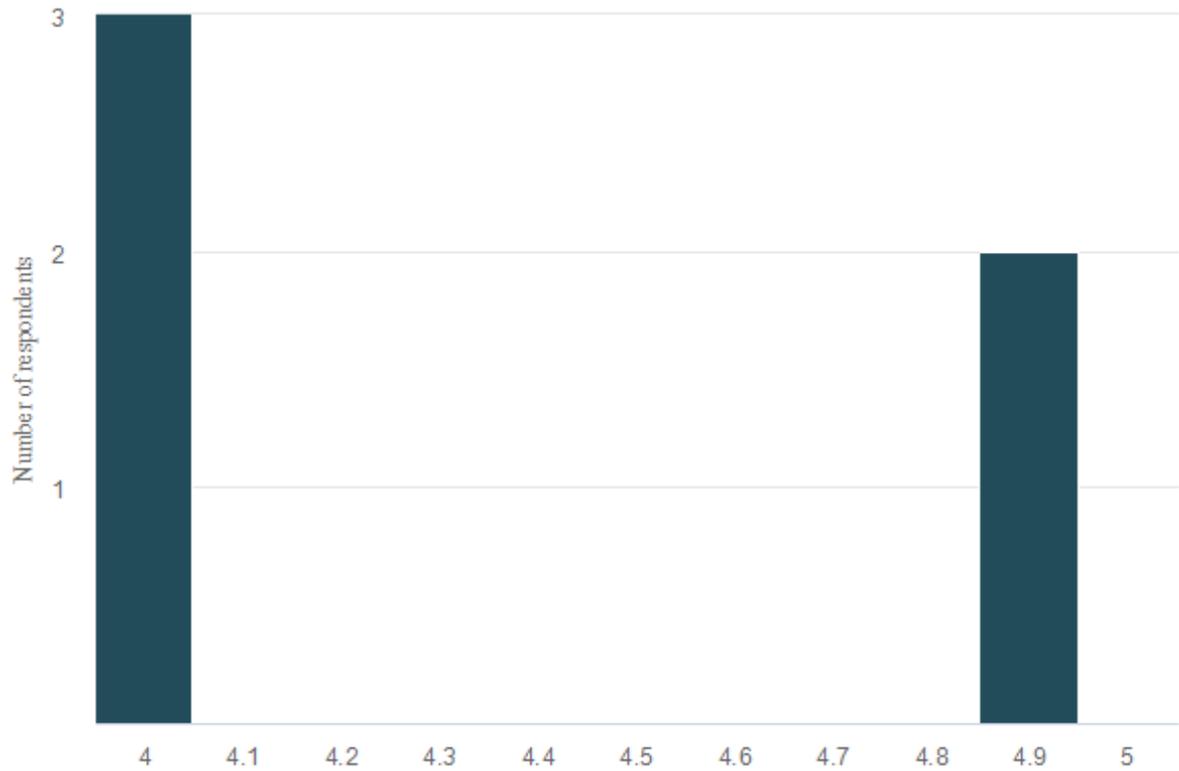


Figure 75: Do you feel peaceful and in no rush when spending time in nature?

The next question was “Do you feel a deeper connection with yourself?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.4 and the standard deviation was 1.3 (see figure 76).

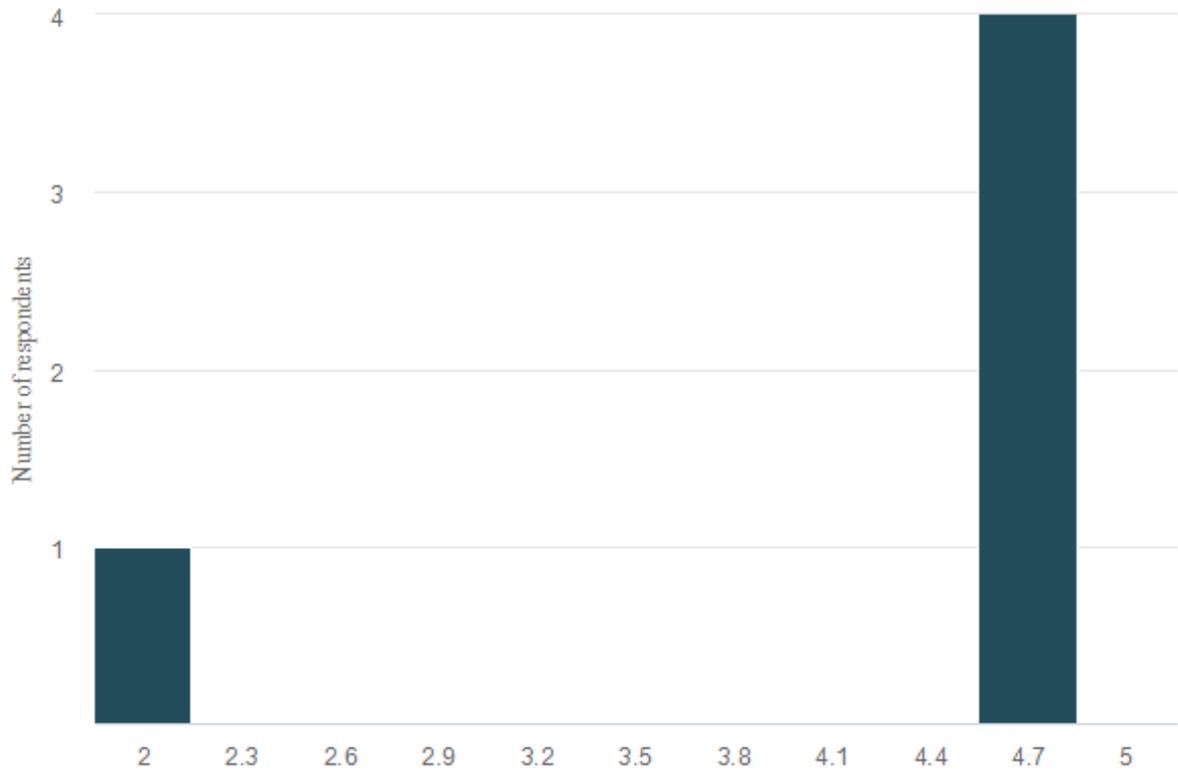


Figure 76: Do you feel a deeper connection with yourself?

The next question was, “How connected do you feel with nature?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘Not connected at all ‘and five being ‘very connected!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.4 and the standard deviation was 0.5 (see figure 77).

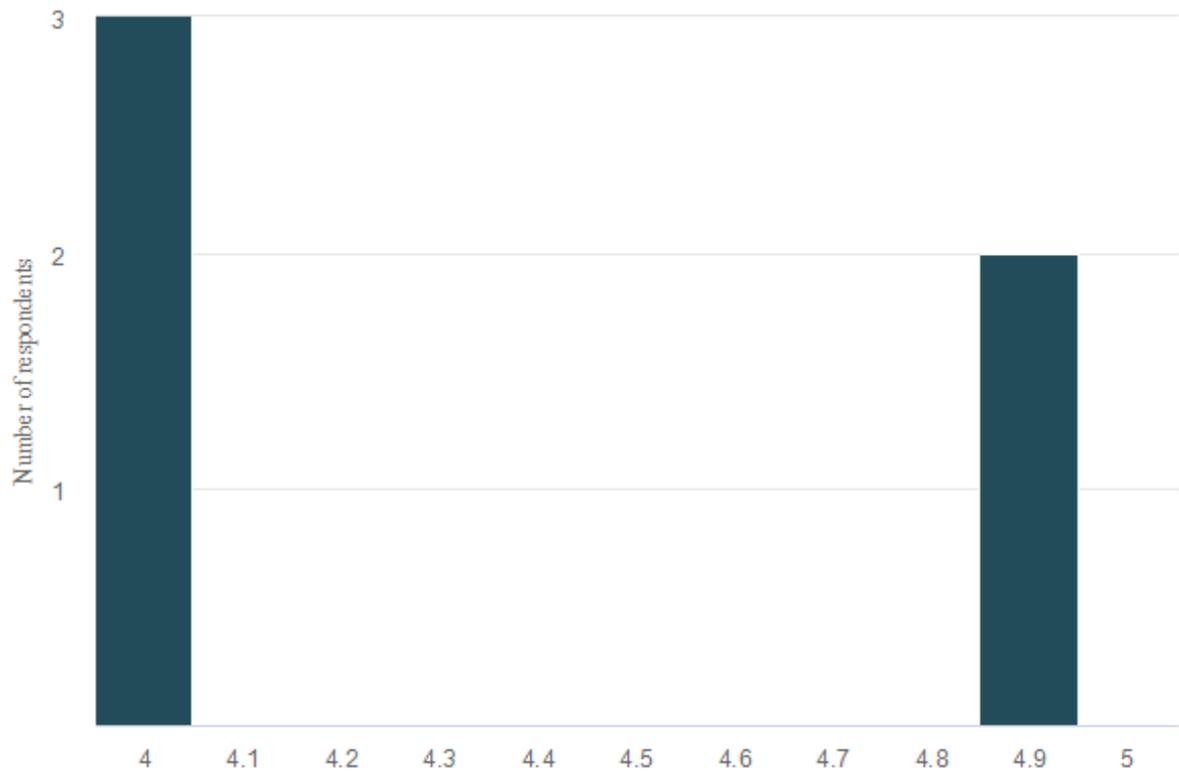


Figure 77: How connected do you feel with nature?

The tenth question asked, “I feel more confident and self-love towards myself”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘No, not at all. ‘and five being ‘yes, very much!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.6 and the standard deviation was 1.5 (see figure 78).

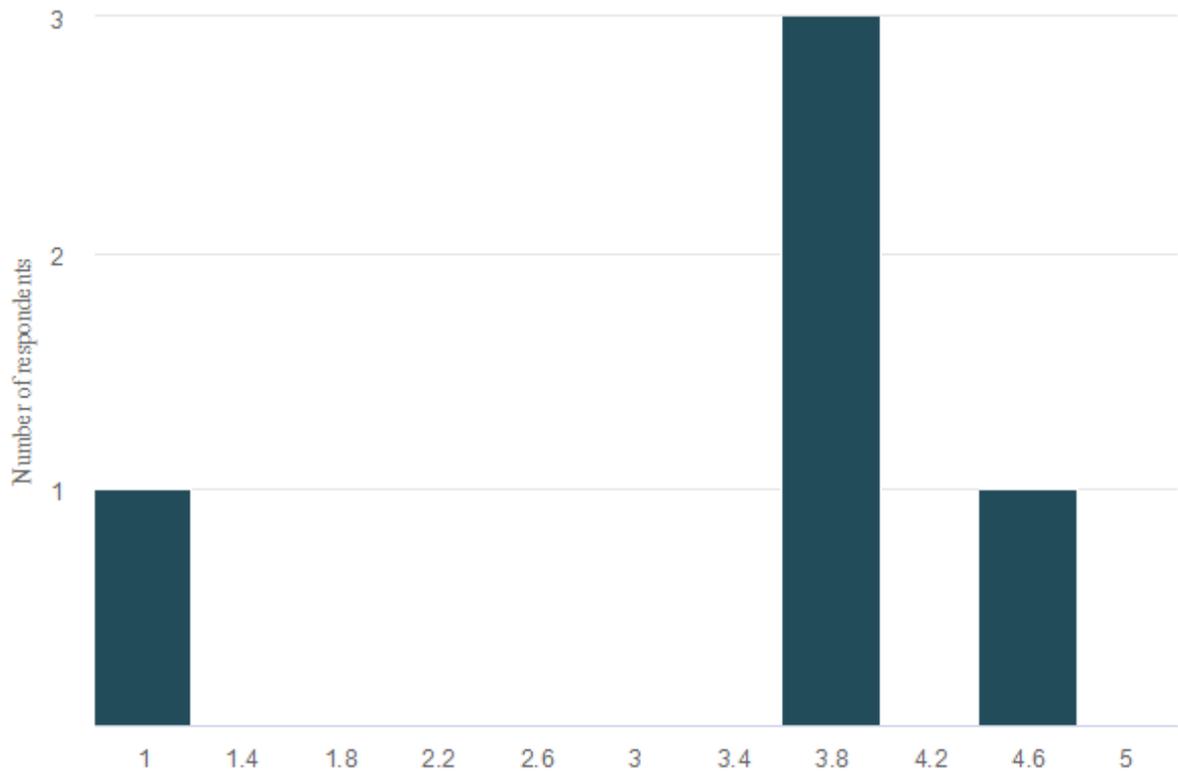


Figure 78: I feel more confident and self-love towards myself

The next question was “How satisfied do you feel in your life? “, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘I don't feel satisfied about my life‘and five being ‘I feel very satisfied in my life!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.8 and the standard deviation was 0.4 (see figure 79).

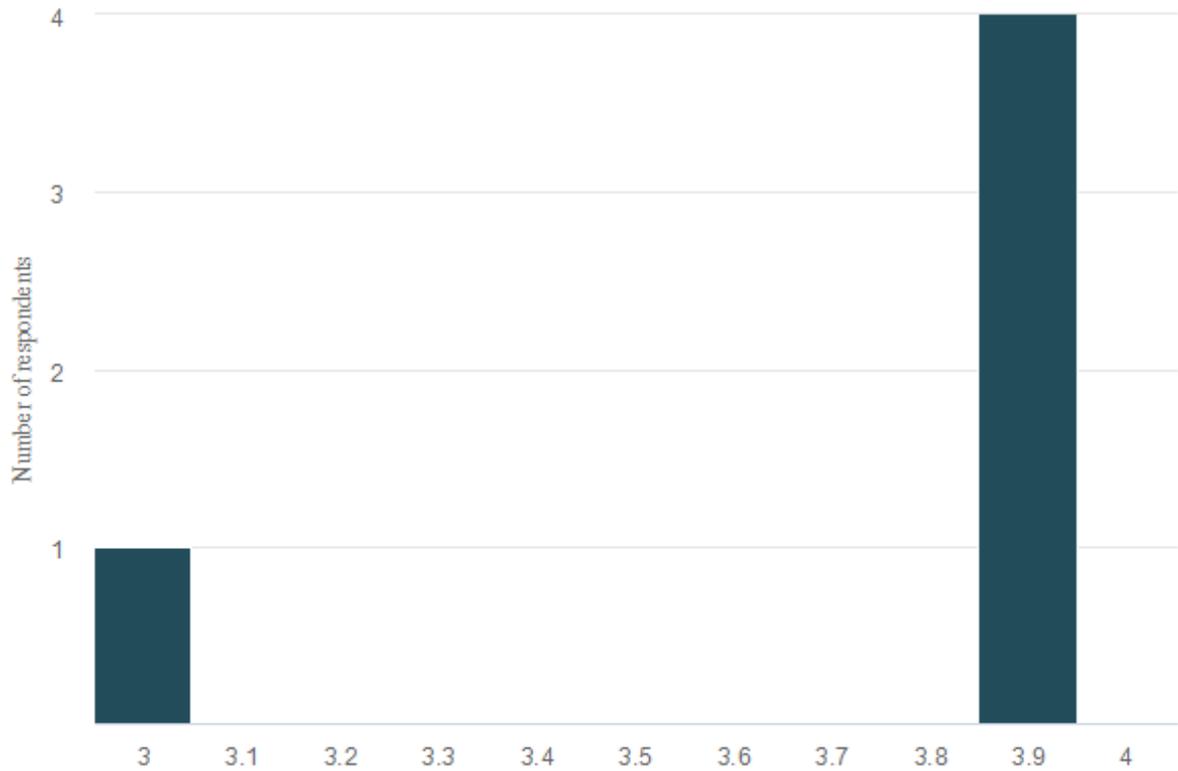


Figure 79: How satisfied do you feel in your life?

The next question was, “I feel a stronger connection to my community, friends and family “, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.4 and the standard deviation was 1.5 (see figure 80).

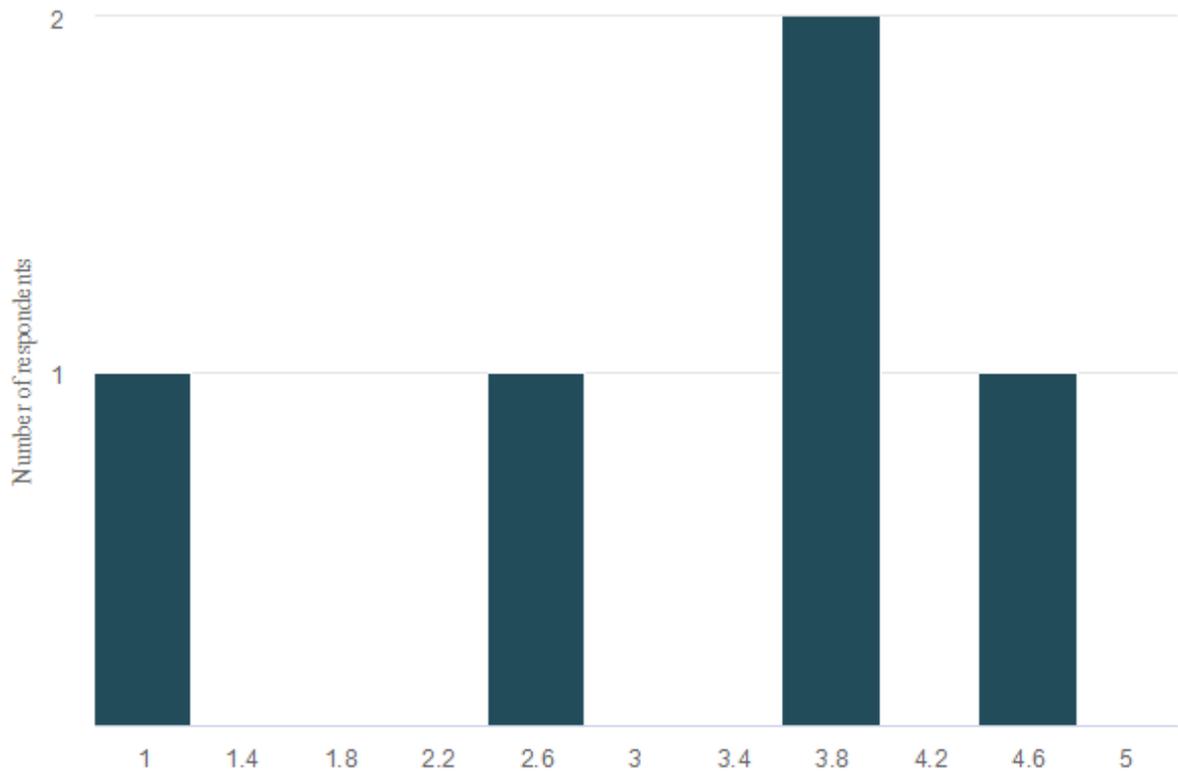


Figure 80: I feel a stronger connection to my community, friends and family

The next question was “My mind feels calmer and I feel like I understand myself“, on a scale of zero to five (zero being, ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.0 and the standard deviation was 1.7 (see figure 81).

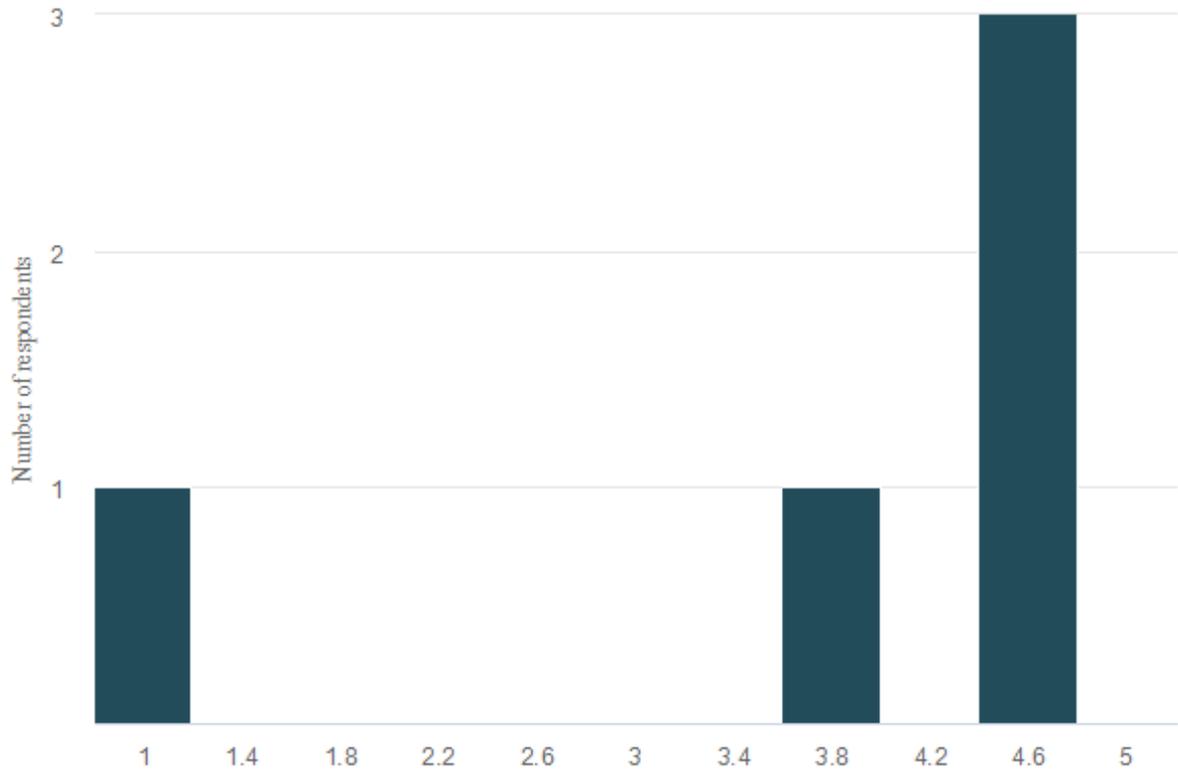


Figure 81: My mind feels calmer and I feel like I understand myself

The next question was “How important is nature to you?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘Not important at all ‘and five being ‘very important!’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 4.6 and the standard deviation was 0.5 (see figure 82).

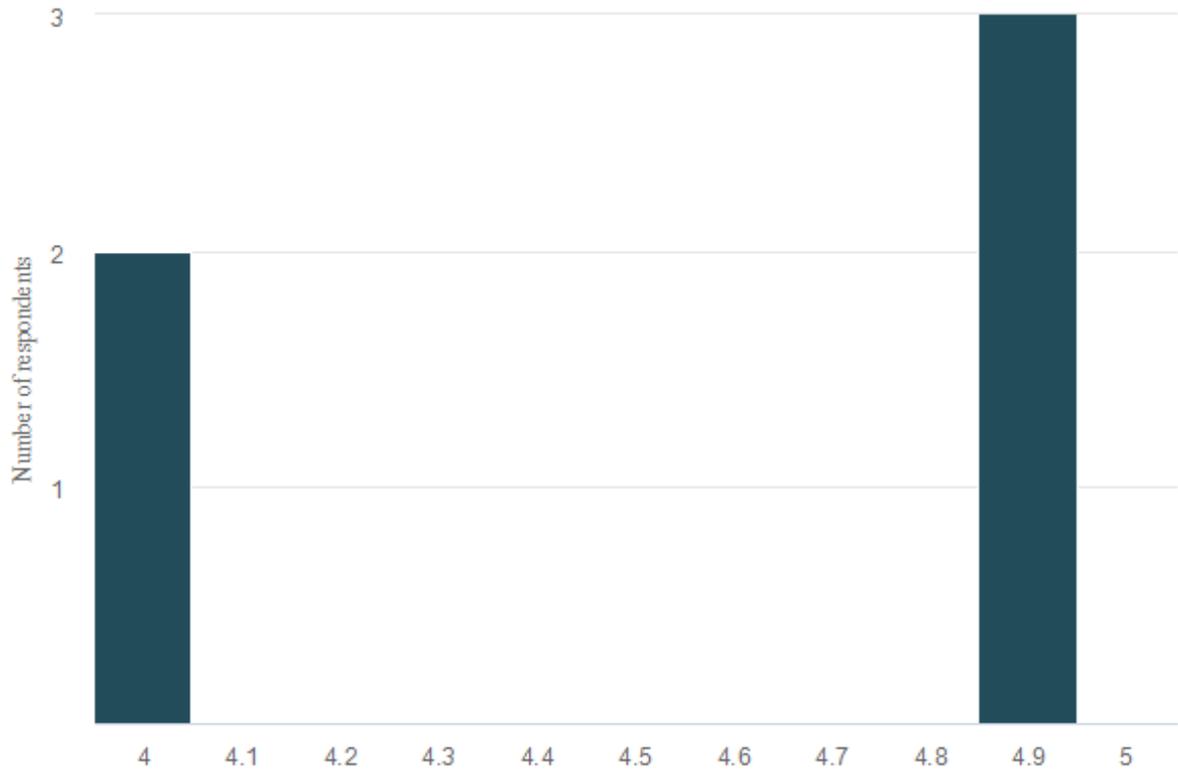


Figure 82: How important is nature to you?

The next question was “Do you pay attention to your breathing?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘never’ and five being ‘yes, very often’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.2 and the standard deviation was 1.5 (see figure 83).

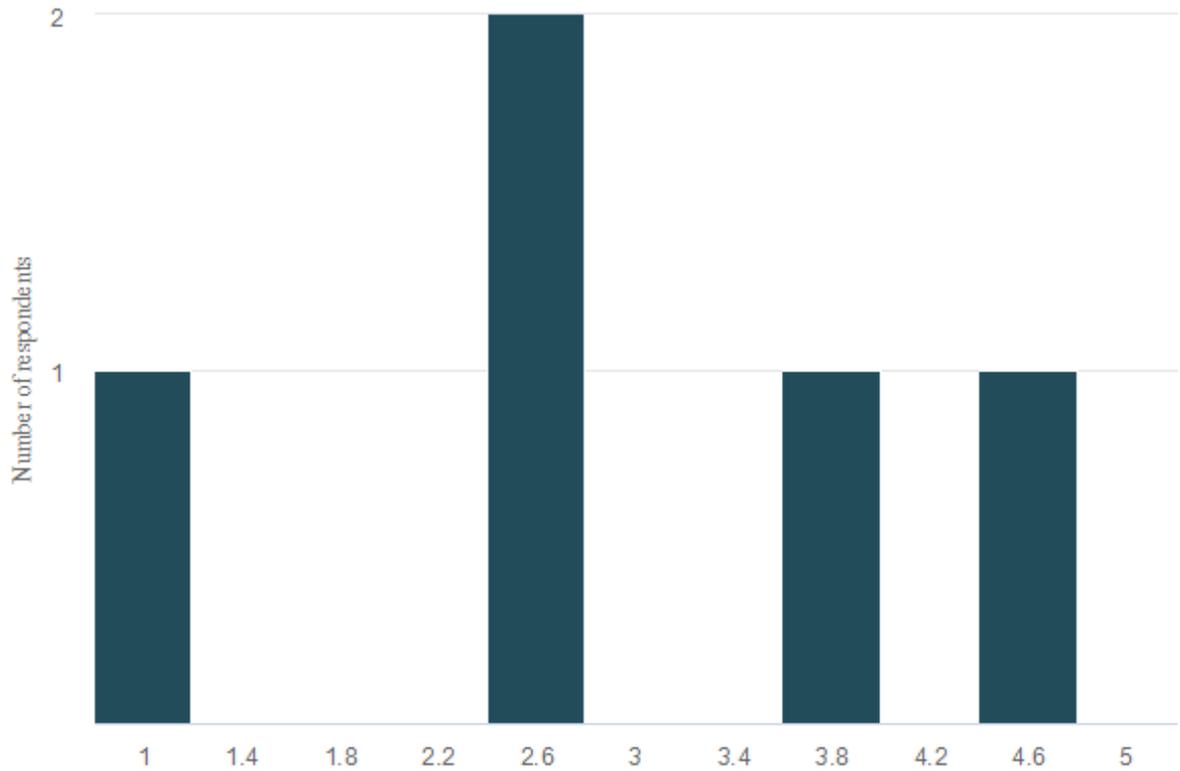


Figure 83: Do you pay attention to your breathing?

The next question was “Do you find it difficult to find motivation to get outside?”. The majority of participants (three) selected ‘no, I can always find the motivation to go outdoors’ and the other two participants selected ‘sometimes’. Nobody selected, ‘yes, very often’ or ‘I don’t know’(see figure 84).

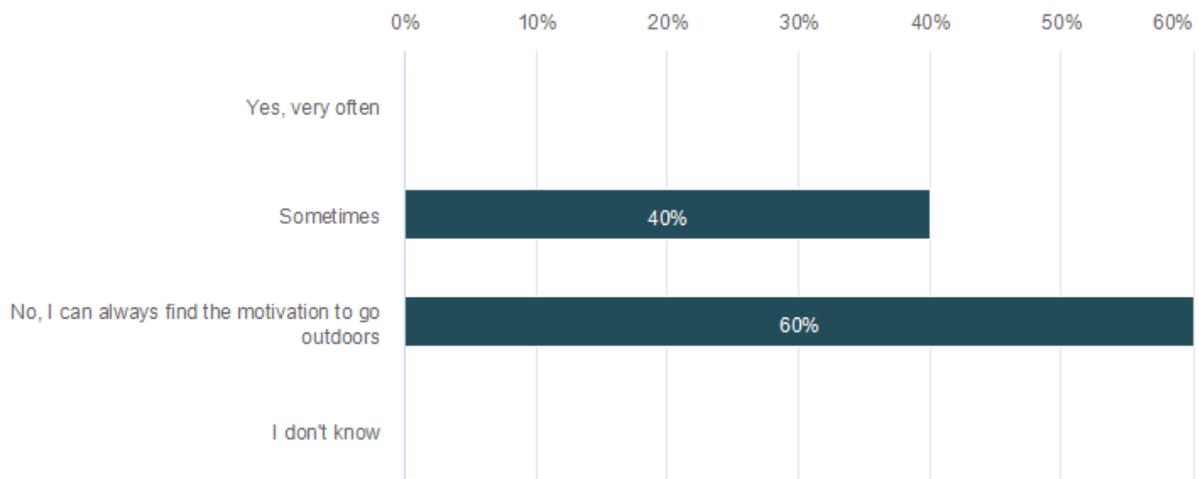


Figure 84: Do you find it difficult to find motivation to get outside?

The next question was “Do you look for purpose when going outside? If yes, for what purpose?” (see figure 85). Participants were asked to select all the options that applied for them. The highest voted answer was ‘reflect/think’, four out of five participants selected this

option. The second most popular options were ‘exercise’ and ‘find a quiet place’, these two options both received three votes. The third most popular option was ‘outdoor chores’ which received two votes. ‘I don’t need purpose to go outdoors’ received one vote as well as ‘others (please elaborate)’. The participants elaborated and mentioned ‘birdwatching’.

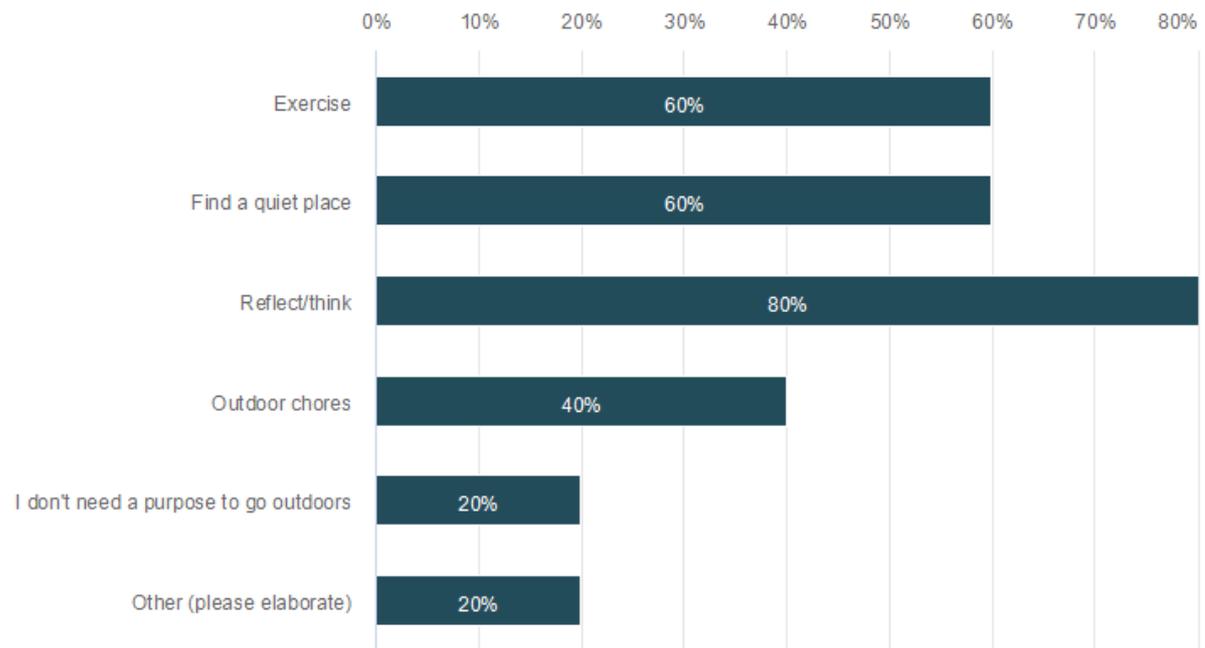


Figure 85: Do you look for purpose when going outside? If yes, for what purpose?

The next question was “have you been spending time outdoors by yourself or with others?” and the majority of participants (three) selected ‘by myself’ and the other two participants selected ‘with others’ (see figure 86).

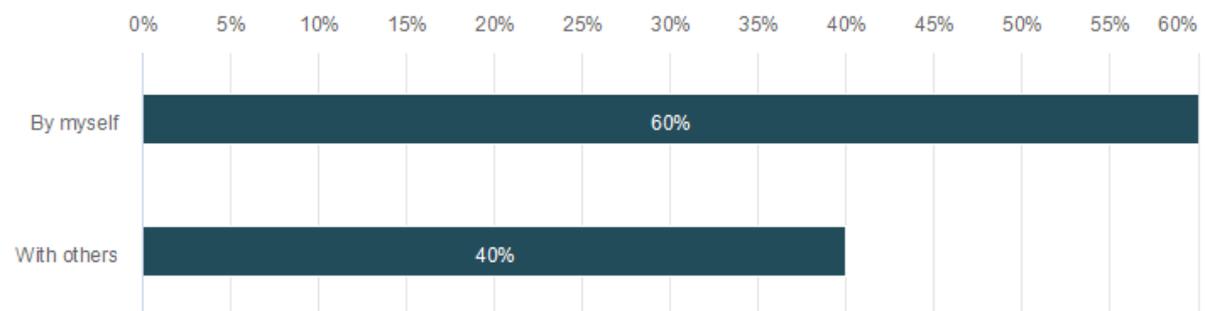


Figure 86: Have you been spending time outdoors by yourself or with others?

The next question was “Do you feel a sense of purpose in your life?”, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘nope, never’ and five being ‘yes, strongly’) or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.5 and the standard deviation was 1.5 (see figure 87).

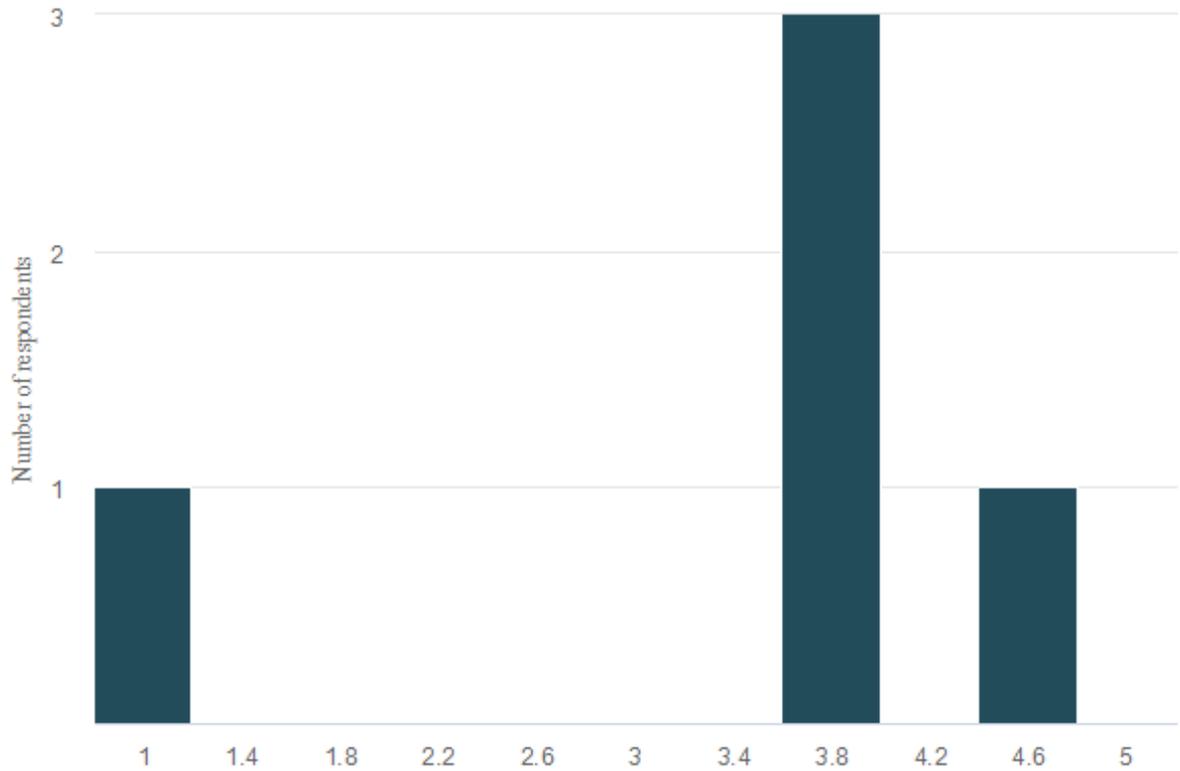


Figure 87: Do you feel a sense of purpose in your life?

The twentieth question was, “Have you still been using your senses more mindfully 35 days after finishing ‘The Journey’?”, and the most popular option selected was ‘yes, very much’ and ‘sometimes’. Only one participant selected ‘no, not really’. Nobody selected ‘I don’t know’ (see figure 88).

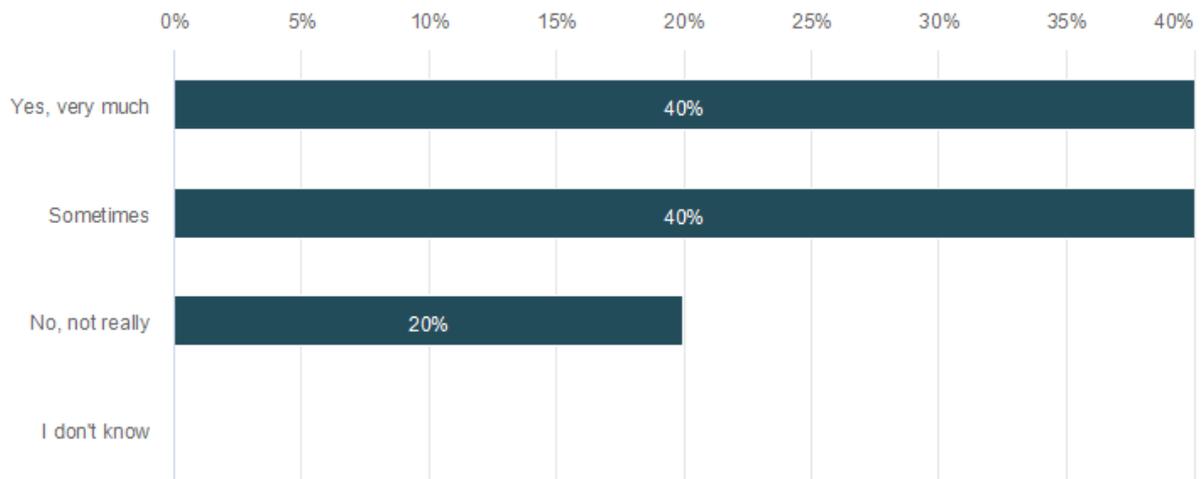


Figure 88: Have you still been using your senses more mindfully 35 days after finishing 'The Journey'?

The second last question was “Reflecting 35 days after 'The Journey', which tools did you learn that you are still using in your day to day life? “. Breathing was mentioned twice in the

responses. Some other answers included things such as reflecting on oneself, ‘being silent in nature is enough’, taking a break, and letting go.

The last question was “reflecting 35 days after finishing ‘The Journey’, place in order which guide you believe was the easiest to connect with”, on a scale of one to four (one being the easiest and four being the most challenging). The average score for the hunter/huntress and gatherer was 2.6, the expert was 2.0 and lastly explorer was 2.8 (see figure 89).

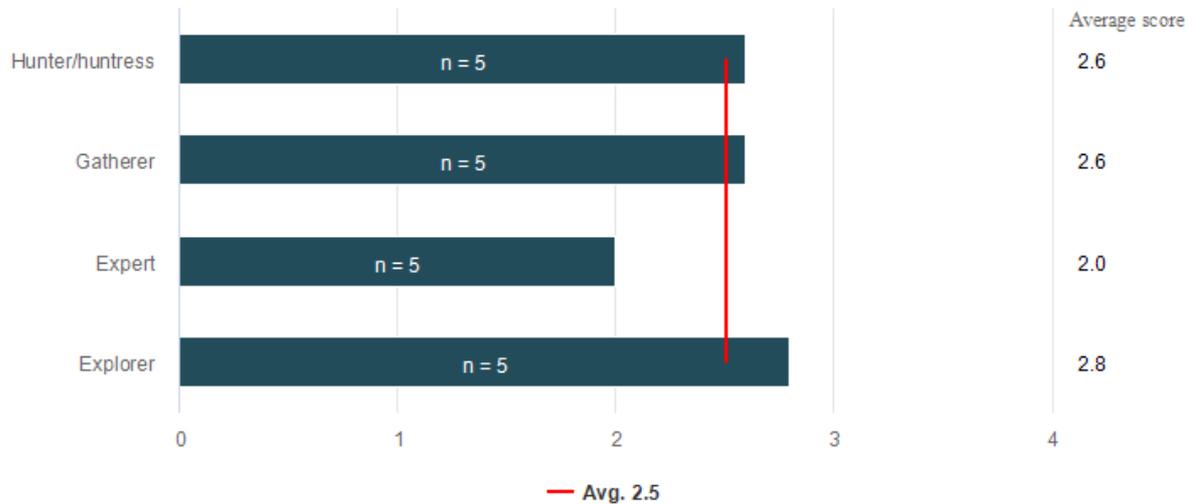


Figure 89: Reflecting 35 days after finishing 'The Journey', place in order which guide you believe was the easiest to connect with.

4.5 Quantitative results summary

Mental Health (average result)

scale of zero to five (zero being ‘not at all’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’)

Before	During	After	35 days after
3.2	3.0	3.6	3.6

Feelings of confidence and self-love (average result)

scale of zero to five (zero being ‘No, not at all.’ and five being ‘yes, very much!’)

Before	During	After	35 Days After
-	-	4.1	3.6

Physical Health: sleep, diet, exercise (average result)

scale of zero to five (zero being ‘very bad’ and five being ‘very good’)

Before	During	After	35 days after
3.3	2.8	2.6	2.8

Feelings of connectedness with nature (average result)
scale of zero to five (zero being 'Not connected at all' and five being 'very connected!')

Before	During	After	35 days after
4.4	-	4.8	4.4

Feelings of deeper connectedness with oneself (average result)
scale of zero to five (zero being 'no, not at all' and five being 'yes, very much!')

Before	During	After	35 Days After
-	3.3	4.7	4.4

Importance of nature (average result)
scale of zero to five (zero being 'Not important at all' and five being 'very important!')

Before	During	After	35 Days After
4.5	-	4.9	4.6

Feeling at home in nature /safe and comfortable (average result)
scale of zero to five (zero being 'not safe/comfortable at all' and five being, 'very safe!')

Before	During	After	35 Days After
-	4.6	4.7	4.8

Feelings of calmness and no rush in nature (average result)
scale of zero to five (zero being 'I feel lots of pressure and have trouble slowing down' and five being 'I am very peaceful and feel no rush')

Before	During	After	35 Days After
-	3.9	4.6	4.4

Life satisfaction (average result)
scale of zero to five (zero being 'I don't feel satisfied about my life' and five being 'I feel very satisfied in my life!')

Before	During	After	35 Days After
-	-	3.7	3.8

Sense of purpose in life (average result)
scale of zero to five (zero being 'nope, never' and five being 'yes, strongly')

Before	During	After	35 Days After
-	3.2	3.8	3.6

Stronger connection with community friends and family (average result)
scale of zero to five (zero being 'no, not at all' and five being 'yes, very much!')

Before	During	After	35 Days After
-	-	3.1	3.4

Practicing & being aware of mindful breathing (average result)
scale of zero to five (zero being 'never' and five being 'yes, very often')

Before	During	After	35 Days After
-	2.9	3.4	3.2

Motivation

I asked if participants if they ‘find it difficult to find motivation to get outside’ and before the program, 60% selected that ‘no, I can always find the motivation to go outdoors’.

After the program 78% of participants answered with ‘no, I can always find the motivation to go outdoors’ and none selected ‘yes very often’ whereas in the before survey there was 5% who selected that option. 35 days after the program, 60% selected ‘no, I can always find the motivation to go outdoors’. The results show that participants motivation improved after the program and returned to its regular sense of motivation 35 days after the program.

Time spent outdoors

The time spent outdoors increased throughout the program even though 60% answered 2hours and more before the program. During the program there was a tie 33% selected that their time spent outdoors increased by ‘additional 30mins’ and the other 33% selected ‘an additional hour and more’

56% of participants after the program selected that the time they spend outdoors is 30mins and the other 44% selected 2 hours and more. Thirty five days after 60% of participants selected that they spend 2hours and more outside.

Comfort zones



Figure 90: Comfort zones (Beckyjohnen 2015)

During ‘The Journey’ after exploring the hunter/huntress and gatherer 100% of participants selected that they ‘explored into the stretch zone’.

After exploring expert and explorer 78% of participants said they ‘explored into their stretch zone’. 11% said they stayed in their comfort zone and the other 11% said they ‘reached the

panic zone'. The answers are varying due to everybody's own experiences. Although it seems hunter/huntress and gatherer were a very positive process for everyone (see figure 90).

Control in life

During the program I asked if participants feel the need to control things in their lives?“, on a scale of zero to five (zero being ‘no, not at all’ and five being ‘yes, I feel I have lots of control.’), or ‘I don’t know’. The average answer was 3.2. After the program, 56% of participants answered ‘sometimes’. 35 days after the program, 40% answered ‘sometimes’ and the other 40% answered ‘no, I let things happen’. The results didn’t have big changes, but it seems that more participants are open to lettings things happen 35 days after the program.

Time spent alone or together

Before the program I asked if participants ‘typically go outdoors by themselves or with others’ and 65% answered ‘by myself’ and the other 35% answered ‘with others. After the program, 89% of participants selected ‘by myself’ and 11% selected ‘with others’. 35 days after the program, 60% selected ‘by myself’ and 40% selected ‘with others’. The results show that even before the program participants mainly spent time by themselves in nature, but it did seem to increase after the program. 35 days after it went back down to almost the original percentage.

Mindfulness

(All participants except for one were familiar with mindfulness before beginning the program)

Using and being aware of our 5 senses (Hear, smell, touch, see taste)

In my ‘during survey’ 67% of participants selected that since beginning the ‘Journey’ they’ve been more mindful of their senses. After the program 56% of participants selected ‘yes, very much’ that they’ve been using their sense more mindfully. 35 Days after there was a tie, 33% selected ‘yes, very much’ and the other 33% selected ‘sometimes’ when asked if they’ve been using their sense more mindfully 35 days after the journey. It seems as though participants after the program and 35 days after were not being as mindful with their senses as they were during the ‘journey’

5 DISCUSSION

The success of the results could allow 'The Journey' to have the potential to become a mindfulness-based forest and nature therapy and complement our already existing health and wellbeing studies. The data provides input into how the program can operate with a personal mindset geared to nature. Which can help people improve their wellbeing's through nature. Constructive feedback was also gathered throughout the surveys to help improve future 'Journeys'.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the data I collected in my commissioners 8 week online/offline program shows a slight increase in a better wellbeing, greater sense of connection to oneself and nature throughout ‘the Journey’ program. The results of the four conducted surveys lead to a better understanding of how nature affects our wellbeing and gives us a better understanding of nature therapy.

Ian’s 8-week online/offline program is a great example of inclusivity. People can access this program anywhere in the world, as all videos are recorded and can be accessed after the program is over. Regardless of age or if you live in a city or countryside. Since the videos are recorded participants who live in different time zones can still participate. The program and online platform bring together a community of likeminded individuals together where they can feel supported and engage with each other.

The number of participants decreased throughout all four surveys therefore it was a bit challenging analyzing the data. A potential improvement to this could be by asking a smaller set of question in each survey. Another difficulty was that the participants were following the program at their own pace which led to inconsistent data sets due to the changing number of participants.

I believe it does not reflect negatively on the data because ‘The Journey’ is an online/offline program that can be done at one’s own pace. Participants are welcomed to follow the structured program or can freely go about the program at their own pace even if joining live is not always an option.

Most participants began their journey with already an awareness and knowledge to mindfulness and nature connection. Although, even with their previous experiences their wellbeing seemed to improve slightly after ‘The Journey’. Participants gained new ‘tools’ to help them in their daily lives. I was surprised to see that physical health did not seem to improve as greatly as I expected but this was also not the main goal of the thesis. Perhaps following the participants for a longer time may lead to observable trends.

Even given the challenges faced with collecting surveys, varying participation and tabulating results, the aim of this thesis which was to observe how natural mindfulness and connection affect wellbeing was successful.

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APPENDICES

Part 1: Before Survey

'How being Mindful & Connecting in Nature affect Wellbeing' 'Before' Survey

Background Information

1. How do you identify? *

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to mention

2. What is your age? *

dd.mm.yyyy

3. Do you live in a city, town, village or other? *

- City
- Town
- Village
- Other

4. Are you working, a student or other? *

Please elaborate which study/job or other. You can select multiple answers for this question.

- Student

- Student _____
- Working _____
- Other _____

5. Do you live alone, with family, partner, friends or others? *

- Alone
- Family
- Partner
- Friends
- Other _____

6. What was your result in 'The True Nature Assessment'? *

Optional: Feel free to add any comments.

- Hunter/Huntress _____
- Gatherer _____
- Expert _____
- Explorer _____
- I haven't done it _____

7. Are you familiar with the practice of mindfulness? *

- Yes
- No

8. Have you ever participated in any online programs before? *

If yes, which online programs?

- Yes _____

No, never.

9. How have you been feeling lately mentally? *



10. How is your current physical health? *

(Ex: sleep, diet, exercise)



11. How much time do you typically spend outdoors in a day? *

- Less than 10mins
- I go outside to just run errands/do chores
- 30mins
- 2hours and more

12. How connected do you feel with nature? *



13. How important is nature to you? *



14. Do you have tools to help you through difficult moments in your life? *

(Optional) If yes, please share.

- Yes _____
- Very few _____
- No

15. Have you practiced natural mindfulness before? *

If yes, what type of exercises and/or activities did you do?

- Yes _____
- No

16. Do you find it difficult to find motivation to get outside? *

- Yes, very often
- Sometimes
- No, I can always find the motivation to go outdoors
- I don't know

17. What activities do you normally do when outdoors? *

(Ex: Hiking, walking, swimming, bird watching, meditating, etc)

18. Do you typically go outdoors by yourself or with others? *

- By myself
- With others

19. Do you look for purpose when going outside? If yes, for what purpose? *

- Exercise
- Find a quiet place
- Reflect/think
- Outdoor chores
- I don't need a purpose to go outside
- Other (please elaborate) _____

20. Lastly, what are your expectations for 'The Journey' 8 week program? *

Also, please feel free to add any additional comments you may have! :)

Part 2: 'During Survey'

 Mandatory questions are marked with a star (*)

1. Has the time you're spending outdoors in a day increased during these 4 weeks? *

- Yes, an additional 10mins
- Yes, an additional 30mins
- Yes, an additional hour and more
- No, it's still the same
- I don't know

2. Would you say that your PHYSICAL health has improved during these 4 weeks? *

(Ex: sleep, exercise, diet)



3. Would you say that your MENTAL health has improved during these 4 weeks? *



4. So far, which guide has been your favourite to explore? *

- Hunter/Huntress
- Gatherer
- I don't know

5. How easy was it to connect with your inner hunter/huntress? *



6. How easy was it to connect with your inner gatherer? *



7. Have you made any changes in your daily routine? If yes, what? *

Yes

No

I don't know.

8. Do you feel a deeper connection with yourself? *



9. Do you feel closer to the people around you? *



10. Have you been using your senses more mindfully since beginning your Journey? *

Hear, Smell, Touch, See, Taste

Yes, very much

Sometimes

No, not really

I don't know

11. Do you feel more relaxed since beginning your Journey? *



12. Do you pay attention to your breathing? *



13. Do you feel you have control over your life? *



14. Do you feel a sense of purpose in your life? *



15. Do you feel at home in nature? *



16. Do you feel peaceful and in no rush when spending time in nature *



17. Do you feel open and comfortable to share your experiences/opinions and comments in 'The Journey' group? *



18. Have you explored out of your comfort zone during your Journey? If yes, where on the circle? *



- I stayed in my comfort zone
- Yes, I explored into the stretch zone
- Yes, I reached the panic zone
- I don't know

Part 3: After Survey

 Mandatory questions are marked with a star (*)

1. Which guides were your favourite to explore? *

- Expert
- Explorer
- I don't know

2. How easy was it to connect with your inner expert? *



3. How easy was it to connect with your inner explorer? *



4. How safe and comfortable do you feel to explore in nature? *



5. Have you learned some new tools to help you through difficult moments in your life? *

If yes, please elaborate.

- Yes _____
- No
- I don't know

6. After finishing this program, do you feel your MENTAL health has improved? *

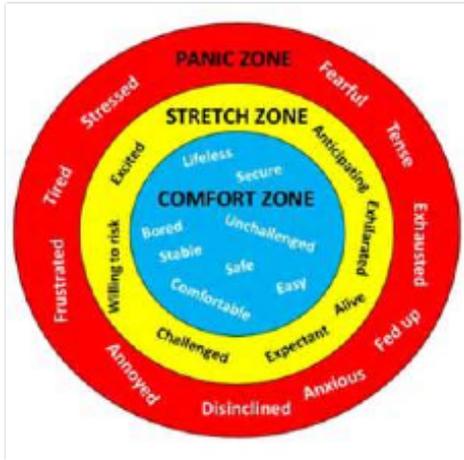


7. After finishing this program, do you feel your PHYSICAL health has improved? *

Ex: sleep, diet, exercise, etc.



8. Where would you place yourself in the comfort zone after exploring your expert and explorer? *



- I stayed in my comfort
- Yes, I explored into my stretch zone

- Yes, I reached my panic zone
- I don't know

9. How much time have you spent outside in a day after finishing this program? *

- Less than 10mins
- I go outside to just run errands/do chores
- 30mins
- 2hours and more
- I don't know

10. I feel the need to control things in my life *

- Yes, all the time
- Sometimes
- No, I let things happen
- I don't know

11. Do you feel peaceful and in no rush when spending time in nature *



12. Do you feel a deeper connection with yourself? *



13. Is there anything that you learned from the Journey that you will apply in your daily routine? *

Example: New outdoor activities, hobbies, healthy habits, etc

Yes

No

I don't know

14. How connected do you feel with nature? *



15. I feel more confident and self-love towards myself *



16. How satisfied do you feel in your life? *



17. I feel a stronger connection to my community, friends and family *



18. My mind feels calmer and I feel like I understand myself *



19. How important is nature to you? *



20. Do you feel more connected to a different guide now at the end of the program? *

- Hunter/huntress
- Gatherer
- Expert
- Explorer
- No, I still resonate with the same.
- I don't know.

21. Do you pay attention to your breathing? *



22. Do you find it difficult to find motivation to get outside? *

- Yes, very often
- Sometimes
- No, I can always find the motivation to go outdoors
- I don't know

23. Do you look for purpose when going outside? If yes, for what purpose? *

- Exercise
- Find a quiet place
- Reflect/think
- Outdoor chores
- I don't need a purpose to go outside
- Other (please elaborate) _____

24. Have you been spending time outdoors by yourself or with others? *

- By myself
- With others

25. Do you feel a sense of purpose in your life? *



26. Have you been using your senses more mindfully since beginning your Journey? *

Hear, Smell, Touch, See, Taste

- Yes, very much
- Sometimes
- No, not really
- I don't know

27. Was Ian clear and concise when explaining the 4 guides and assigning the exercises? *

Yes, very clear and concise I understood what I need to do

Sometimes

No

I don't know

28. Were the meetings interactive enough? *



29. Do you feel open and comfortable to share your experiences/opinions and comments in 'The Journey' group? *



30. Would you recommend 'The Journey' to a friend or family member? *

Yes, definitely!

Maybe

No

I don't know

31. Did the Journey fulfill your expectations that you had before beginning? *

Yes

No

I don't know

32. What was your favourite part during your Journey? *

33. If you could change something in 'The Journey' what would it be? *

Part 4: 35 Days After Survey

 Mandatory questions are marked with a star (*)

1. How safe and comfortable do you feel to explore in nature? *

0
 Not safe/comfortable at all
 5 Very safe!
 I don't know

2. 35 days after finishing 'The Journey' do you feel you've connected more strongly with a different guide now? *

- Yes, my hunter/huntress
- Yes, my gatherer
- Yes, my expert
- Yes, my explorer
- I don't know

3. 35 day after finishing this program, do you feel your MENTAL health has improved? *

0
 Not at all.
 5 Yes, very much!
 I don't know

4. 35 days after finishing this program, do you feel your PHYSICAL health has improved? *



5. How much time do you spend outside in a day, 35 days after finishing this program? *

- Less than 10mins
- I go outside to just run errands/do chores
- 30 mins
- 2hours and more
- I don't know

6. I feel the need to control things in my life *

- Yes, all the time
- Sometimes
- No, I let things happen
- I don't know

7. Do you feel peaceful and in no rush when spending time in nature *



8. Do you feel a deeper connection with yourself? *



9. How connected do you feel with nature? *



10. I feel more confident and self-love towards myself *



11. How satisfied do you feel in your life? *



12. I feel a stronger connection to my community, friends and family *



13. My mind feels calmer and I feel like I understand myself *



14. How important is nature to you? *



15. Do you pay attention to your breathing? *



16. Do you find it difficult to find motivation to get outside? *

- Yes, very often
- Sometimes
- No, I can always find the motivation to go outdoors
- I don't know

17. Do you look for purpose when going outside? If yes, for what purpose? *

Please select all options that apply to you.

- Exercise
- Find a quiet place
- Reflect/think
- Outdoor chores
- I don't need a purpose to go outdoors
- Other (please elaborate) _____

18. Have you been spending time outdoors by yourself or with others? *

- By myself
- With others

19. Do you feel a sense of purpose in your life? *



20. Have you still been using your senses more mindfully 35 days after finishing 'The Journey'? *

Hear, Smell, Touch, See, Taste

- Yes, very much
- Sometimes
- No, not really
- I don't know

21. Reflecting 35 days after 'The Journey', which tools did you learn that you are still using in your day to day life? *

22. Reflecting 35 days after finishing 'The Journey', place in order which guide you believe was the easiest to connect with. *

1 being the easiest and 4 being the most challenging

