

Session # E03

# ACCEPTANCE AS THE FIRST STEP TO INNER HARMONY: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSES TO THE ONLINE BREATHINGROOM™ MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

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# FACULTY DISCLOSURE

The presenters of this session have NOT had any relevant financial relationships during the past 12 months.



# TREATY 7 TERRITORY LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that we live on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.



<https://bit.ly/3KJgSM8>

Calgary, Alberta



# CONFERENCE RESOURCES

Slides and handouts shared by our conference presenters are available on <https://www.integratedcareconference.com/> and on the conference mobile app.

All sessions will be recorded and posted to <https://integratedcarelearning.talentlms.com/> shortly following the conference.



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Describe the **benefits of an online mental health program beyond** reduction of depressive and anxiety symptoms.
- Appreciate that the inclusion of what are traditionally considered **spiritual practices enhances mental well being.**
- Understand that **qualitative analysis can reveal unexpected value** for participants, clinicians and researchers that can go unseen by quantitative data.



# OVERVIEW

Context/Background

Evidence-base

BreathingRoom™ program

Methodology

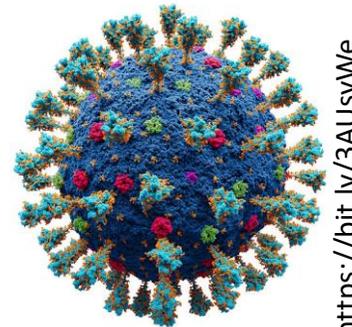
Findings/Highlights

Limitations/Strengths/Future Direction



As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.

Carl Jung, 1963



# ORCHESTRA OF INNER WELLBEING



**SOUL**

**SPIRIT**  
(HEART / ENERGY)

**RELATIONSHIPS**  
(SELF / SOCIAL)

**GOODNESS**  
(ETHICAL)

**THINKING**  
(REASON)

**EMOTIONS**  
(RELATE)

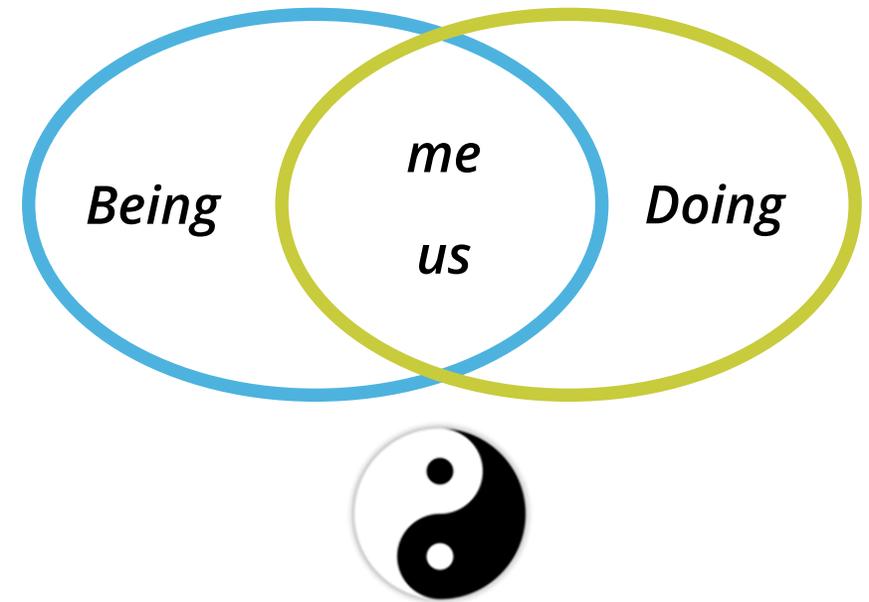
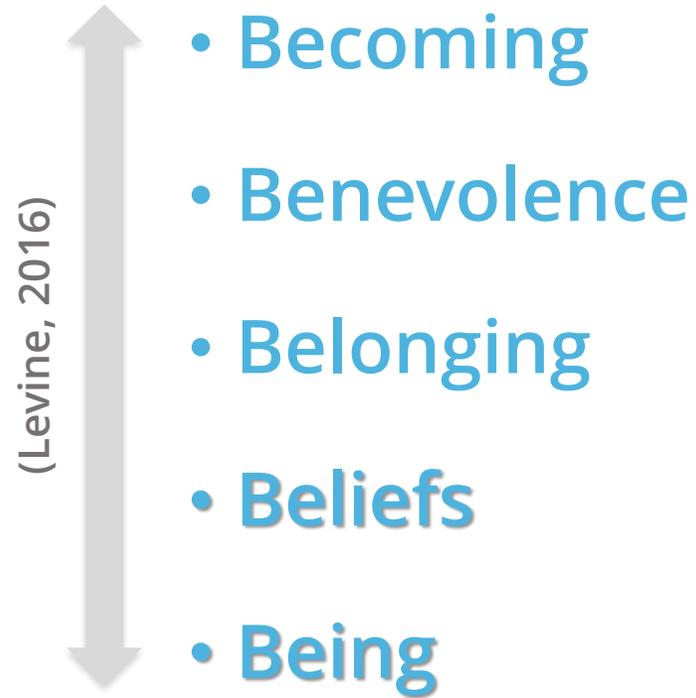
**BIOLOGY**  
(REGULATE)



<https://bit.ly/3ANnpLn>



# INNER AND OUTER WELLBEING



# INNER HARMONY

## BEING WELL IN THE WORLD

**Peace**  
**Beauty**  
**Joy**  
Gentle  
Rested  
Humble  
Patient  
Authentic  
Connected  
Compassionate...

## PRACTICES THAT ENHANCE WELLBEING

**Slowing down**  
**Patience**  
**Kindness**  
Letting go  
Forgiveness  
Creativity  
Compassion  
Acceptance  
Less judgmental  
Tolerating uncertainty...



# SPIRITUALITY IN WELLBEING

“...practices to awaken the heart and the mind”  
(Walsh, 2000)

- undeniable dimension of human experience
- gives depth & significance to life
- goes beyond reduction of symptoms
- better quality of life (QOL)
- being human in the time of Covid



# EVIDENCE-BASE

1

Expanded spiritual awareness, characterized by a sense of connection.

Moritz et al., 2011

2

Spiritual concepts, delivered online, are a potentially beneficial approach to treating depression in youth.

Rickhi et al., 2015

3

Summary of biological mechanisms underlying mind-body therapies.

Muehsam et al., 2017

4

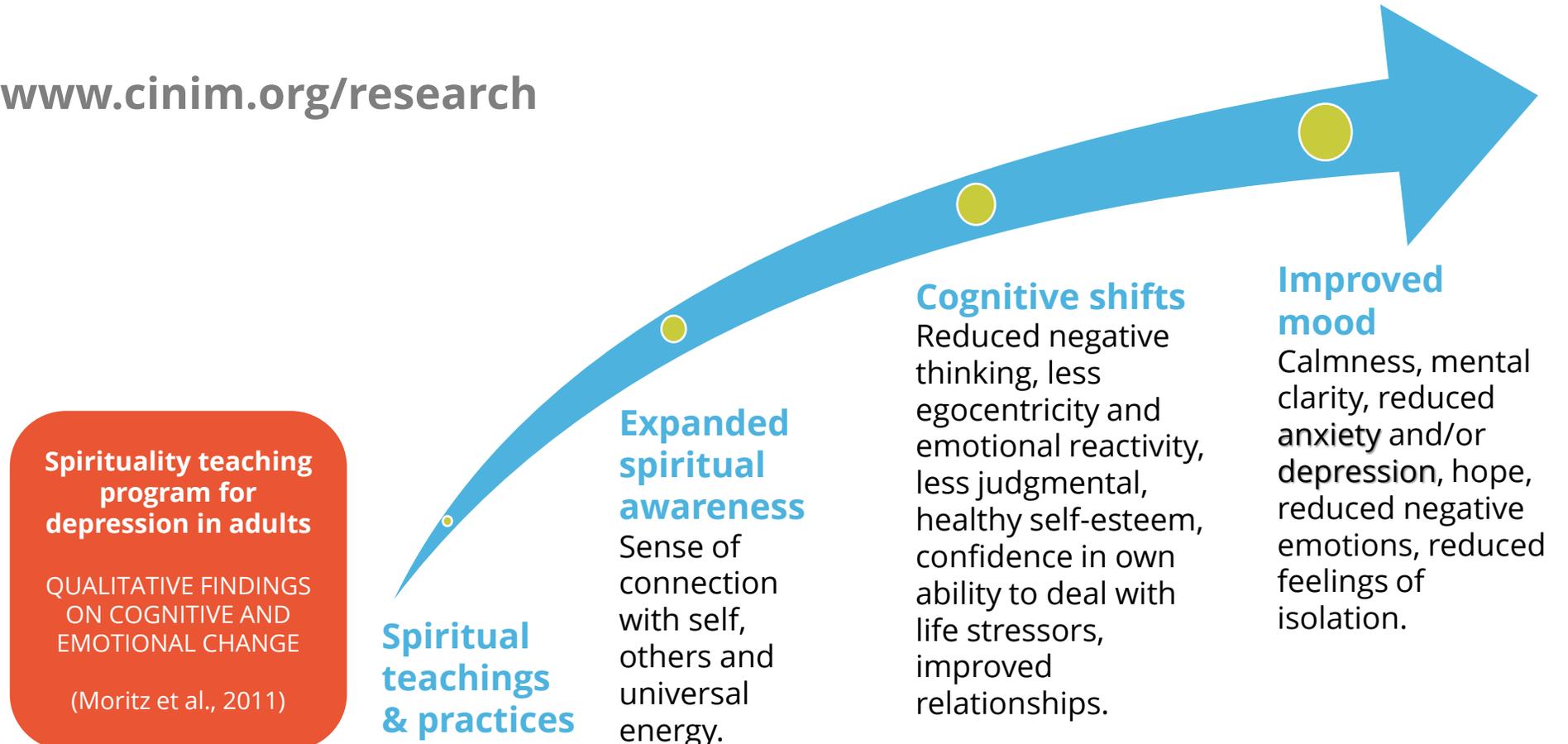
Benefits of spirituality beyond the reduction of depression.

Rickhi et al., 2019

*What do you think are the main causes of depression?  
“...the disconnection of spirit with self.”  
(Moritz et al., 2011)*

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

[www.cinim.org/research](http://www.cinim.org/research)



# BREATHINGROOM™ PROGRAM

- digital mental wellness program (online and mobile app)
- participants aged 13 to 24 years old
- videos, meditations, visualizations, journaling, movies, books, songs
- self-assessments
- launched 2013, updated August 2020



breathingroom

Unlock the real you

[www.breathingroom.me](http://www.breathingroom.me)



# SPIRITUAL PRACTICES IN BREATHINGROOM™



**UNLOCK THE REAL YOU**  
Self-acceptance

**RESPOND TO DISAPPOINTMENTS**  
Acceptance

**CONNECT WITH LIFE**  
Creativity

**DEAL WITH THE PAST**  
Forgiveness

**DISCOVER YOUR PURPOSE**  
Joy

**REACH IN TO REACH OUT**  
Compassion

**FIND THE POSITIVE**  
Gratitude

**MOVE FORWARD**  
Celebration



# SELF-ACCEPTANCE IS NOT....



- being passive
- ignoring your feelings
- being ok with the status quo
- Ignoring your feelings & “sucking it up”



# SELF-ACCEPTANCE IS...



- not resisting, seeing things as they are
- not criticizing self
- not living your life like others want you to
- saying yes to yourself



# METHODOLOGY

- Data: *N*694 anonymous, optional participant responses collected over 6 months, Jan-June 2021
- Qualitative data analysis using a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hallberg, L. R.-M., 2006)
- NVIVO software utilized for coding and categorization of emergent themes (word clouds)



# RAW DATA- EXAMPLES TOPIC 1

“ Not being the real me is draining. Like I said in this module, it makes me anxious and depressed because I feel like I am trapped.

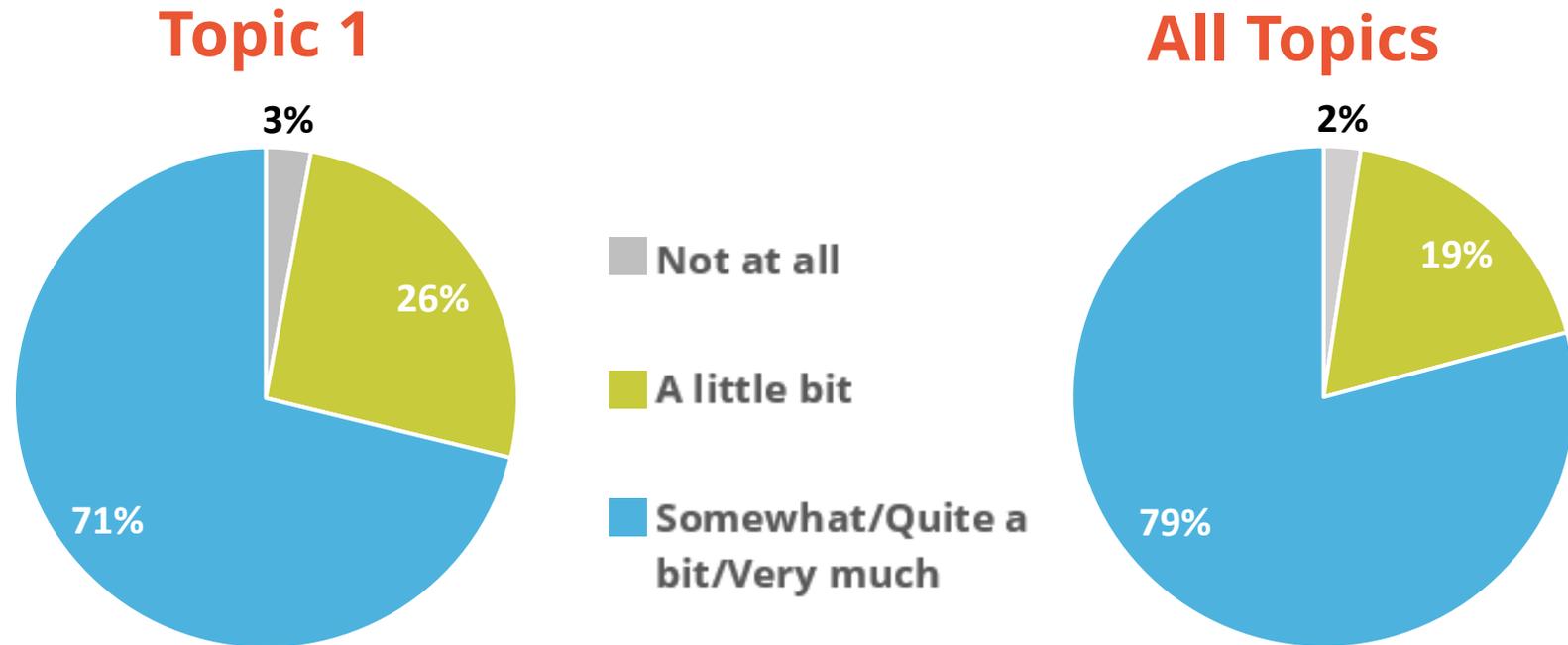
“ It has really helped me focus on my self and reflect.



# PARTICIPANT BENEFIT

JAN 1-JUNE 30, 2021

How much has BreathingRoom™ helped you?



*NB. There were no negative responses about the program itself.*



# EMERGENT THEMES: TOPIC 1 (SELF-ACCEPTANCE)

What's it like to live your life and not be the real you?

depression  
frustrating  
**stressful**  
exhausting  
sad



What's the value of being able to accept yourself?

freedom  
self  
confidence  
**happy**  
loving



# ...NOT ACCEPTING SELF

“ *Like a stranger in my own life. I feel **disconnected** and in my own little torture chamber. Life is not fun, but **miserable**. It's like I've lost part of myself and just a **shell** remains. It's like I live in a **shell**.*

“ *I have **no voice** and I don't matter.*

“ *Not being the real you is almost like living as a **background character** in your own life. It also feels kind of like you are **waiting** around for something to happen rather than making that thing happen for yourself.*

“ *Hiding behind a persona you present to everyone but once you're **alone** you take that **mask** off.*



# ...SAYING YES TO SELF

“If I can't accept myself then nobody else can really help me, I need to know myself for *who I am*.

“...because I love *who I am inside* and I want the freedom to be her all the time and let everyone else meet her too. It'll be interesting to meet her, she certainly isn't *who I am now*.

“I'd much rather be the *real me*. Accepting yourself is learning to love yourself in ways you never thought you could.

“If I accepted myself as I am I would be more comfortable pursuing other life goals.



# UNEXPECTED FINDING – CONFIDENCE

“ *The program has made me feel **hopeful**, a bit **stronger** and **confident** knowing there is an alternative method of dealing with disappointment.*

“ *The value of accepting myself is that I feel more **confident** and more at **peace** with how I live my life.*

“ *...it helps people get through their days easier when they are **confident** and **happy with themselves**, and overall, it's a **massive mood booster**.*

“ *Accepting myself made me more **confident** in my **academic abilities**, **personal relationships**, and **life**.*



# EMERGENT THEMES: ALL TOPICS\*

BEFORE

confusing  
**depression**  
**frustrating**  
**stressful**  
**exhausting**  
hard sad tiring  
negative worrying



BR participants  
Jan-June, 2021

AFTER

freedom true  
**confidence**  
**happy**  
better love peace  
joy good happier

\*BR™ Spiritual themes: self-acceptance, creativity, joy, gratitude, acceptance, forgiveness, compassion, celebration



# RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- No a priori expectation of outcome(s) other than knowing universal spiritual practices can be beneficial.
- **Confidence** emerged as a central theme from practicing self-acceptance.
- A spiritually based program can meaningfully improve quality of life.
- Self acceptance can be a first step towards inner harmony and wellbeing.



# LIMITATIONS

- Unknown demographic information: age, gender, ethnicity, etc.
- Unknown clinical status of participants.
- Unknown previous participation in therapy or other healing practices.

# STRENGTHS

- Feedback is from the heart, unprompted.
- Large sample size ( $N= 694$ ).
- Confirms previous qualitative findings on spiritual practices.
- Unanticipated emergent themes.



# IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTION

- **Permission**
  - Implicit
  - Should every therapy start with permission?
- **Confidence**
  - Unexpected theme
  - Foundational in doing anything\*
- Further research regarding **self-acceptance, confidence** and the **role of spirituality in mental health & wellbeing.**
- How can self-acceptance help **navigate the challenges of COVID-19?**

*Science is the exact art  
of the measurable. Art  
is the exact science of  
the unmeasurable.*

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*Perhaps my heart  
doesn't need 'numbers'  
to validate what it  
knows to be true?*

*Allan Donsky*

# DISCUSSION

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