



## **Reach Out! Rise Up! Text Package Research Pilot Report of results to date 20th August 2014**

### **Executive Summary**

Youthline were very excited to receive the funding to be able to pilot the Reach Out! Rise Up! text package from the Social Media Innovations Fund. We have utilised the funding to complete the training of supporters, recruitment and assessment of participants, administration and sending of messages and evaluations. We have completed post assessments with 22 young people and evaluations with 23 young people and have concluded the pilot. We are very happy to announce that the package had statistically significant results for both depression and anxiety levels and that young people were overwhelmingly happy with the package, with 100% of young people surveyed thinking that other young people would benefit from the package.

From here Youthline would like to be able to roll out the text package nationwide as a support option for all young people with mild to moderate depression. In accordance with feedback from the young people, we would like to make a few changes to the package including: having extended options for young people with regards to their preference of language and timing for the text messages (further analysed in the evaluation section below). These changes would require additional IT infrastructure to automate the sending of messages according to young people's preference as well as extra resources for training of additional volunteers as supporters.

### **Background to the research**

Youthline has been providing early intervention services to young people for over 40 years. Over this time young people, their environments and the challenges they face as they navigate their journey toward adulthood have changed dramatically. In a technological world where young people spend more time on mobile phones and social media, Youthline aims to meet the needs of the young generation by offering accessible and relevant early intervention and therapeutic services.

Across Youthline's early intervention and face-to-face services, depression and anxiety are consistently in the top five issues young people present with. The popularity and success of Youthline's helpline text counselling service since its inception in 2005 along with the success of 'inspireme' (inspirational messages sent to young people who sign up via their mobile phones) have provided Youthline with the technical and clinical infrastructure to trial a text message package to support young people with depression and anxiety.

In 2012 Youthline commissioned a report written by Teresa Fleming entitled 'Extending the reach of community services: computerized therapies and other online opportunities' which concluded:

*'There is good evidence to suggest that various CT programmes (mainly computerized CBT programmes) are effective for the treatment of mild to moderate depression and anxiety among adults and these also appear to be effective for adolescents. Currently evidence suggests that CT's are more effective where they are offered with some personal encouragement, support or reminders, although this may not require a high level of mental health training and may require only a few minutes per week.'* (Fleming, 2012, p. 4)

Alongside this, the report confirmed the significance of barriers that young people face in help seeking:

*'Two decades ago, it was reported that up to 80% of young people with depression did not get therapy or treatment (Fergusson, Horwood, & Lynskey, 1993). More recent studies suggest that the vast majority of people with depression still do not get treatment (Zachrisson, Rödje, & Mykletun, 2006). Barriers to treatment include person-centred barriers, barriers related to the experience of depression and barriers related to how services are delivered'.*

In addition to this, a Colmar Brunton survey of 403 young people conducted for Youthline in 2014 confirmed that less than 10% of young people rated talking to family or a professional as their preferred place to access health and wellbeing information with 64% of young people surveyed indicating that the internet is where they go.

Common elements to CBT that found to be effective in the treatment of anxiety and depressive disorders are:

- Psychoeducation (information regarding symptoms and treatments for anxiety and fear)
- Affect (mood) recognition and somatic management skills training (such as teaching clients to recognize anxiety related feelings and how these feelings don't need to spiral out of control– they can be managed)
- Cognitive training (involves learning to identify and challenge unhelpful ways of thinking and irrational thoughts that bring on and reinforce anxiety)
- Exposure training (this behavioural technique is often used in supporting people with fears and phobias. It involves developing cognitive and physiological relaxation techniques and gradually being exposed to the feared situation/stimuli.
- Long term relapse prevention (this includes developing techniques the client can use in the real world to maintain the gains made in therapy).
- Other components of CBT tailored to the client, including:
  - Problem solving interventions
  - Specific skills training such as social skills
  - Parent training (where the client is a child or young person. This often includes reward techniques and training parents in modelling appropriate behaviour)

Other promising areas that assist with increasing wellbeing from Youthline's best practice reviews include:

Lifestyle modification such as a healthy diet, avoiding alcohol, caffeine and other drugs that precipitate anxiety and regular exercise is often recommended as part of best practice and may help clients with anxiety problems. Exercise may be particularly beneficial where other conditions, such as depression, are present alongside the anxiety (Youthline 2011a).

Mindfulness-based Therapy (MBT) has recently become a very popular form of treatment for anxiety and depressive disorders. The basic premise for mindfulness is that by experiencing the present moment non-judgmentally and openly can effectively counter the effect of stressors, because excessive orientation of the future when dealing with stressors is related to anxiety. Moreover, mindfulness teaches individuals to react reflectively rather than reflexively to situations, thus countering avoidance strategies, a common problem of anxiety disorders. Furthermore, the breathing exercises learnt and practiced in mindfulness based therapies are useful coping strategies that alleviate stress and anxiety symptoms. Mindfulness techniques can be combined with CBT or used on their own accord (Youthline 2011b).

With the aforementioned research taken into consideration 'Reach Out, Rise Up' was created to combine a CBT-based programme in the youth-friendly and accessible medium of text messages. A group of young people have assisted in editing the language and format of the ten-week package and a youth advisory group came up with the name for the pilot with the aim of mitigating any potential for young people to feel that package is generic or too clinical. We hope that this pilot will add new knowledge in the areas of: effective, low cost, low intensity and easily accessible support options for young people with mild to moderate depression and anxiety.

### **Study design**

Young people who came through Youthline's telephone Helpline or who contact Youthline's Support Centre team presenting with mild to moderate anxiety and/or depression were offered the option of the text programme pilot along with Youthline's other services normally offered e.g. face to face counselling, helpline services, youth services. We also sent out a bulk text message to young people involved in Youthline's Youth Service and posted on Youthline's Facebook page inviting people to txt 'RiseUp' to 234 if they were interested in being involved.

The young people who consented to participate in the pilot (following participant selection process below) received text messages for ten weeks including three groups of text messages per week:

1. Monday 4pm: Psycho-educational message (to give young people a better understanding of their symptoms and help them to gain a sense of perspective on what they are experiencing)
2. Tuesday 4pm: Weekly challenge (to give them practical and achievable challenges each week based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy principles for improving their feelings)
3. Friday 4pm: Inspirational message (to keep them motivated and to learn from the wisdom of others).

Following the ten week package the young people were contacted to complete a follow up assessment and to ask the participants about their experience using an evaluation questionnaire.

This project was developed by Amber Davies Youthline's Support Centre Team Leader who is a registered psychotherapist and specialises in youth, anxiety, and depression.

### **Participant Selection**

The young people who were identified as potentially suitable for the package through an initial needs assessment by the Triage Helpline team or Support Centre team were told about the pilot and asked whether they would like to be involved. Involvement was voluntary and other standard interventions options were offered i.e. face to face counselling.

Following voluntary involvement in the text programme the young people were contacted by members of the Support Centre team (SAS) and assigned in order of their referral to either:

1. Text programme only group
2. Text programme with weekly phone support group

Consent to participate was gained through the verbal consent form which was then sent to participants via post or email along with supporting materials to assist them with the weekly challenges.

All young people who consented to be a part of the pilot completed a full assessment with members of the Support Centre (SAS) team. This assessment includes HEeADSSS (best practice adolescent assessment) the GAD-7 and PHQ-9 (internationally validated anxiety and depression scales and risk

assessment). This is Youthline's standard assessment process for all young people entering therapeutic services and all the team members are highly skilled and trained in youth and risk assessment. We kept a record of the number of eligible participants invited to participate and those who consent to be a part of the pilot. We also kept a record of those who choose to drop out of the study.

### **Sample size**

We piloted the package with 40 young people, 20 of whom also received a follow-up call each week to support them and gauge how well they are engaging with the programme and 20 who received only the text messages. The rationale for this was that there is mixed results in the latest research around e-therapies as to whether having support alongside the intervention improves outcomes and will help guide how we will package the project (with phone support or not) if successful when we extend the project to a larger number of young people in the future. The supporters were trained helpline counsellors who received additional CBT introduction training and supporters training and manual for the text package pilot.

### **Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

The criteria for inclusion in the project is young people aged 12- 24 assessed as having mild to moderate depression and anxiety as outlined above. All participants required a personal mobile phone. All participants required to be English literate as the text messages were delivered in English.

Young people who are assessed as having mild to moderate depression or anxiety according to the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 and none to low risk of harm to self, from others or to others will be offered the programme. Those with significant risk or severe depression or anxiety were offered face-to-face options with Youthline if they live in Auckland as well as a referral to their general practitioner instead of the text programme. Young people living outside of Auckland were referred to an appropriate face to face counselling, mental health or psychological service and their general practitioner (as per usual practice).

### **Analysis of programme effectiveness**

Effectiveness of the programme will be assessed through pre- and post-programme iterations of GAD-7 and PHQ-9. As both scales give single, numeric scores that summarise the extent of anxiety and depression respectively, analysis for each scale will be conducted as paired t-tests on differences between pre and post-programme scores. To investigate the influence of telephone supported young people, an independent t-test will be conducted across differences for both scales. Given the small sample size, if data are not normal, non-parametric equivalents will be implemented.

To calculate power we took the mean and standard deviation of PHQ-9 and GAD-7 scores for young people who came into our face-to-face services in the last three months with mild to moderate depression and/or anxiety. According to these numbers our sample size of 40 allows us to detect a mean difference of 1.7 for the PHQ-9 and 1.8 for the GAD-7 with 80% power.

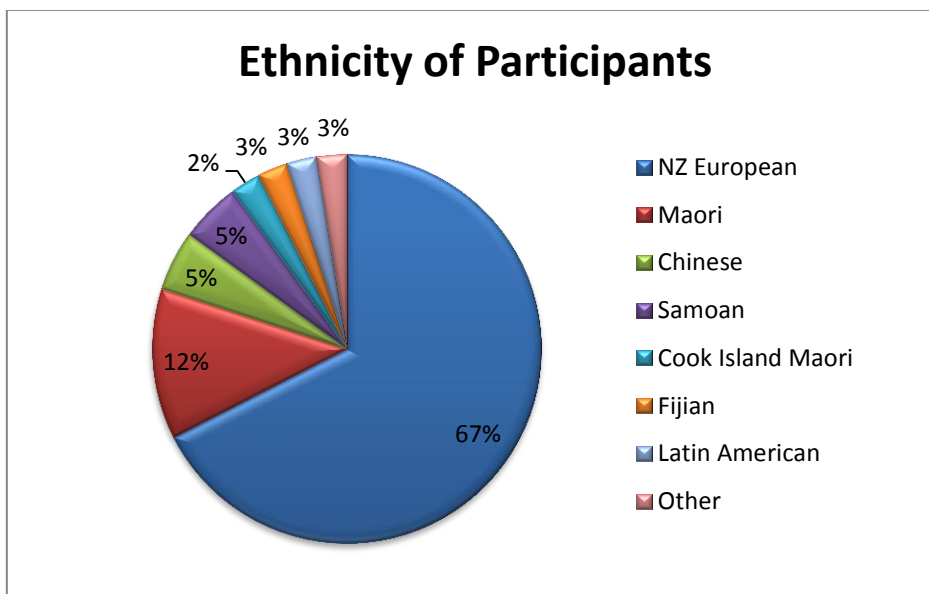
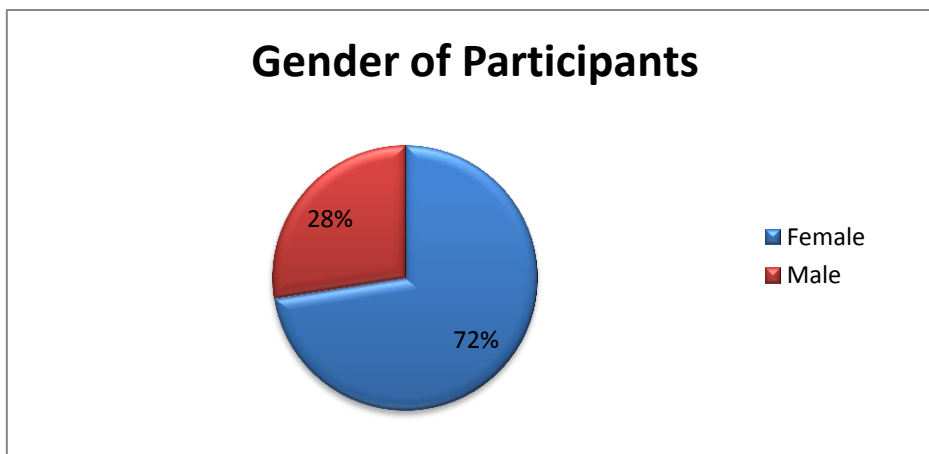
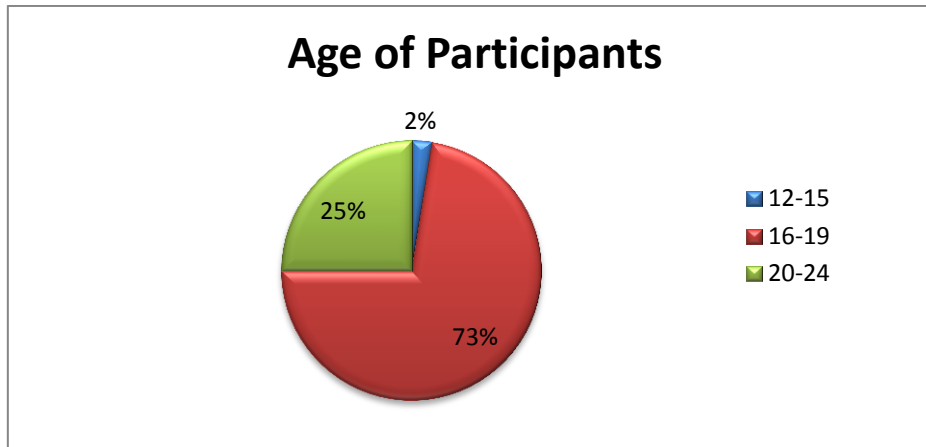
In addition to the quantitative analyses a qualitative survey exploring participant perceptions of the effectiveness of the programme, as well as their level of engagement with it is administered on completion also.

### **Anticipated risks to participants**

Risk to participants in this research were predicted as being minimal due to the thorough screening assessment process and support services offered by Youthline's to all people who come through our services. All participants were informed about support services upon signing up and were sent copies of the information and consent forms. Participants were reminded that participation is

voluntary throughout the course of the programme. Individuals who were assessed as high risk by the Support Centre team were referred to face-to-face services.

### Demographics of young people involved



## Results

We recruited 40 young people for the pilot. On completion of the pilot we completed 22 post package assessments and 23 evaluations. Six young people chose not to complete the post assessment and evaluation and we were unable to contact seven young people to follow up after significant efforts to get hold of them.

### Participant drop out

Of the 40 young people recruited to take part in the pilot 5 young people opted out prior to completion of the programme. Two after week 1, one person after week 2, one person half way through week 3 and one person at week 4. Reasons for opting out included:

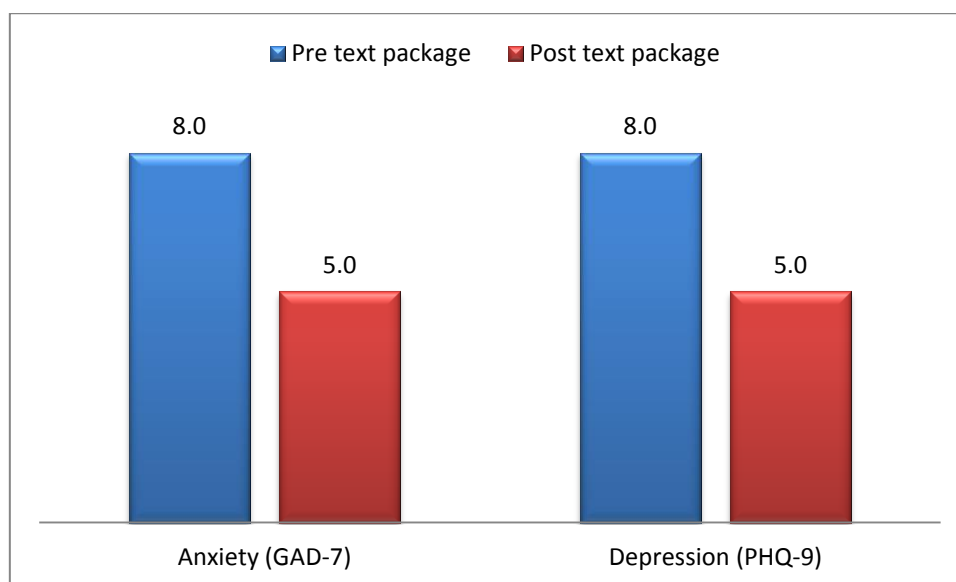
- One young person deciding they did not need the package,
- One young person finding the text language patronising and number of texts annoying,
- One young person no reason given,
- Two young people unable to contact for reason for opting out.

All other participants completed the pilot package.

### Removal of one outlier result

One participant's scores were removed from the assessment results as an outlier because on follow up the young person revealed a mental health diagnosis and recurrent suicidality that was not disclosed on intake. Irrespective of this, the young person was satisfied with the package and gave an overwhelmingly positive evaluation. The young person is being cared for by another Youthline service and mental health services in her area. This young person's scores were significantly different to all other results to justify exclusion.

## Depression and Anxiety Scores Pre and Post Assessment



On average, participant's pre-text package scores for GAD-7 were significantly different to their post-text package scores at the 0.05 level of statistical significance.

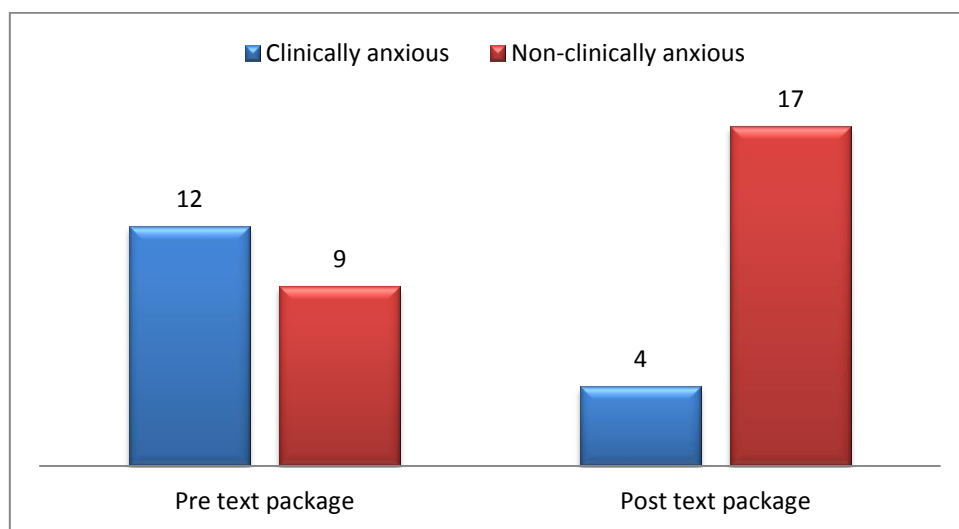
On average, participant's pre-text package scores for PHQ-9 were significantly different to their post-text package scores at the 0.05 level of statistical significance.

A repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that participants' mean GAD-7 and PHQ-9 scores did not differ statistically significantly between pre and post assessments based on demographics of: age, ethnicity, gender or whether they were supported or unsupported. Given the limited sample size of this study, this result should be interpreted with caution.

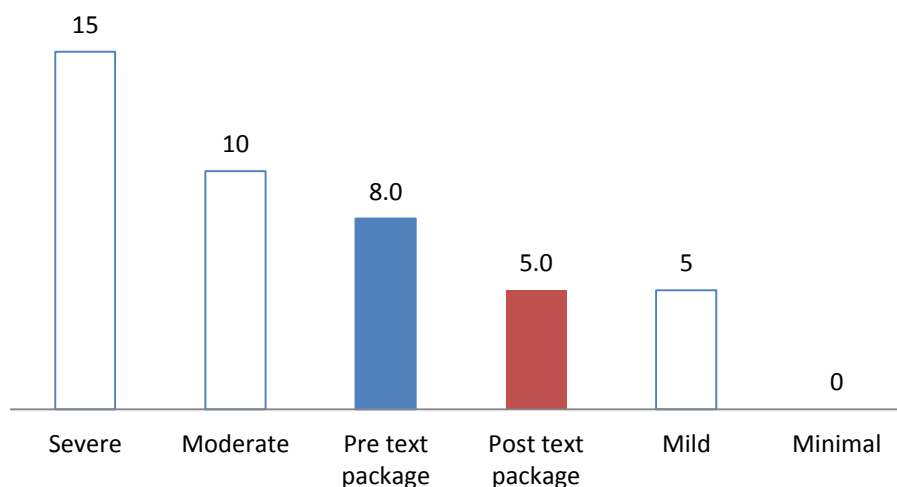
From the evaluations of young people who were randomly assigned to have a support person, most were very pleased to have this support and described it as helpful and encouraging. A few young people would have like more phone calls and a few didn't really feel that they needed the extra support. If Youthline receives the support to roll out the text package based on this feedback we would like to be able to offer the telephone support as a voluntary option to those young people who would like this alongside the text package.

### Anxiety (GAD-7)

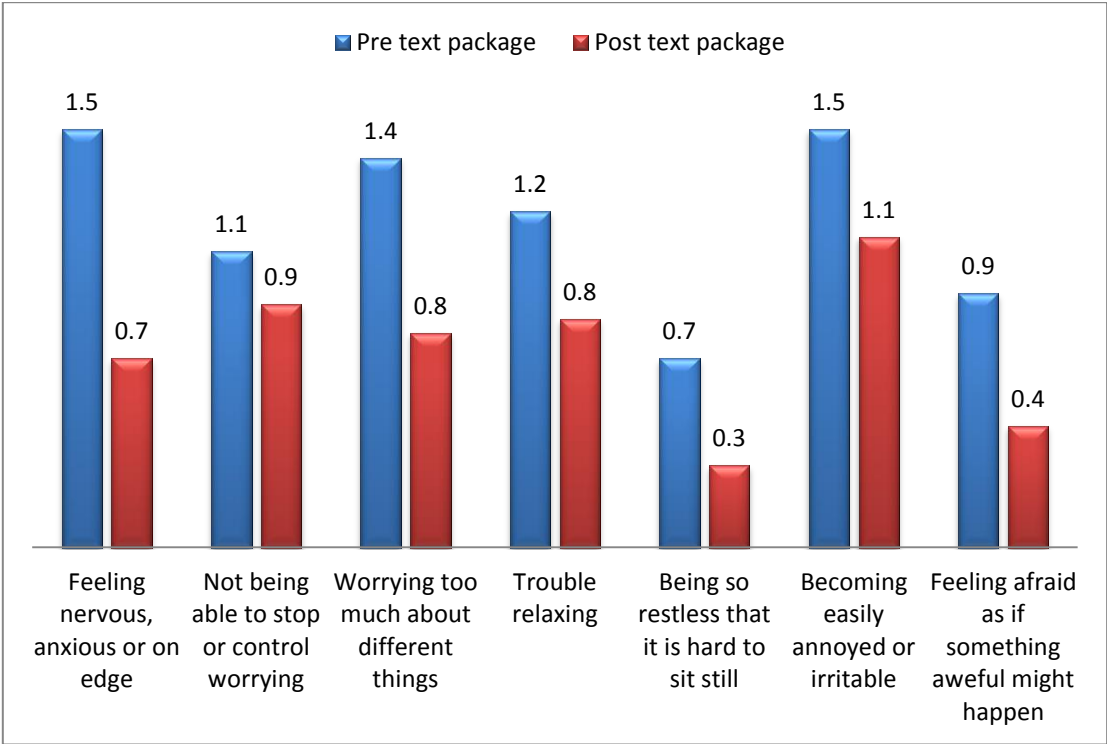
Number of clinically anxious clients at pre- and post- assessment



Where pre- and post- anxiety assessment scores sit relative to anxiety severity

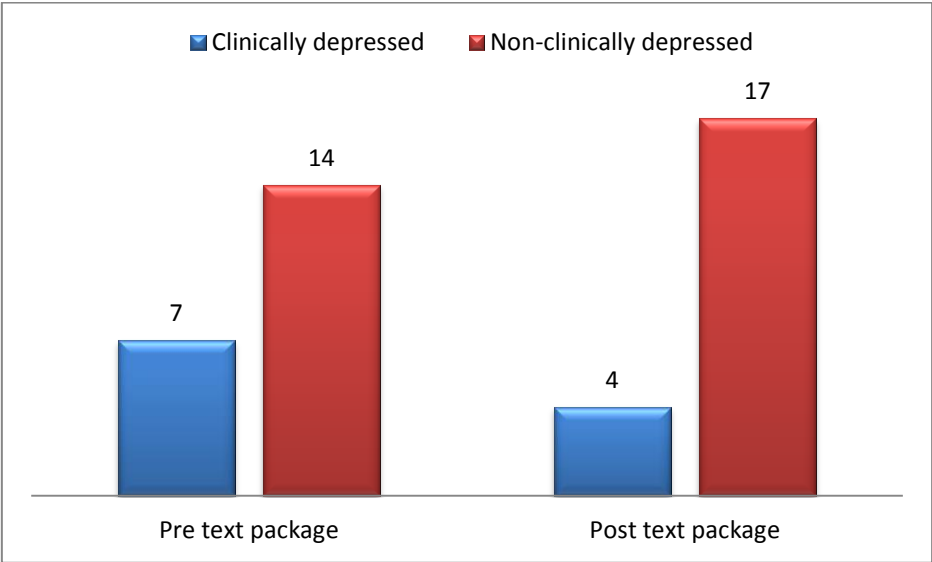


**Average GAD-7 scores at pre- and post- assessment (out of a maximum score of 3)**



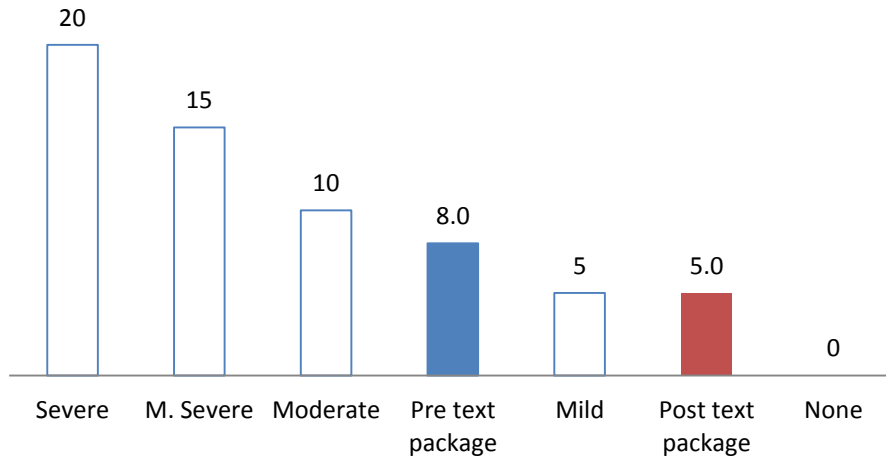
**Depression (PHQ-9)**

Number of clinically depressed clients at pre- and post- assessment

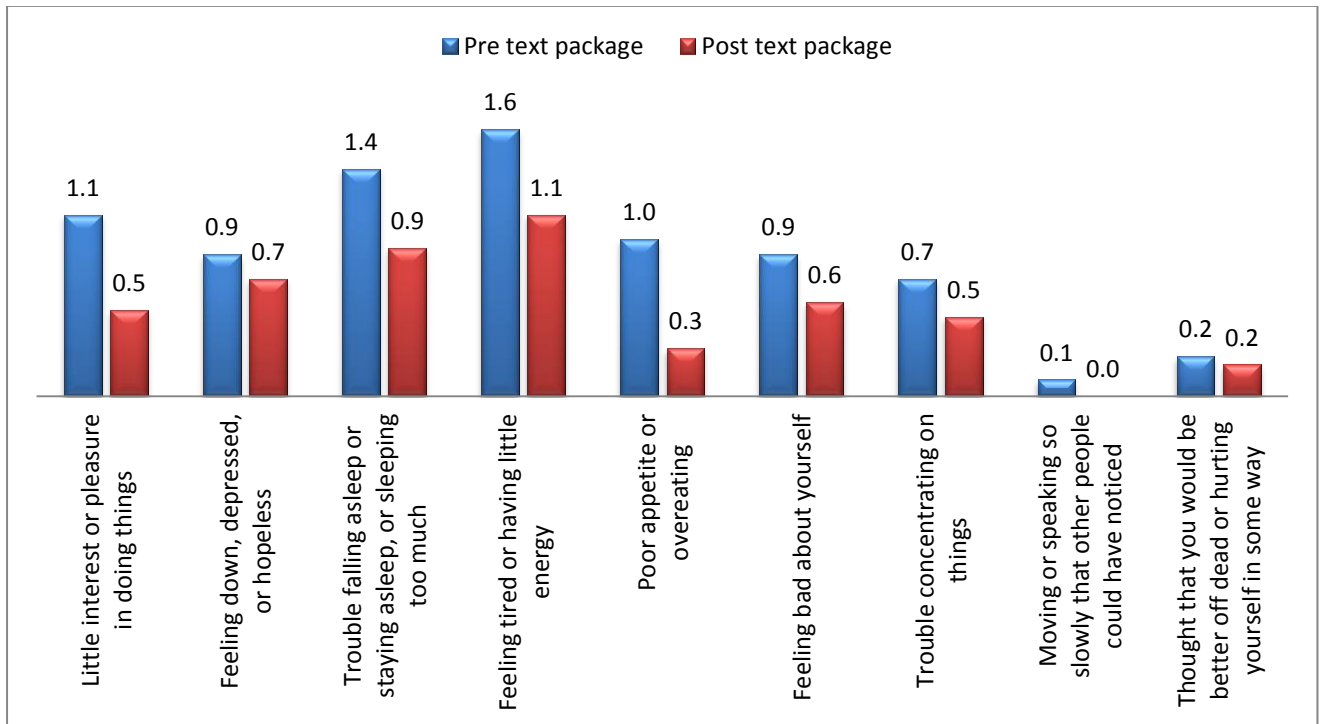




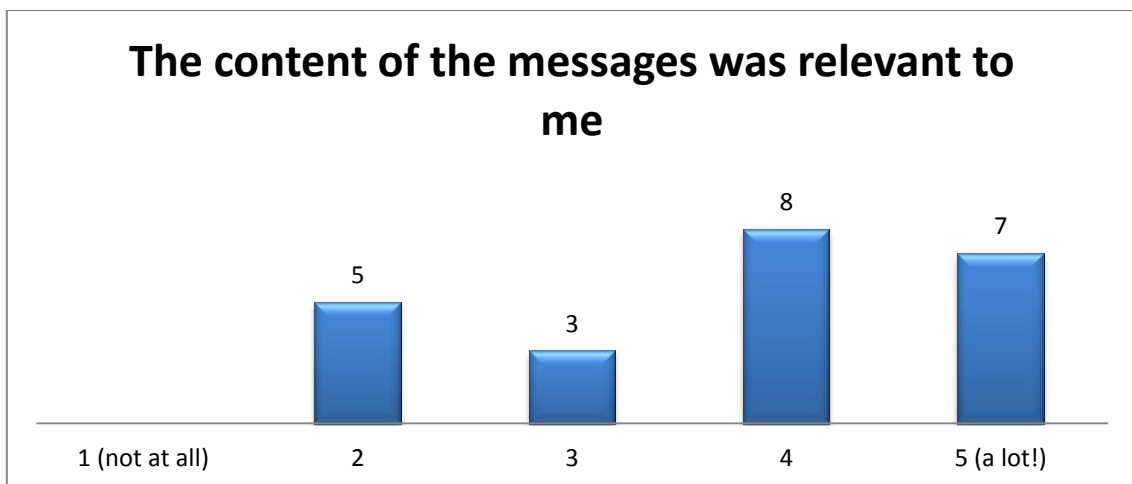
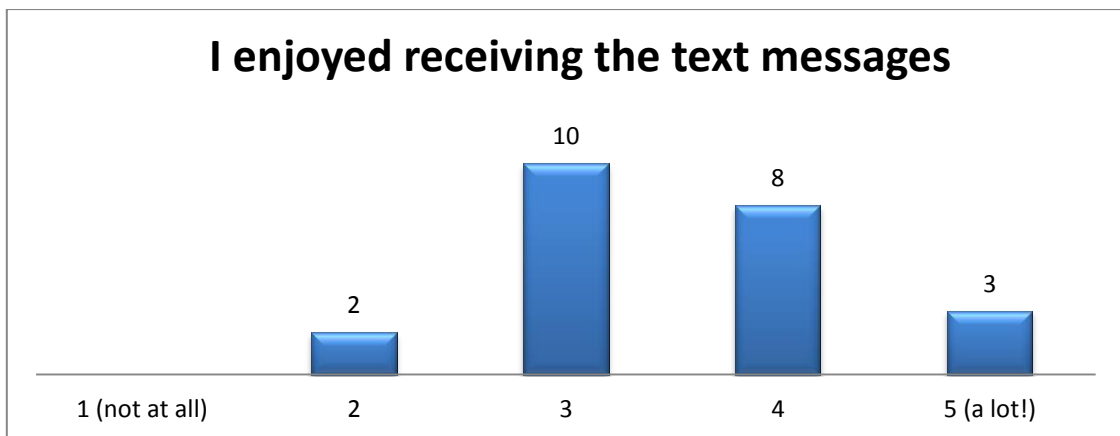
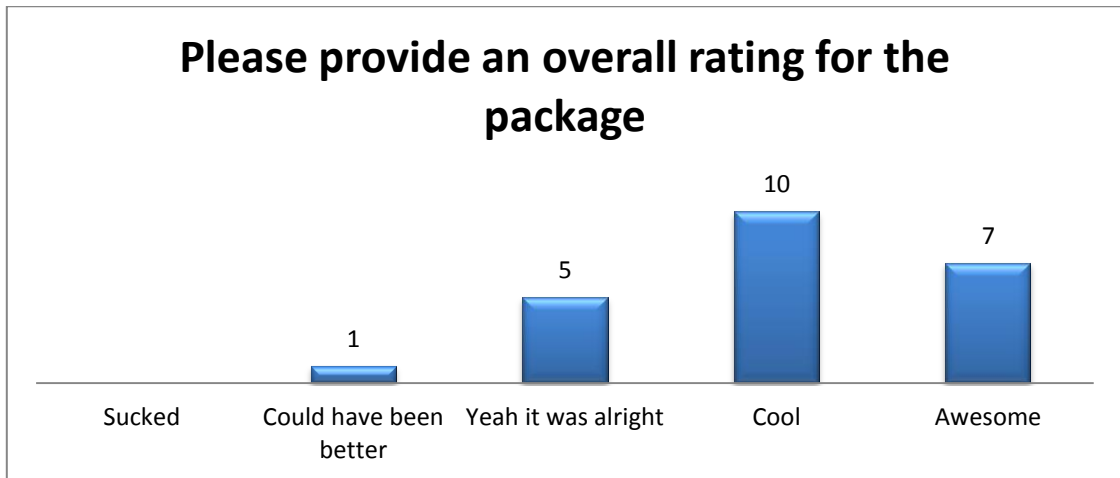
**Where pre- and post- depression assessment scores sit relative to depression severity**



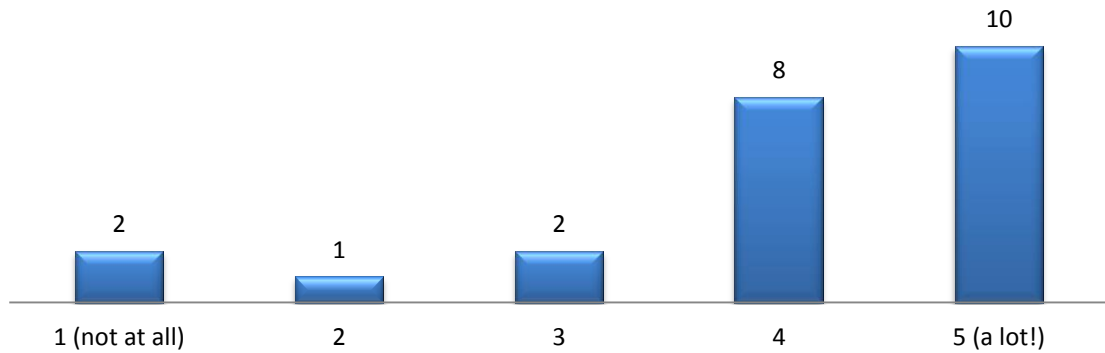
**Average PHQ-9 scores at pre- and post- assessment (out of a maximum score of 3)**



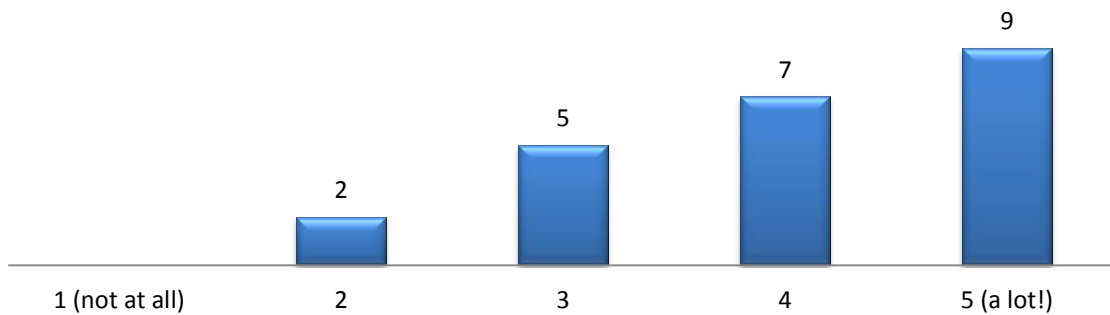
## Evaluation responses



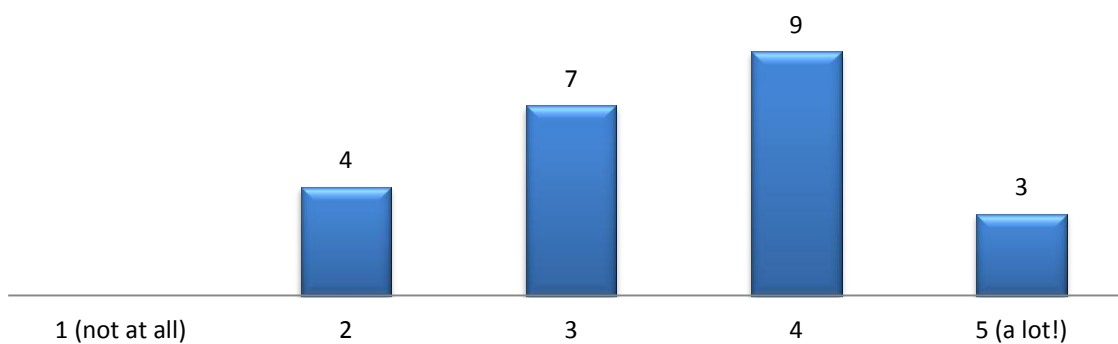
### The messages were easy to understand



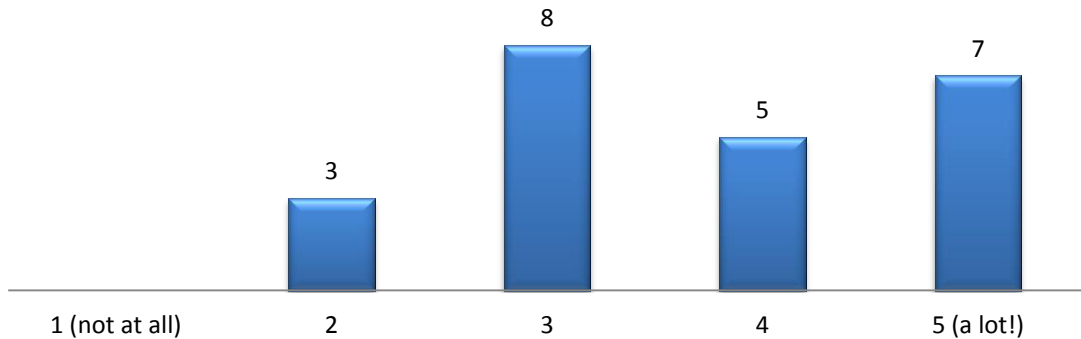
### I learnt some new things and got some good information about my wellbeing



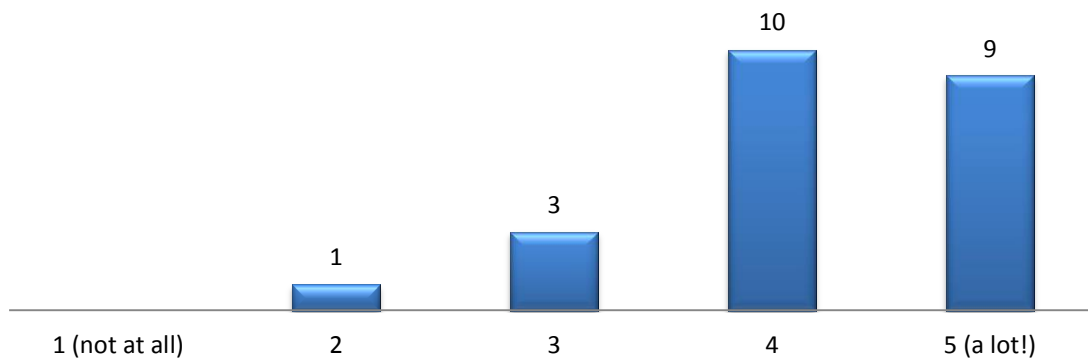
### I felt my mood was better as a result of receiving the text messages



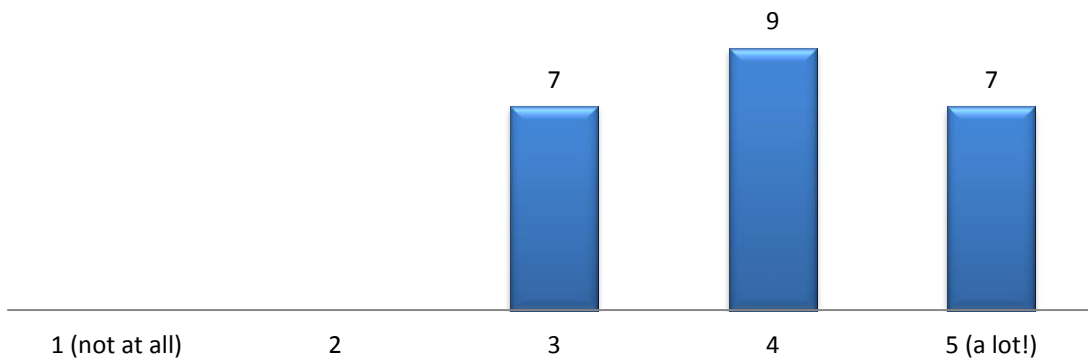
**Reach Out Rise Up helped me to understand my thoughts and feelings**



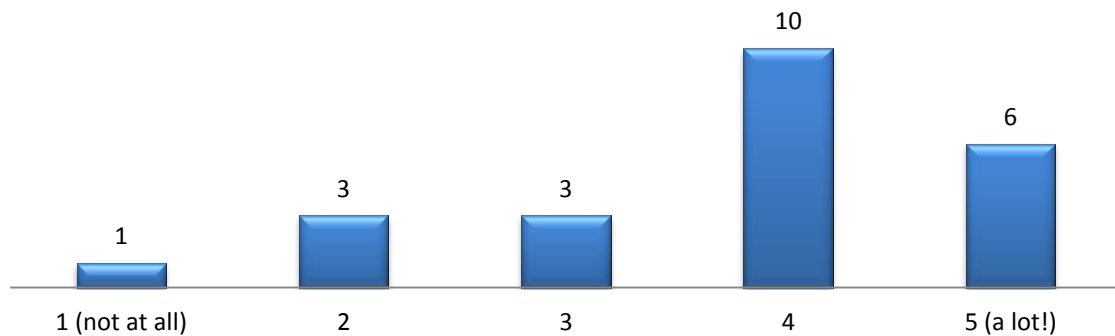
**Reach Out Rise Up helped me to focus on the positive things I was doing**



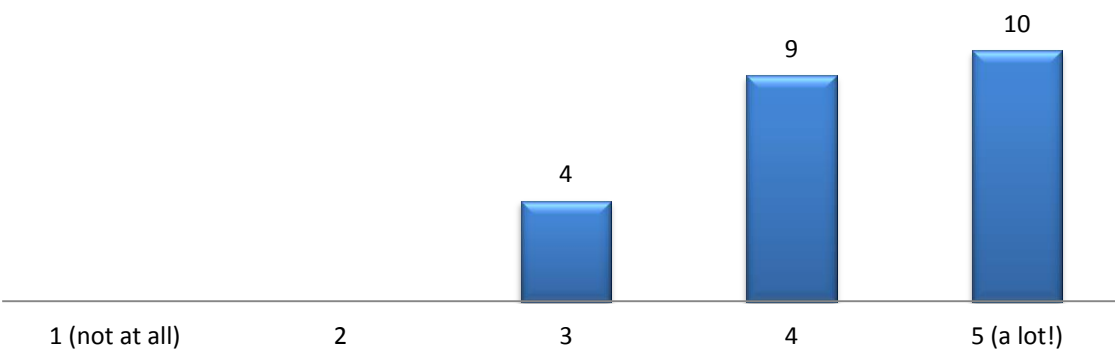
**Reach Out Rise Up encouraged me to try new things to look after myself**



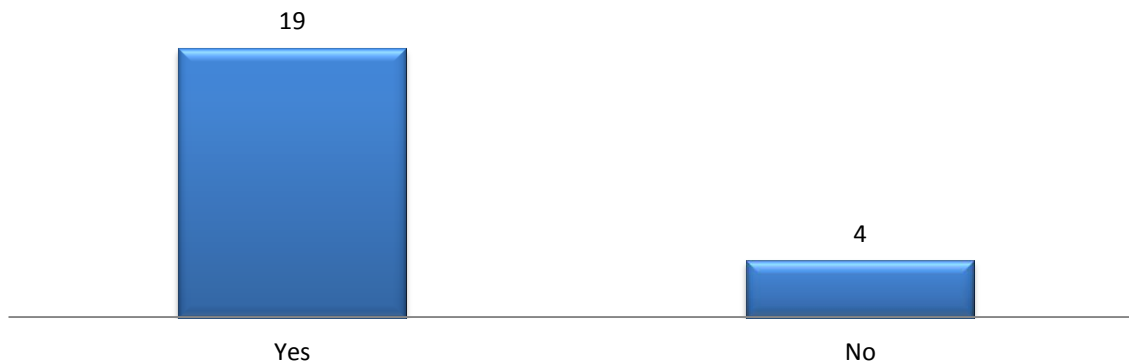
**Reach Out Rise Up helped me to think about my future and gave me tools for setting goals**



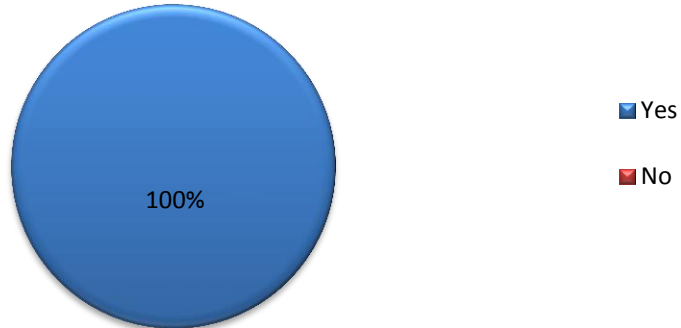
**Reach Out Rise Up was encouraging and I felt supported as a result of being a part of it**



**Did you notice changes in yourself from doing Reach Out Rise Up?**

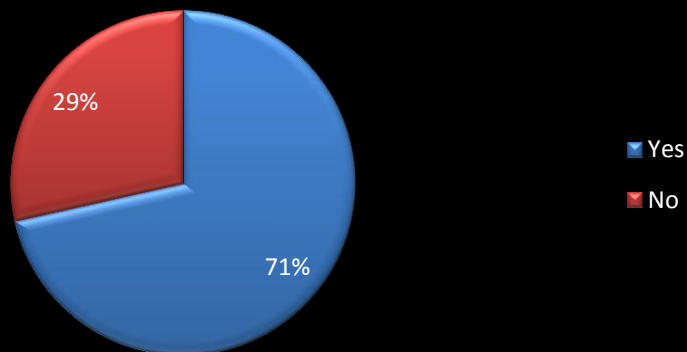


## Do you think other young people would benefit from Reach Out! Rise Up!?



## Which of the challenges did you give a go?

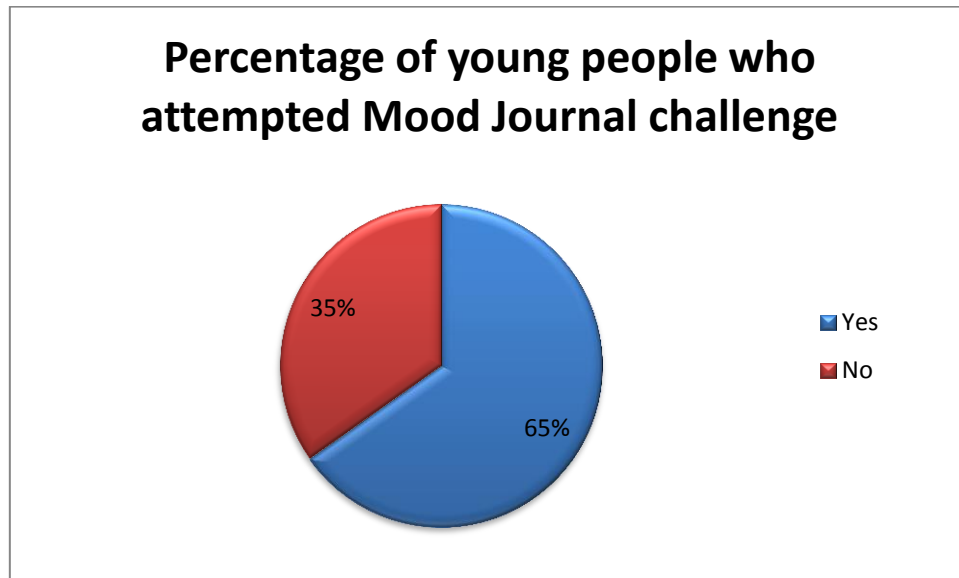
### Overall percentage of challenges attempted by all young people



Overall most young people tried most of the challenges over the course of the package regardless of whether they had a support person or not.

## Week One

**Theme:** Getting to know your moods  
**Aims:** Normalise feelings  
Impart hope for recovery  
Increase self-awareness of mood and triggers  
**Challenge:** Mood Journal



**If Yes, how useful was it? Did you notice any benefits? Would you change anything?**

- *Was nice to see it on paper. Found it helpful to get it out and not keep it inside*
- *Tried it for a week then discontinued. Motivated at the beginning then forgot about it*
- *Found it helpful, I could see I was more nervous in the mornings and before doctor appointments*
- *I noticed my mood changes and how quickly they had changed. I enjoyed trying these and noticing patterns*
- *I thought about my mood for about a week, didn't write them down but it was good to think more about them. Was too busy to write them down*
- *I spent time thinking about moods. Didn't write them down. They helped me to understand moods and feelings*
- *Useful. Put things into perspective. Easy to see where I'm at*
- *It was really good to see the change. I have good days and bad and it helped me notice patterns, notice what happens*
- *Having to do it took time. Helped me understand feelings and find connections when I had time*
- *I didn't really stick to it but when I did it was helpful*
- *It was interesting to see a pattern. Not sure if it was useful, but it was good to know*
- *I found this the most useful tool of the programme, keyed me into me and my feelings*
- *Very useful*
- *Discovered a pattern at work which could set off a bad mood. Helped me recognise patterns*
- *Sometimes when I had it on me. Useful to see changes and writing down how I was feeling*

Overall those young people who attempted the Mood journal described increased understanding of their emotional world. It assisted several young people to notice patterns in their moods.

**If No, what do you think stopped you giving this a go?**

- *Forgot to do it*
- *The time of the texts*
- *It just wasn't my thing. I might have tried it if the texts were in English. I didn't have time.*
- *Didn't have time*
- *Time was a big factor. I started work and all the messages came at once while I was finishing up and feeling rushed*
- *Too stressed with too much work. Lost journal that was given*
- *Honestly just too busy*

Overall those young people who chose not to attempt the Mood Journal challenge found time to be the biggest barrier.



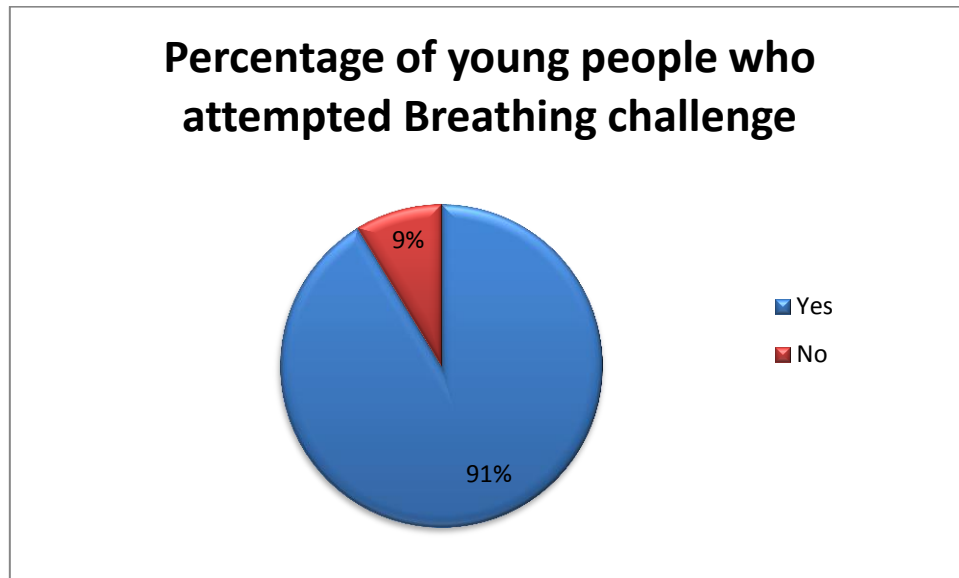
## Week Two

**Theme:** The self-care basics and breathing

**Aims:** To raise awareness of the importance of food, exercise and sleep for improving mood and encourage self-care in these areas

To encourage practicing breathing as a relaxation exercise

**Challenge:** Breathing



**If Yes, how useful was it? Did you notice any benefits? Would you change anything?**

- Found the breathing exercises helpful and used them while doing assignments to keep relaxed
- Tried it a few times. Couldn't recall the impact
- Very helpful to ease nerves
- Really useful. I use them a lot in stressful situations. They are discreet and easy to do in public. I saved this challenge on my phone so I can look back at it when needed
- I didn't do this exercise at the time but remembered it a few weeks later when I was busy and stressed and it worked to relax me
- Learnt about this at course so it wasn't new. Tried it but didn't find it that helpful
- Found this helpful. I have bad asthma so found breathing exercises helps to regulate this and calm me down
- Kind of useful, I already knew about breathing exercises so it was nothing new to me
- Very useful. Used breathing to ground myself, to reduce the adrenalin rush
- I felt more relaxed
- Didn't stick to it. Tried twice
- It was really calming, I still use it now, usually when I'm really stressed
- Helped me being able to take a minute to breath can change your whole day
- It was good to have a space each day just to be by myself, it's quite calming
- Good, breathing is helpful when panicking
- Useful, it makes you concentrate on the present
- Useful when I managed to do it because it was in high stress situations, didn't do as much as the mood journal
- Heaps of benefits, would use it more often
- Good, sometimes got panic attacks so I tried this quite a lot. Made me feel less stressed

- *Yes, very calming, breathing and trying to relax*
- *Some benefit*

Overall of all the challenges the highest percentage of young people gave this a go. This may be due to the ease of the challenge and the ability for participants to do this challenge anywhere at any time without anyone noticing. Several participants found it calming and a useful tool in stressful situations.

**If No, what do you think stopped you giving this a go?**

- *Didn't read that text. It came through at an inconvenient time and was too long.*

Only two participants did not attempt this challenge and it seems that the timing of the text was the most significant barrier for this participant in giving it a go.

## Week Three

**Theme:** Thinking mistakes and small victories

**Aims:** To raise awareness of how our thoughts influence our mood

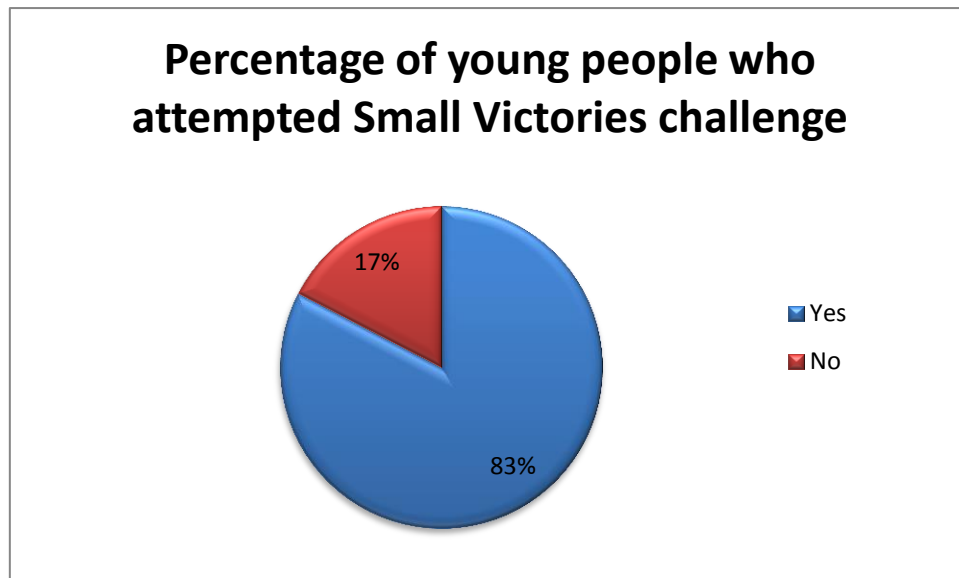
To encourage observation of thoughts

To understand common thinking mistakes of people who suffer problematic moods and anxiety

To enhance self-awareness of negative self-talk

To move focus of attention to achievements

**Challenge:** Small Victories



**If Yes, how useful was it? Did you notice any benefits? Would you change anything?**

- *Wrote them down and used them when I was feeling down to remind myself of the good stuff*
- *Good to help to realise that there are good things. Good to stop and congratulate yourself for the good things*
- *Helps to highlight my achievements even though they are small*
- *It was useful but difficult at first. I was used to seeing the world and myself as bad. I felt much better after doing it and feel grateful for positive things. I still celebrate small victories*
- *It was good to focus on the positive things*
- *I like this one. Helped to improve mood as I focussed on the good things*
- *Useful, came through at the right time. I was able to stop and think about the good things*
- *I got reminded to do it more and remembered to celebrate the little positives*
- *Made me want to achieve more. Made me happier*
- *I found this pretty good. It boosted my self-esteem, I felt better about myself*
- *Really cool. Good to notice small things to keep you going*
- *I didn't keep up with this as well but I did feel better when I did it. I should do it more*
- *Good because it shows that's it's good to focus on small good things, helps to keep positive*
- *Definitely. Good to notice achievements rather than focus on the negative*
- *Really good. Made me realise what you do and keep track of things*
- *Good, reminded me to not take things for granted and appreciate achievements, not always think 'I could have done better'*
- *Yes benefits, would use more often*

- *Funny and good, noticed things that I was pleased about*
- *Found it really good. Imagine you have a big picture but you focus on the tiny detail and it creates one big picture*

Overall the Small Victories challenge appeared to have assisted participants to notice the positive things they achieved. The effects of noticing positives in their lives had an impact on: their mood, motivation, self-esteem, and helped them to balance any negative thinking.

**If No, what do you think stopped you giving this a go?**

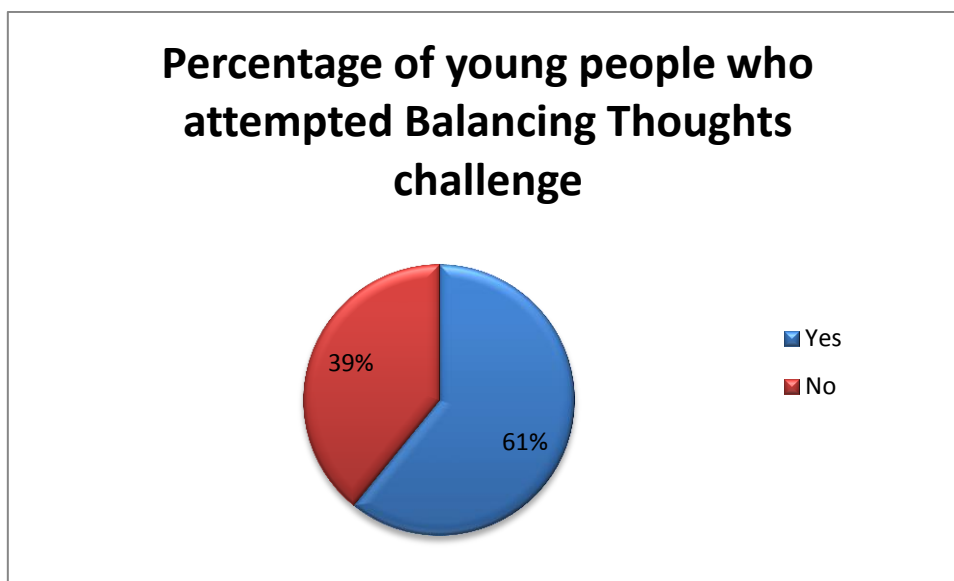
- *Forgot to do it*
- *Didn't write the down*
- *Another busy week had to stop to take the time to read back*

## Week Four

Theme: Balancing thoughts

Aims: To learn and practice thought records for balancing negative thinking

Challenge: Balancing thoughts



If Yes, how useful was it? Did you notice any benefits? Would you change anything?

- *I didn't find this helpful but it might be good to do after I go through surgery*
- *Very helpful. I wouldn't normally think of the other perspectives. Made me feel like not the whole world was bad*
- *This was good but I felt it was time consuming after reading the texts and reflecting on it.*
- *My counsellor at Marinato taught me this so it was a good refresher and reminded me. Put me in a better mood*
- *I tried it once, pretty good. Like a pros and cons list, made things less daunting*
- *It was quite good. I felt more in control and it helped me feel better about trying new things.*
- *This was good, encouraging and positive*
- *Learned this in CBT therapy. Reach Out! Rise Up! Reminded me of these tools*
- *Useful, you saw reality of situation. Not to be negative or optimistic*
- *Good, I got the hang of it quickly, would question my reactions when in a bad mood e.g. 'is this really reasonable'*
- *Very useful, more than helpful*
- *Tried it out, quite interesting*
- *A few times, tricky to do. My situation was such that this made me realise I had to change the situation*
- *Found it ok*

Overall, young people who attempted the Balancing Thoughts challenge found it quite good and two young people recognised it as a CBT tool that they had learned previously in counselling. This was one of the most complicated challenges of the package and there were some concerns by the authors that it may be too complicated to be explained over text and without support of a counsellor to assist. Two people mentioned it being time consuming or difficult and it was noted by two people as their least favourite week of the package. The authors may consider a revision of this challenge in the next version of Reach Out! Rise Up! in order to simplify the challenge.

**If No, what do you think stopped you giving this a go?**

- *Don't remember*
- *Had lots going on*
- *Too busy*
- *Forgot to do it*
- *Didn't do this because I know about it and already do it*
- *Didn't have time and didn't read the text.*
- *Time*
- *Can't remember this*

Overall time was the biggest barrier to young people attempting this challenge.

**Week Five**

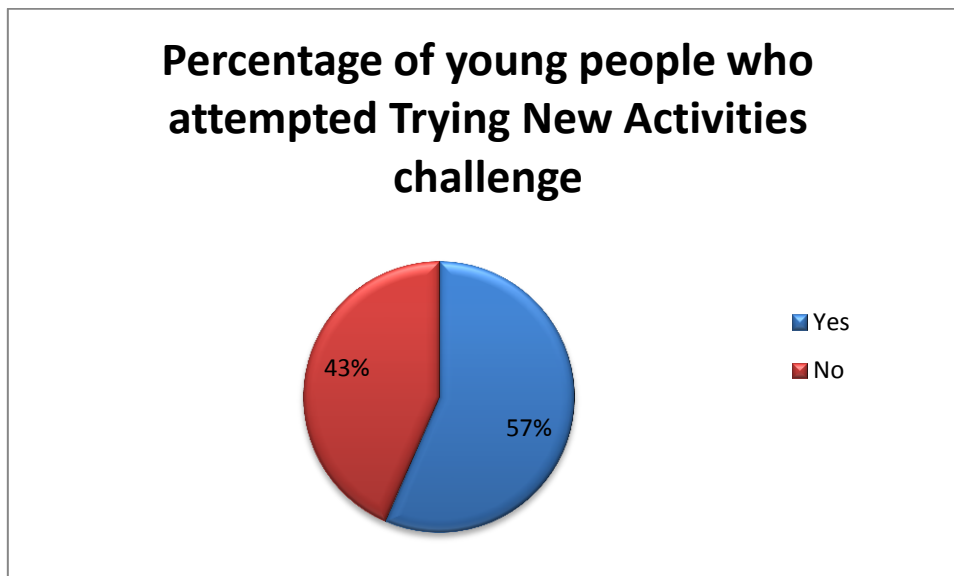
**Theme:** Avoidance and suppression

**Aims:** To learn about avoidance and suppression as coping strategies  
To increase self-awareness of coping strategies

**Challenge:** To observe self (break from formal challenges this week)

## Week Six

**Theme:** Building resilience: Trying new things and expression  
**Aims:** To encourage testing new behaviours to engage in doing things  
To encourage testing new forms of expression  
**Challenge:** Trying New Activities



**If Yes, how useful was it? Did you notice any benefits? Would you change anything?**

- *I normally find new things frightening but after trying new things had more energy*
- *I started going to youth group which was scary at first but more fun than I expected. I really enjoy it so it made me feel more confident to trying new things*
- *Loved this. Tried new things this week and enjoyed new challenges*
- *Started socialising more often, even when tired and working hard. Felt fantastic to socialise.*
- *Started talking more in class after this text*
- *I took up Karate and doing new things and keeping busy keeps my mood up. I worry less and just get myself out there!*
- *Positive experience to try new things*
- *Did this, it helped*
- *A little bit but trying more to do more of the stuff I already enjoy but put off for example doing yoga every morning*
- *Went fishing! I survived. Did something totally new, it felt super good*
- *Bits and pieces and being social. Some benefit being around friends and doing something relaxing*
- *Not too bad, met some new people and tried some new things*

Overall, the Try New Activities challenge along with the Mindfulness challenge was the least attempted challenge of the package. Those young people who did attempt the challenge seemed very enthusiastic and proud of their achievements.

**If No, what do you think stopped you giving this a go?**

- *Had lots going on*
- *Can't remember*

- *Too busy*
- *Forgot to do it*
- *I already know that it's important to try new activities*
- *I've been busy with routine stuff, no opportunity to try new stuff*
- *On my 'to do list'. Didn't feel like I had an opportunity to try new stuff*
- *Too busy*
- *Seemed too hard to do something. Not in my mind*

Overall, busyness seemed to be the biggest barrier to young people attempting this challenge.



## Week Seven

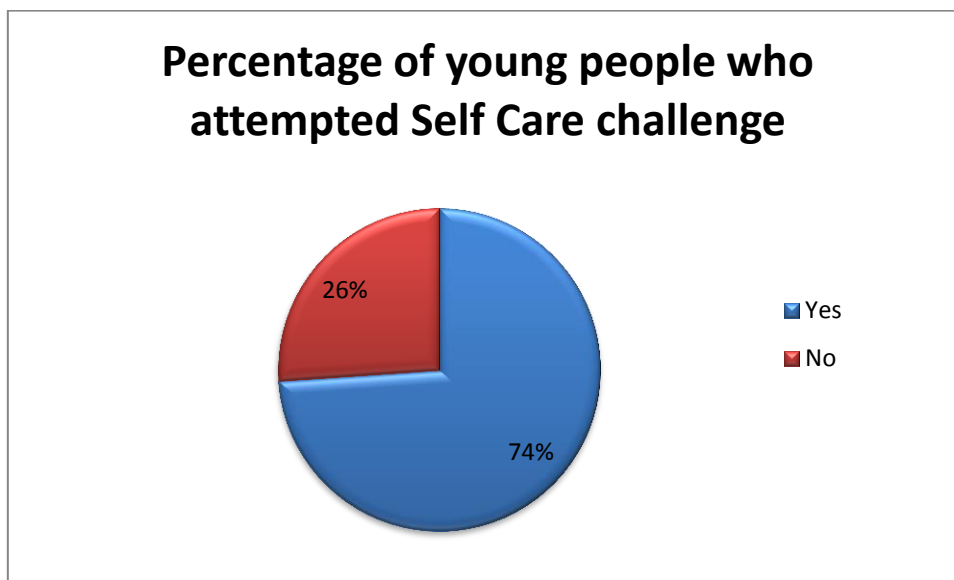
**Theme:** Coping Strategies: Self-care and mindfulness

**Aims:** To learn about self-care and mindfulness

To reinforce the importance of having many coping strategies

To encourage experimenting with new coping strategies

**Challenges:** Self-care and Mindfulness



**If Yes, how useful was it? Did you notice any benefits? Would you change anything?**

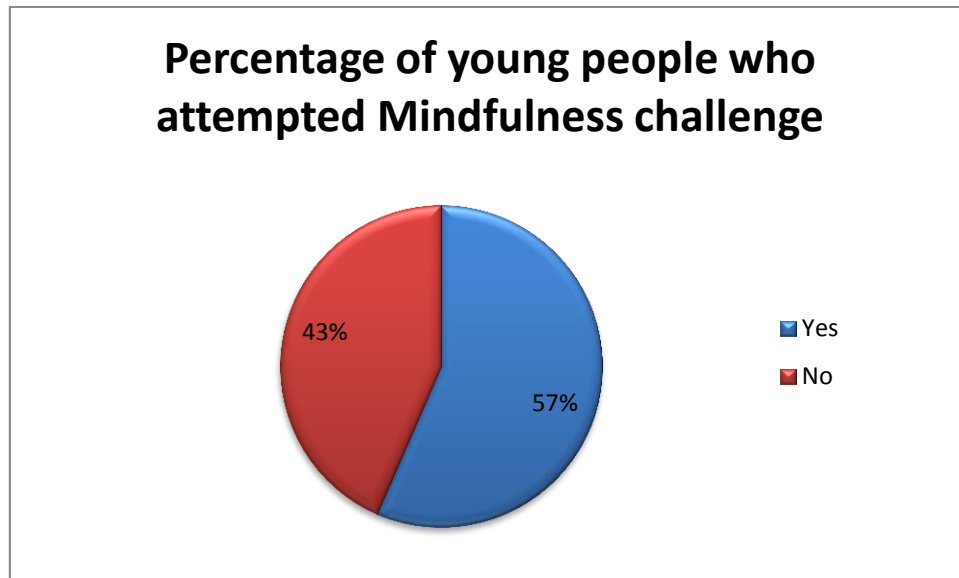
- *The self-care texts helped me to think about the importance of looking after myself*
- *Found it helpful. Applied it to everyday life. Most helpful exercise*
- *It helped me remember what I like doing. I found it useful and spent time playing with our cat*
- *Not so useful, I do self-care already and often think about looking after myself*
- *I liked this exercise; it was similar to the breathing exercise and reminded me that it is important to take time out*
- *This week I went running which helped clear my head*
- *Bought myself and iPad as a treat and didn't feel guilty*
- *Did that, it was cool*
- *I felt good when I did it but I should do it more*
- *Usually do this anyway, listening to music and talking to people. Good to take time out*
- *This was great, started going for walks*
- *Likes learning about self-care. Especially when stressed out from uni or work*
- *Already done this*
- *This came along with the trying new things, felt good doing stuff for myself, giving myself a treat*
- *Started eating fruit again after stopping after moving out of home*
- *Not too bad*

Overall, whilst a few young people commented that they already do self-care and therefore did not note any benefit, many young people described benefits from taking time to look after their self-care needs.

**If No, what do you think stopped you giving this a go?**

- *Forgot*
- *No time*
- *Didn't have time*
- *I do this stuff already*
- *Can't remember*

Overall, time and forgetting were the biggest barriers to young people attempting this challenge.



**If Yes, how useful was it? Did you notice any benefits? Would you change anything?**

- *Good distraction way to calm down. Prevented me from stressing about the future*
- *I combined this challenge with the self-care one and tried to be mindful when playing with the cat*
- *I acknowledged some negative feelings without letting them get me down. I was able to prop myself up and self soothe*
- *I'm not sure how to answer this but I felt like it did help*
- *This was good, brought me back to the present, stopped me from going to extremes with my thoughts*
- *I generally try to do this anyway but it was good to have a text reminder*
- *Tried, struggle with it as it is hard to stop and focus*
- *Really good, I use it from time to time*
- *Tried to do this on walks, taking in nature, makes me calmer.*
- *A little bit, don't remember too much, overlooked it a bit*
- *Good, wakeup call in trying not to worry about things, let life be*

Overall the Mindfulness challenge (along with the Trying New Activities) was the least attempted challenge of the package. Some young people who did attempt it noted it having a calming effect and provided a good way to distract from stressors.

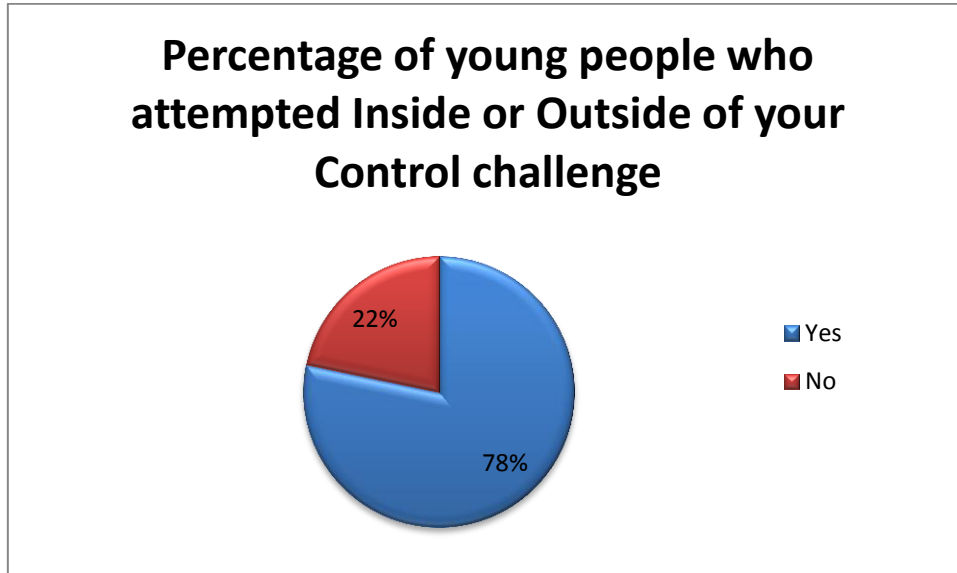
**If No, what do you think stopped you giving this a go?**

- *I didn't do it but I read the texts and thought it was cool and liked the idea of it. I'll remember it for the future.*
- *Does not find mindfulness effective for me personally. I knew about it already so didn't do this weeks' challenge.*
- *Forgot*
- *No time*
- *Couldn't be bothered, texts were hard to engage with because of language.*
- *Not sure*

Being one of the least attempted challenges and having the comment about the language in the responses to barriers to attempting this challenge warrants a review of this challenge and some consultation with young people about how to make this more engaging.

## Week Eight

**Theme:** Envisioning the future: Intro to goal setting and locus of control  
**Aims:** To learn the importance of goal setting for envisioning the future  
To differentiate between things outside and inside of personal control  
**Challenge:** Inside and Outside of your control



**If Yes, how useful was it? Did you notice any benefits? Would you change anything?**

- *Texts were helpful to identify things that were and weren't in my control. Applied this to competing in a netball tournament*
- *Helpful to see it on paper*
- *Was kind of useful. I might use this challenge after surgery*
- *I noticed I had a big list of stuff I couldn't control so I focussed on the stuff I could. Felt it made me worry less and improved how I felt*
- *Didn't read the texts this week as I was too busy*
- *Like this week as it was short and quick challenge. It was helpful to learn this*
- *I liked this exercise. It was similar to CBT work I have done in counselling in the past. Good to remember and use again*
- *I do this on a day to day basis. Nothing new*
- *Found this ok, make me feel better and calmer*
- *I don't usually worry about this anyway but it was good to read*
- *Really good. Good to see it on paper. Something's are not worth worrying about*
- *There are a lot of things outside my control I realised! I still worry a bit about those but I can focus on what I can change and that makes me feel better*
- *Helped to show what I can control and not to worry on the things I can't*
- *Made a long list, showed what I can and can't do which helps*
- *I did this in my head alongside thought balancing at the same time, it all tied together*
- *Took a lot to notice of this, made me aware of how I interpret things*
- *Quite useful, did it once in journal*
- *Good, realised I can't change what is meant to be*

Several young people who attempted this challenge seemed to find it useful writing it down and finding things that they could control was very helpful and helped them feel better.

**If No, what do you think stopped you giving this a go?**

- *Busy, too many texts*
- *Find it hard to do written exercises.*

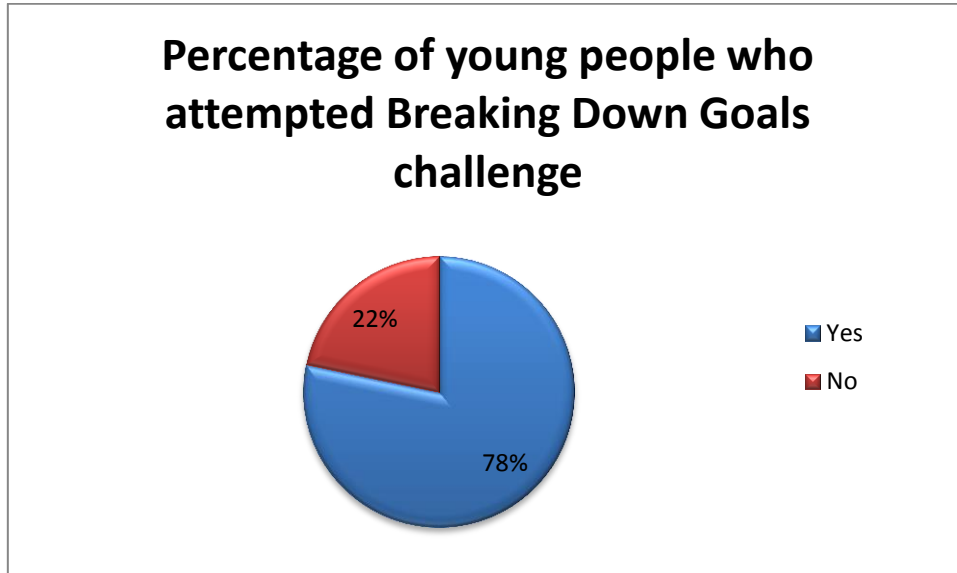
## Week Nine

**Theme:** Envisioning the future: Breaking down goals

**Aims:** To encourage goal setting

To encourage following your dreams and making steps towards them

**Challenge:** Breaking down goals



**If Yes, how useful was it? Did you notice any benefits? Would you change anything?**

- *Making smaller goals made big goals achievable*
- *Motivated me to set goals, made them more manageable*
- *Really liked this one. Good to have smaller goals to work towards*
- *Celebrating small achievements kept me motivated. Lots of people around encouraging me to make and keep goals*
- *I already know about goal setting. I'm into this, it's awesome*
- *This took more time than the other weeks. Would of liked this text to be sent over two weeks as it is important to learn about and needs more time to reflect*
- *Helped to remind me to break down goals*
- *Helpful, made big goals and broke them down*
- *I found this good, helpful for busy study*
- *Really good, made some realistic goals*
- *This was amazing! Changed my whole perspective, small goals made things so much easier, sense of achievement*
- *Uses this at school to pass NCEA level 3. Breaking down into manageable goals*
- *This was really good, make things feel more manageable*
- *Good to make little steps, already do this*
- *This was really helpful. My support person had great advice on diarising the 'due dates' for achieving the goals, kept me motivated*
- *Get my license, search for job, really useful setting little goals*
- *Good, sort of leading to where I want to be in the future*

Overall young people who attempted the Breaking Down Goals challenge seemed to find the idea of breaking down big goals into smaller achievable goals very helpful. The authors had some concerns

about this challenge as we received some feedback that young people don't like goal setting. The feedback above is not reflective of this as many noted it was motivating.

**If No, what do you think stopped you giving this a go?**

- *Forgot*
- *Don't have goals, take each day as it comes.*
- *Started a new job so was really focussed on that.*

### What was your favourite week of Reach Out! Rise Up?

- *Self-care and breathing. I found the texts helpful and good timing as I was studying and struggling with some school work*
- *Goal setting*
- *The last week, it was realistic, and set me up to carry on by myself and encouraged me to go back over the weeks and what I learnt*
- *Trying new activities and small victories*
- *All of them*
- *I didn't have one*
- *No favourite*
- *Small victories*
- *The exercising/healthy week. Over time this has been the most important or life changing for me. Lost 8kgs so far!*
- *Every week!*
- *Balancing thoughts! Realising that things aren't always crap and bad moods pass in a few days*
- *Breathing and self-care. Small things that make a difference*
- *None particularly*
- *The mood diary. I'd never taken that time before to really think about my moods. I had reminders in my phone. It really set up the whole programme*
- *Breaking down goals*
- *Trying new activities*
- *Loved the quotes*

Overall the participants were varied in their favourite week of the text package.

### What was your least favourite week of Reach Out Rise Up?

- *Can't think of anything*
- *Nothing*
- *Inside/outside control. It didn't feel relevant but might be later on*
- *Self care, I didn't learn much*
- *The one telling me to exercise more, that made me angry cause I do lots of exercise*
- *Mindfulness*
- *One of the weeks in the middle. Bit over it by that point,*
- *None jumped out*
- *Balancing thoughts was hard but good. It was just difficult to face emotions*
- *Not at all*
- *I didn't have one!*
- *None, more affected by own moods/motivation than the text content*
- *Trying new activities*
- *Balancing thoughts*
- *Nothing*
- *Not really*

Overall the least favourite week was varied for participants and several people did not have a least favourite week.



**What did you think about the timing of the messages? Would you have preferred something different?**

- *Afternoon is best. Especially after a day at school which could have been stressful*
- *Happy with anytime*
- *Would be better to get them in the morning at about 8am when I am more nervous*
- *I liked the timing*
- *I'd prefer them to be later. When they came through I was always busy and could not read them at the time. 6 or 7pm would be better*
- *Prefer to receive texts fortnightly to have more time to practice challenge and reflect on messages. I would prefer fewer texts there were too many to read through. I was in class when they would get sent so not good timing*
- *Would have done the challenges if the texts were sent later*
- *Terrible timing, I was still at work and it was unprofessional getting texts beeping on my phone in front of customers. 7pm would work best when you're at home*
- *They weren't consistent, a bit all over the place. Would have preferred morning texts Monday and Tuesday but Friday avo was good*
- *Would have preferred 5pm or later when at home*
- *I would prefer 5pm when work is over*
- *Timing was fine*
- *Good timing*
- *Timing was good, right after school, some days it would have been nice if they arrived when I felt bad*
- *4pm is good, after school*
- *May have been better on weekends or a bit later in the evening around 6.30pm*
- *4pm is a good time. Consistency is key*
- *Fine*
- *Would have preferred 7-8pm when home, actually having time to read them*
- *Timing was perfect, just finished studying*
- *Pretty cool, afternoon break at work*
- *Good timing for me, sometimes quite a lot of texts*
- *Not too bad, quotes would be nice in the morning*

In accordance with the above feedback we would like to be able to offer young people a choice of time that the texts come through. For young people at school 4pm was a good time however working young people found the timing inconvenient. Currently our text system requires us to manually calendar times and send the texts. We would like to look into developing our system or sourcing a system that could manage these automatically.

**Did you find the language used in the texts? Would you have preferred it to be full wording or any other suggestions?**

- *Found text language formal. Would prefer more teenage language e.g. 'whats up!'*
- *Occasionally found it funny with text slang. Didn't mind the informal style*
- *Was too generic and automated. Would of wanted more personalised texts from someone knowing what I'm going through*
- *Thought it was fine*
- *Found this really annoying. The texts were childish and this was confusing because the content*

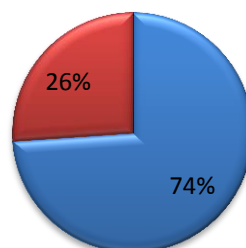
*isn't childish*

- *Would prefer the full wording. Found the texts hard to read*
- *Would prefer full wording, found texts hard to read*
- *Full wording essential, I felt that it was aimed too young and felt patronising*
- *Didn't mind*
- *This was fine, I found it easier*
- *Too much at once, overwhelming slang was fine*
- *Worked, no worried here.*
- *I would have preferred formal language but it was fine in text speak too.*
- *Would have preferred full wording*
- *Would have preferred full wording because I am a grammar nut! But it was easy to understand*
- *Took a bit to get used to. OK*
- *Would have preferred full wording rather than text slang*
- *I would have much preferred full wording and all in one text*
- *It was ok*
- *Fine, not bothered*
- *Liked the language used, liked the little quotes*
- *Good, not too slang*

In accordance with the above feedback in the future we would like to be able to have a few different versions of the text package for young people to choose from. For example we would send them a sample or they would see examples of the texts on our website and choose which style of language they prefer. It seems that older young people did not like the condensed language. We condensed a lot of the language not only for youth friendliness but because we wanted to make the texts as short as possible and to send fewer texts. Because some young people have older phones (i.e. not smart phones) we needed to make sure all texts were 160 characters or less otherwise they would come through scrambled on older phones. We hope that in the future the young person can let us know if they have a smart phone and we can send them a single text rather than multiple texts. Personalising all the texts would require a lot more manual input and resources therefore we would not likely change this aspect as Youthline already offers individualised texting through our text counselling service via the helpline.

**Did you have a support person (family or trusted friend) who knew you were doing Reach Out! Rise Up!?**

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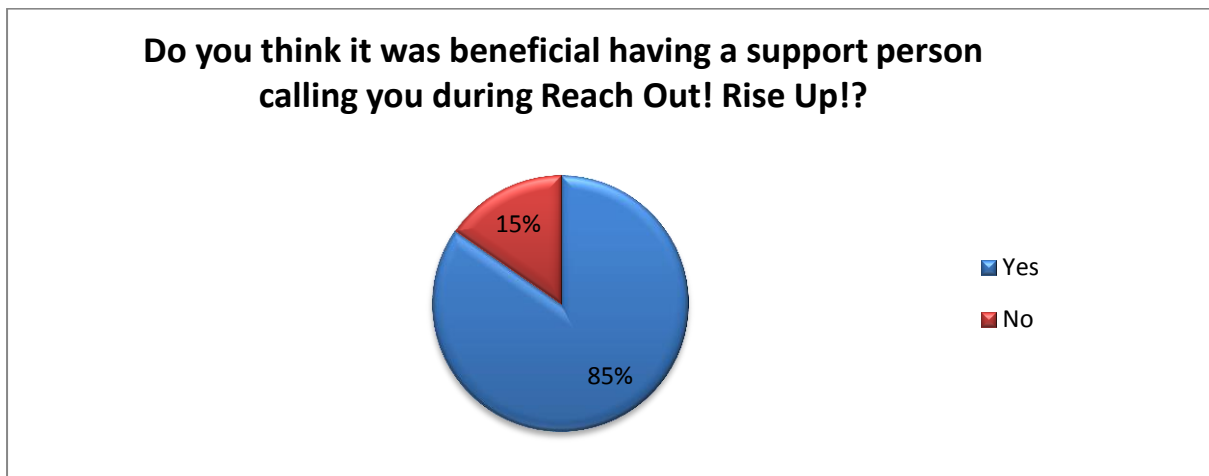


■ Yes  
■ No

**If Yes, did you find it helpful to have someone alongside you who knew you were doing Reach Out Rise Up? It what ways was this helpful?**

- *Yes, was able to talk to dad about texts and he was able to listen and provide help*
- *My youth pastor supported me and I read him the texts each week. He encouraged me to stay motivated and give things a go*
- *Didn't make a difference for me personally*
- *No one helped but they knew about it*
- *Made no difference*
- *Good to have someone remind me about it and show interest*
- *Was really good, she listened to what I was doing this week, encouraged me and keep me motivated*
- *I didn't tell them much*
- *Kept me motivated and feeling supported*
- *No difference*
- *Knew I was doing it but not really 'supportive'*
- *Not too much input but supportive along the way*
- *Asked how it was going, knowing someone was there*
- *Knowing they have my back, shared messages with them*

**For supported young people only**



**What was good about having a support person?**

- *Nice knowing to get call every week. Consistent support. Felt reassured and helped through the process*
- *Was good to have someone to talk to. She aided the texts, I might not have read them otherwise*
- *My support person was cool. Friendly and sounded pretty. She motivated and encouraged me*
- *Having someone to talk to. Felt it was a trusted relationship*
- *Good, she as bubbly*
- *She was awesome. She asked things in a good way, not invasive, made things comfortable.*
- *Being able to talk to someone positive affirmations from her*
- *Good to know someone was there to explain. Provided a 'face' to the texts*

- *To go over the challenges and ways to apply them in life*
- *It was really cool talking to my support person. She had a great personality and great advice*
- *I didn't feel pressured to say anything which was good*

The majority of supported young people were very positive about the support they received. Some of the support was inconsistent and one young person only received one phone call. In the analysis between supported and unsupported this person was counted as unsupported. Due to their being no statistically significant difference in effectiveness for supported or unsupported young people we do not see the support person as a necessary requirement for young people to participate in the text package if we were to roll it out further. The positive feedback however warrants an option for support and Youthline's volunteer helpline counsellors with some CBT and mentoring training would be well placed to provide this support. Feedback from the supporters themselves was extremely positive, many finding the experience very fulfilling. They enjoyed the continuity of the mentoring relationship as different from the helpline experience.

#### **What was not so good about having a support person?**

- *Nothing, but sometimes feel anxious talking on the phone*
- *Sometimes I would get a call when I was in a down mood and didn't want to talk*
- *I was all good so didn't need the support person to call me*
- *Nothing*
- *More calls in the week*
- *Too busy, would have preferred if they texted*
- *It was sometimes tough taking the extra time out from the day*
- *One call then didn't receive any more calls*

#### **Narrative stories**

##### **Young person 1:**

A 22 young woman joined the text package wanting to get some help managing her anxiety and had seven supporter phone calls over the 10 weeks. This young person was a very hard worker juggling both volunteer work and study and had recently got married. She utilised the text package from the outset finding the mood journal to be one of the most useful things she did, week after week gaining insights into her mood and triggers. She described this as providing her with a better sense of 'who I am' and feeling more present to herself. She was able to see that whilst she had focussed on when she wasn't feeling so good that actually she felt 'serene' a lot of the time and hadn't even noticed! She was really proactive with the challenges, even putting tasks and alarms on her phone to remind her to keep it up! She began focussing on her self-care which really helped her to balance her busy life. On the last call with her supporter the young person revealed 'I feel in such a better place than when I started the programme and not feeling crazy' in addition she said 'it has been an absolute pleasure, you are a beautiful person and go and help someone else'. Both the supporter and the young person had a wonderful experience!

##### **Young person 2:**

A young 15 year old woman joined the text package experiencing multiple difficulties at school and at home when she signed up. Despite these multiple challenges according to the young person she really engaged with the text package giving nearly every challenge a go and speaking very highly of how the package helped her to feel supported. She worked very hard at resourcing herself and doing the best she could over the time she received the package and stretched herself through the challenges. The young person described how she had been able to focus on the things inside her

control and as a result her mood had improved from not worrying about things she couldn't change. She also started celebrating her achievements which she described as changing her thinking from always being focussed on the 'bad' things happening to recognising the positive.

## **Conclusion**

Youthline are very pleased with the results of the pilot and believe that many young people could benefit from a roll out of the text package nationwide. Additional support for an upgrade from the current manual system for sending messages will assist to reduce the staff resources required to send the messages. Support for training for volunteers and additional resource for screening and assessment for the intake team will mean that we can offer young people the option of having a support person alongside them as well as ensuring that young people who sign up are monitored pre and post ongoing (to monitor the packages effectiveness), given appropriate support and intervention and continue to provide feedback for improving the text package through evaluation.