From Fight, Flight or Freeze to Self-regulated Wellbeing

A Minor Qualitative Study on Exploring the Perceived Health Impact of Inner Engineering in India.

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Preface

Navigating today's complex world requires more than external solutions. It calls for inner stability, clarity and resilience. As global mental health concerns continue to rise, the demand for low-threshold, sustainable approaches to well-being grows increasingly urgent. This study was born from a desire to understand how individuals cultivate emotional and mental resilience through accessible practices, and how such efforts can align with broader principles of health promotion.

By examining the lived experiences of participants in the Inner Engineering program, this research offers insight into the personal and transformative dimensions of well-being. It aims to contribute to both scholarly conversations and practical applications in health promotion, supporting professionals and individuals alike in developing the internal resources needed to meet life's challenges with steadiness and strength.

I am deeply grateful to all who have contributed to this work in various ways. Your input, support and presence have been invaluable to its completion.

Katarina

Abstrakt

Introduktion: Mental och emotionell resiliens, känsla av sammanhang och egenmakt är centrala för både psykisk och fysisk hälsa. Dessa förmågor stärker individens kapacitet att hantera stress, fatta hälsosamma beslut och navigera livets utmaningar. Denna kvalitativa studie undersöker hur personer som praktiserar Inner Engineering, ett program som integrerar äldre yogiska metoder och strategier för självreglering, uppfattar programmets roll i att stärka dessa förmågor.

Metod: Individuella intervjuer genomfördes med nio personer som praktiserar Inner Engineering, varav fem även är erfarna ledare av Inner Engineering -programmet vid Isha Yoga Center i Coimbatore, Indien. Materialet spelades in, transkriberades och analyserades med hjälp av manifest innehållsanalys, där fokus låg på deltagarnas uttryckta upplevelser utan tolkning av underliggande mening.

Resultat: En övergripande huvudkategori, *Självreglerande välbefinnande genom Inner Engineering,* framkom tillsammans med fem kärnkategorier. Deltagarna rapporterade upplevda förbättringar inom vitalitet, emotionell reglering och interpersonella relationer.

Begränsningar: Studien genomfördes i en ashram-kontext, med en relativt homogen och liten grupp av erfarna praktiker. Avsaknaden av baslinjemått eller longitudinella data begränsar generaliserbarheten och möjligheten att dra kausala tolkningar av resultaten. Ytterligare forskning i mer diversifierade populationer och sekulära sammanhang rekommenderas.

Slutsats: Emotionell resiliens framträdde som en central kategori i denna studie och speglar deltagarnas självupplevda förändring från stress-reaktiva mönster (kamp, flykt eller frys/ handlingsförlamning) till självreglerat välbefinnande genom en daglig kontemplativ praktik. Resultaten belyser potentialen i strukturerade metoder för inre utveckling, -som medveten-närvaro-övningar och självreflektion, för att främja mental och emotionell resiliens, empowerment (egenmakt) och övergripande välbefinnande. Insikter som kan vara särskilt relevanta inom hälsopromotion och stresshantering.

Nyckelord: common sense, self-efficacy, emotional resilience, empowerment, sense of coherence, om-chanting,

Abstract

Introduction: Mental and emotional resilience, sense of coherence and empowerment are central to mental and physical health. These capacities support individual's ability to manage stress, make healthy choices and effectively navigate challenges. This qualitative study explores how practitioners of Inner Engineering, a program integrating yogic practices and self-regulation strategies, perceive the program's role in enhancing these capabilities.
Methodology: Individual interviews were conducted with four pilot participants and five experienced Inner Engineering facilitators at the Isha Yoga Center in Coimbatore, India. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded and categorized using manifest content analysis.
Results: One overarching category, *Self-regulated well-being through Inner Engineering*, emerged, along with five core categories. Participants described perceived improvements in vitality, emotional regulation and relational awareness.
Limitations: The study was conducted in an ashram setting, with a relatively small and homogenous group of experienced practitioners. The absence of baseline or longitudinal measures limits generalizability of findings and the ability to draw causal conclusions. Further research across more diverse populations and secular contexts is recommended.
Conclusion: Emotional resilience stands out as a central category in this study, reflecting a perceived shift from stress-reactive patterns (fight, flight or freeze) toward self-regulated well-being through consistent contemplative practice.The findings suggests that structured, techniques such as meditation and self-reflection, may support mental and emotional resilience, empowerment and overall well-being. These insights may be of relevance to health promotion and stress management initiatives.

Key words: common sense, self-efficacy, emotional resilience, empowerment, sense of coherence, om-chanting,

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Glossary

Ashram A spiritual residential center where yogic practices are taught and lived. In this study, the setting was the Isha Yoga Center in Tamil Nadu, India.

Inner Engineering A structured program offered by the Isha Foundation that combines yogic tools and inner exploration techniques to promote personal transformation, balance and health (Isha, 2022).

Maa Female spiritual teacher or authority

Sadhguru The founder of the Isha Foundation and Inner Engineering program. An Indian yogi, mystic and author known for integrating ancient yogic knowledge with contemporary life.

Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya A 21-minute central yogic breathing and meditation practice taught in the Inner Engineering program. It is said to balance energy and support mental clarity, emotional stability and physical well-being. A tool for managing stress and enhancing mental and physical health (Peterson et al., 2017; Sadhavisam et al., 2020; Sadhguru, 2021).

1. Introduction

1.1. Social Determinants of Health

Social Determinants of Health encompass the social and environmental conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024). These include factors such as education, employment and income, which together shape an individual's socioeconomic status. These determinants play a critical role in influencing health outcomes, contributing significantly to both well-being and the risk of disease. Appendix [1] Social Determinants of Health Chart.

1.2. Health Promotion and Well-being

Health is a fundamental human right (Ottawa charter, 1986). Health is defined by the WHO (1986) as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease.

"Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health." (WHO - Health Promotion Glossary, 2021).

Health promotion therefore emphasizes empowering individuals to control their own health by leveraging both personal and social resources. This perspective resonates with Antonovsky's (1991) salutogenic model, which highlights the importance of identifying and strengthening factors that support well-being and resilience, rather than focusing solely on illness. Central to this model is the concept of Sense of Coherence (SOC), which consists of *comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness*, key components that support individuals in navigating challenges (Antonovsky, 1991).

A health promoter plays a central role in translating health promotion principles into practice by providing support and guidance that strengthens individuals' capacity for self-regulation and healthy decision-making in daily life (WHO, n.d). Through methods such as motivational interviewing, stress management and strategic problem-solving, the health counsellor contributes to enhancing individuals' sense of control and meaningfulness in their health journey (WHO, n.d). This reflects the concept of empowerment, where active participation and resource management by the individual are crucial for long-term health and well-being (WHO,1986; Zimmerman, 2000).

1.3. SDG's & Health Equity

Most recently, the 9th Global Conference on Health Promotion in Shanghai, titled "*Promoting Health in the Sustainable Development Goals: Health for All and All for Health*," emphasized the vital connections between health promotion and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (WHO, 2016). While advocating for bold political actions to accelerate national progress toward the SDGs, the Shanghai Declaration offers a strategic framework that empowers governments to leverage the transformative potential of health promotion (WHO, 2016).

This study provides practical insights into how individual behaviour change and relational awareness can foster health, equality and sustainability, by aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3: Good Health and well-being, 5: Gender Equality 12: Responsible Consumption and Production and 13: Climate Action (WHO, 2015).

Health promotion also includes the advancement of health equity where everyone should have the same opportunities to achieve good health, regardless of their background or life circumstances (WHO, 1986). Health and health equity are shaped by the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, play and age (WHO, 2021). In this way, health promotion supports both individual and societal well-being, aligning with international efforts to improve mental health and reduce inequalities. The foundation for achieving equity includes knowledge, monitoring and analysis (WHO, 2021).

1.4. Well-being

Central to well-being is mental health, which involves psychological resilience, emotional regulation and the ability to cope with life's challenges (Meneefe et al., 2022). As outlined in Self-Determination Theory [SDT] (Ryan & Deci, 2000), well-being stems from fulfilling three basic psychological needs: *autonomy, competence and relatedness* -which promote self-motivation and psychological health when satisfied. True well-being goes beyond physical health or absence of illness, but the ability to feel capable and connected in everyday life. Self-Determination Theory explores the dynamic interaction between external influences and the intrinsic motives and psychological needs that drive human behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Achieving optimal psychological functioning requires continuous personal development, with the capacity to adapt, evolve and grow being essential to long-term

well-being (Ryff & Singer, 1996). Ryff and Singer (2008) describe six key dimensions of well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth.

1.5. Empowerment

Empowerment is a key concept in public health, emphasizing the importance of self-efficacy from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) 1977, and agency in health-related decision-making (Wallerstein, 2006). Julian Rappaport (1987) defines empowerment as a process: "the mechanism by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their lives."

Empowerment is closely linked to self-efficacy, with the distinction that empowerment is influenced by interpersonal relationships and the surrounding society, whereas self-efficacy pertains to an individual's belief in their ability to perform specific actions and implement behavioral changes (Streetman et al., 2023). Streetman et al. (2023) argue that a sense of empowerment in one context can be transferable to other environments.

Zimmerman's (2000) Empowerment framework distinguishes between personal empowerment, where individuals gain control over their lives and community empowerment, which involves collective action for structural change. This perspective shifts the focus from simply measuring mental health outcomes to understanding how individuals experience and exercise control over their psychological and emotional states (Zimmerman, 2000).

1.6. Emotional Resilience

Emotional resilience refers to an individual's ability to navigate adversity and recover from setbacks (Pahwa & Khan, 2022). Resilience includes both mental and psychological dimensions, encompassing the capacity to manage stress, maintain emotional balance and adapt constructively in challenging circumstances (Southwick et al., 2014). Mental dimension: thinking, memory, focus, perception, decision-making and problem-solving. Psychological dimension: how we feel, process emotions, relate to others, and perceive ourselves and the world (Southwick et al., 2014). Given its close connection to emotional regulation and self-leadership, resilience has become a core concept in health promotion and preventive mental health work (WHO, 2013). Emotional resilience relies on a strong sense of

self-awareness, effective self-regulation and a range of other psychological strengths (Pahwa & Khan, 2022) See Appendix [2] Emotional Resilience Chart.

Resilience refers to the ability of a complex, dynamic system to adapt to significant challenges or threats in a way that sustains or strengthens its life, healthy functioning and future growth (Masten et al., 2024). In essence, resilience is the ability to withstand adversities (Pahwa & Khan, 2022).

However, factors such as chronic stress, burnout, limited social support and negative thought patterns can significantly undermine emotional resilience (Pahwa & Khan, 2022).

1.7. Mindfulness Improving Mental and Physiological Health

According to WHO (2019) an estimated 970 million people globally were living with a mental disorder, with anxiety and depression, the most common. During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global prevalence of these conditions increased by a massive 25% (WHO, 2022). Depression causes a greater burden of disease than many physical illnesses, affecting one in four people at some point in their lives (WHO, 2023). Depression can affect anyone, but those who have experienced abuse, severe losses or other stressful events are at higher risk. Women are more likely to experience depression than men (WHO, 2023).

Mental health challenges often result in significant personal distress and can disrupt relationships, education, work and social engagement (Meghrajani et al., 2023). The burden of mental health issues on individuals, families and society is substantial, leading to reduced quality of life, impaired daily functioning and contributing to major social and economic costs (Agboola et al., 2018; Meghrajani et al., 2023). Cultural stigma, divergent views on mental illness and uneven access to care continue to complicate mental health support globally (Meghrajani et al., 2023). In this context, non-medical approaches such as mindfulness and meditation are increasingly recognized as valuable compliments to conventional mental health strategies (Meghrajani et al., 2023).

Mindfulness-based practices are increasingly recognized for their capacity to strengthen mental and emotional resilience as well as empowerment, by providing individuals tools for self-regulation and adaptive coping (Schuman-Olivier et al., 2020; Zimmermann, 2000).

Kabat-Zinn's pioneering work in mindfulness emphasizing present-moment awareness and self-regulation, remains foundational and continues to inform contemporary interventions (Kabat Zinn, 2025). Closely related, positive psychology serves as an umbrella for the scientific study of factors that contribute to human flourishing, such as positive emotions, meaning, engagement, and close relationships (Park et al., 2014).

Daily stressors are known to induce pathological arousal and sustained activation of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, contributing to psychological and physiological strain (Herman et al., 2016). See Appendix [3] The Stress Response System.

Given their growing relevance, this study explores how such practices, particularly as taught in the Inner Engineering program, are perceived to impact mental well-being in everyday life.

1.8. Inner Engineering

According to Isha (2022) Inner Engineering, developed by Sadhguru, is engineered to empower individuals to optimize their mental, emotional and physical health. The ashram program unfolds over four days.

The online program unfolds over seven progressive steps:

1. **Sessions with Sadhguru:** Participants engage with recordings exploring the fundamental mechanics of life, paired with a 13-minute meditative practice aimed at cultivating self-empowerment.

2. **Introduction to Isha Kriya:** This guided meditation practice fosters mental clarity and emotional balance. Includes focused breathing.

3. **Arm and Neck Practices:** These physical exercises are complemented by Sadhguru's teachings on living fully and the process of personal transformation.

4. **Yoga Namaskar & Ardhasiddhasana:** Participants learn specific yogic postures alongside reflections on the nature of the self, emphasizing the insight that "You Are Not What You Think."

5. **Body and Mind Awareness:** This step deepens understanding of the body as nourishment, the mind as a powerful tool and the ongoing journey of self-empowerment.

6. **Sounds of Creation:** Introducing meditations such as Kalpavrisha and the potential of Shambhavi Kriya, this phase focuses on manifesting desired outcomes through sound and energy. AUM-chanting.

7. **Live Weekend Session:** The culmination is an in-person intensive where participants practice the Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya, an advanced meditation technique designed to harmonize body, mind and energy. Four hours on a Saturday and eight on a Sunday.

While quantitative studies have demonstrated the programs potential in reducing stress, mitigating burnout and enhancing mindfulness (Chang et al., 2022; Upadhyay et al., 2022; Sadhasivam et al., 2020), there remains limited qualitative insight into how participants, subjectively experience its transformative effects.

2. Rationale

The global rise in stress-related challenges highlights the urgent need for non-clinical interventions that foster empowerment, mental and emotional resilience. Emotional well-being can be significantly compromised by factors such as chronic stress, burnout, limited social support and persistent negative thinking. While several quantitative studies have examined the outcomes of Inner Engineering, there is limited qualitative research exploring how these practices are subjectively experienced, particularly from the perspective of participants. This study aims to address that gap by offering experience-based insights into how individuals internalize and apply self-regulation techniques through the program by exploring how it may support emotional resilience and well-being, offering insights for global health promotion practices.

3. Purpose

This study aimed to explore the subjective experiences of Inner Engineering practitioners, focusing on how traditional mindfulness-based practices foster mental and emotional resilience and empowerment within the context of health promotion.

4. Methodology

This qualitative study originated as a small-scale research project developed within the framework of a Minor Field Study (MFS), funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through The International Office at Lulea University of Technology. It later evolved into the author's final degree project within the Health Promotion program. The study employed semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of Inner Engineering practitioners at the Isha Foundation in Coimbatore, India. This approach provided a balance between consistency and flexibility, enabling the researcher to maintain a coherent line of inquiry while allowing for in-depth exploration of each participant's unique perspective (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

4.1. Pilot Testing

Four women who had completed the Inner Engineering program, and were staying at the Isha Foundation where they also continued to engage in the Inner Engineering practices, were approached in person and informed about the study's purpose. After receiving verbal and written information, they voluntarily consented to participate and were interviewed on site. The participants, aged between 48 and 73, had two to seven years of experience of practicing Inner Engineering. Initially, these interviews were conducted as pilot interviews to test the feasibility of the research approach and refine the interview guide. However, due to their depth and strong thematic relevance, they were later included in the main dataset. Their alignment with the responses from participants recruited through formal purposive sampling, reinforced the credibility and consistency of emerging categories (Shakir & Rahman, 2022). Since no substantial changes to the interview protocol were made following the pilot phase, and informed consent had been obtained for research use, their inclusion in the final analysis was deemed both methodologically sound and ethically appropriate. This approach aligns with established qualitative research practices where pilot interviews may serve dual purposes, both exploratory and analytical, when conducted under consistent methodological conditions (Shakir & Rahman, 2022; van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002).

4.2. Purposive Sampling

Following the pilot interviews, purposive sampling was used to recruit five additional participants. Practicing Inner Engineering facilitators were intentionally selected for their extensive experiential knowledge. Recruitment was supported by a senior Maa at the Isha Foundation, who acted as a gatekeeper, and referred eligible individuals based on their

experience and relevance to the study aim. This sampling strategy ensured that participants possessed rich, practice-based insight, allowing for in-depth exploration of subjective experiences rather than statistical generalization (Campbell et al., 2020; Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Purposive sampling is particularly suited to qualitative research that focuses on subjective experiences and social dynamics (Moser & Korstjens, 2017).

4.3. Sample of Participants

A total of nine participants were included in the study, aligning with and extending the target sample outlined in the initial project proposal (PM) submitted to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through Lulea University of Technology's international office.

Practitioners ages ranged between 32 and 73 years (M = 50), with 2 to 25 years of experience of Inner Engineering. The sample consisted of two men and seven women with roots in the Middle East, Europe, Southern-Africa, South Asia and Latin America.This information-rich sample aligns with the goals of qualitative research by emphasizing depth over breadth (Campbell et al., 2020). The interviews revealed consistent themes across participants, with only individual variations in personal stories. One facilitator was unable to complete the final part of the interview due to a persistent cough. However, the majority of key questions had already been addressed, and the data were included in the analysis.

4.4. Setting

All interviews were conducted between 5-11 February 2025, on-site at the large ashram complex surrounded by nature. The environment was highly structured and immersive, with activities beginning before dawn and continuing into the late evening. The selected interview locations were situated within a quieter compound inside the main ashram grounds, providing a focused and largely interruption-free environment. Except for three interviews that took place close to welcome point administrative spaces, sitting on the stone floor, or a bench close to one of the ashram's schools.

4.5. Conducting the Interviews

A semi-structured interview guide, featuring both open- and a few closed-ended questions, facilitated a flexible, systematic exploration of participants' experiences. All interviews were audio-recorded using an iPhone with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy (Graneheim & Lundman, 2007). To obtain quality data, the interviews unfolded with iterative interactions between the interviewer and interviewees (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Each interview lasted between 25 and 75 minutes. Field notes were also taken to document contextual details. Appendix [4]: Summary of Field notes. Data saturation was reached, as no new analytical insights emerged and the material provided sufficient information on the studied phenomenon (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Complete list of interview questions. Appendix [5]: Interview Questions.

4.6. Data Processing and Analysis

A manifest content analysis was conducted to remain close to the participants' actual words, without interpreting underlying meanings (Aronson, 2023; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; 2017). The analysis followed these steps:

- **Familiarization**: Recordings and all transcripts were listened to and read several times to gain a sense of the whole.
- **Meaning units**: Sentences or phrases relevant to the research aim were identified as meaning-bearing units.
- **Condensation and coding**: Each meaning unit was condensed and assigned a code that captured its core message.
- **Categorization**: Codes with similar manifest content were initially grouped into subcategories under broader core categories. As the analysis progressed the subcategories were removed, and the content was synthesized and presented within the final five core categories. This allowed for a more streamlined structure while retaining the core meaning of the manifest content.

4.7. Researcher's Position and Reflexivity

The researcher acknowledges academic supervisor Jimmy Ingemansson, former director of the Health Promotion Program and current PhD student, for his feedback during the development of the research design and theoretical framework. The researcher acknowledges

Anitha Risberg, Doctor of Medicine in Physiology, PhD, Senior Lecturer, and recognized teacher in the Health Guidance Program, whose extensive research experience and ongoing involvement in multiple projects have been valuable in the decision to include the integration of pilot interviews and other methodological decisions. Transparency about these supervisory relationships contributes to maintaining reflexivity in qualitative research (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; 2017)

The researchers international experience, having previously lived in Saudi Arabia, India, England, Finland, Italy and the United States, has shaped a culturally informed and context-sensitive lens. This international exposure compliments a professional journey through high-pressure environments, such as the aviation industry under conservative Muslim regimes, academic training within the opera world and the competitive jewellery business. These experiences provided valuable insight into the psychological effects of performance pressure, external validation and existential uncertainty.

In addition to formal academic training in opera and health promotion, certification has been obtained as a nutritional advisor and intermittent fasting coach. Experience includes working with companies and their employees to enhance metabolic health, with measurable and sustained outcomes. This practical background contributes to a nuanced understanding of behavior change, energy regulation and the interconnectedness of physical and emotional well-being. With over six years of experience as a columnist writing on existential well-being, this continuous reflective practice has contributed to a nuanced understanding of the interrelated dimensions of mental, emotional, physical and existential health. Furthermore, the researcher serves as an ambassador for the 1.6 & 2.6 million club, a charity that donates funds to scientific research on women's health. This role underscores a sustained commitment to gender-responsive approaches within health promotion.

Reflecting on one's position and potential biases is critical in qualitative research (Yip, 2023). Before data collection, familiarization with the Inner Engineering Online program (13,5 hrs) was undertaken by the researcher to gain contextual understanding, although the final component, Shambhavi Mahamudra Kriya (+ 12 hrs), was not completed. A reflexive stance was maintained throughout the research process, with awareness of how prior experiences and perspectives could influence. Pre-existing knowledge of the context can enhance depth and relevance, provided it does not affect participants or compromise analytical neutrality (Bengtsson, 2016). During the interview phase, a slight difference in tone and content became

apparent between the two participant groups. The pilot participants (I6-I9) often shared more esoteric and spiritually framed experiences, while the facilitators (I1-I5) conveyed their insights in a more grounded and practical manner. This contrast contributed to a richer understanding of how Inner Engineering is lived and understood across different practitioner roles.

The study reflects the perspectives of Inner Engineering participants.

4.8. Trustworthiness in Research

Enhancing trustworthiness was achieved through rigorous methods in data collection and analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), specifically by ensuring:

- **Credibility:** Accurate capture of participants' experiences. Verbatim.
- **Dependability:** A transparent and consistent research process.
- **Confirmability:** Mitigation of researcher bias through reflexivity.
- **Transferability:** Provision of rich, contextual descriptions for broader applicability (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

To ensure transparency and traceability, all meaning units were extracted and compiled in Appendix [6] Meaning units. They are presented verbatim and in sequence per interview, starting with the five interviews with Inner Engineering facilitators (I1-I5) and followed by the four pilot interviews (I6-I9), allowing readers to follow the progression from raw data to main category and core categories. Although all interviews were conducted in English, minimizing translation issues, participant openness varied, with initial reluctance giving way to more expressive interactions as trust developed. Due to the small sample size, detailed demographic descriptions were limited to ensure confidentiality. A larger survey-based study would allow for more comprehensive contextual information (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

4.9. Ethical Considerations

An essential aspect of research is adherence to good research practice, which concerns the quality of the research and its relevance for the world and society (Swedish Research Council, 2024). Before participation, all individuals received written and verbal information about the study's purpose, voluntary nature and confidentiality measures. Informed consent was obtained, and personal identifiers were anonymized in transcripts and reports to protect

confidentiality (Swedish Research Council, 2024). Participants were informed about data collection, storage, handling and deletion procedures, as well as their right to withdraw at any time without explanation (Swedish Research Council, 2024). Ethical guidelines emphasize presenting participant information clearly and accessibly, avoiding technical jargon or coercive language and adapting communication to participants' age and language proficiency (ALLEA, 2023; Swedish Ethical Review Authority, n.d.). In Sweden, research involving human participants is governed by the Ethical Review Act [2003:460] (The Swedish Parliament, 2003) and even when formal review is not required, researchers must assess and minimize potential risks such as the identification of participants or misuse of sensitive data (Swedish Ethical Review Authority, n.d.). Appendix [7] Informed Consent Document.

Table 1 Overview Data Analysis examples

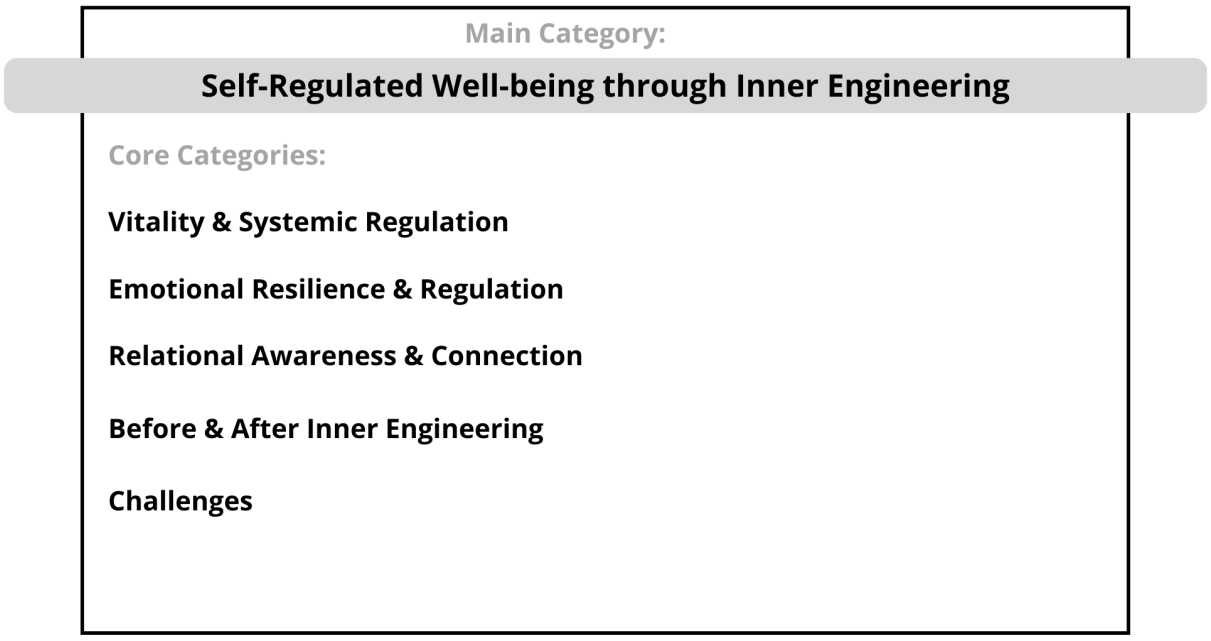
Meaning unit	Code	Core Category

"When your physical chemistry is something that you take care of on a daily basis, then being in sync with life happens much more effortlessly." (I5)	Conducting the physical- body- benefits	**Vitality & Systemic Regulation**
"Inner Engineering gave me the remote control of choice about how I want to feel, think, be".	A Remote control from within	**Emotional Resilience & Regulation**
"I never had good relationships with anyone, I was always on the edge, ready to fight. Slowly as I practiced, I can clearly see that my relationships turned better. I am able to see where the other person is coming from".	Conscious Relationship Development	**Relational Awareness & Connection**
"Before the program I was at a low phase, even when everything was happening perfectly on the outside". *"You will better handle difficulties in career, relationships or any current difficulty".*	Pre- & Post program experience	**Before & After Inner Engineering**
"The expectation to do the practice daily and for the first 40 days twice a day, may be difficult to include in people's schedules".	Program challenges	**Challenges**

5. Results

Self-Regulated Well-Being through Inner Engineering emerged as the main manifest category based on the practitioners' experiences. The meaning units consistently reflected a shift toward greater physical vitality, emotional stability, mental clarity and healthier behavioral patterns. Practitioners referred to Sadhguru as they spoke about the dimensions; energy, body, mind, emotions, with the primary technique; Shambhavi Mahamudra kriya, influencing energy levels, which in turn was said to affect a human's entire system. One main category and five core categories (Table 2), derived from the interviews, meaning units and codes identified through the content analysis process.

Table 2. Summary of Findings



5.1. Vitality & Systemic Regulation

While the facilitator-participants (I1-I5) emphasized that physical health is not the primary focus of the Inner Engineering program, they nonetheless reported a range of positive physiological effects. These included increased endurance, enhanced immune function and improved capacity to manage stress. Several other participants also described significant improvements in overall well-being and relief from various health-related challenges. Practitioners described a noticeable increase in lung capacity, a release of inhibitions and a heightened flow of creativity. They also emphasized the importance of personal responsibility as a foundation for transformation. They observed that unless individuals are willing to look honestly at their own patterns, rather than blaming the outside world, they remain stuck in a bubble of illusion.

"Those who practice Shambhavi Mahamudra can see their health improving." (I5)

Reflecting on the personal health benefits observed after participating in the program, the practitioners recognized Shambhavi Mahamudra kriya as a preventive health tool, illustrating that inner well-being practices contribute significantly to broader health promotion and disease prevention.

> *"Shambhavi is like the one go-to thing when in doubt. It's always there and it brings this incredible sense of calm. Even when the mind is racing all over the place during the practice, somehow by the end of it, everything feels processed."* (I6)

Practitioners talked of a noticeable shift that their approach changes.

"When your physical chemistry is something that you take care of on a daily basis, then being in sync with life happens much more effortlessly." (I5)

Through Shambhavi Mahamudra and kriya, they reported building an inner energy system, less reliant on external influences and rooted in the awakening of the *nadis* (sanskrit), the body's subtle energy channels. This inner shift brought clarity, balance and resilience, a way of being, stating that true empowerment comes from within. Participants described how the physical aspects of the practice gradually contributed to increased internal ease and bodily regulation. One practitioner detailed how changes in the diaphragm played a key role in this process.

"If you breathe deep, because your diaphragm is flexible, you massage your intestines. You improve your digestion, your whole system is more released, the tension is released." (I9)

As the diaphragm became more flexible, participants noticed a deeper breathing capacity which in turn supported digestion and the release of internal tension. This embodied awareness was seen as integral to restoring systemic balance.

Participants also reflected on how their experience of physical energy and recovery shifted after engaging in the practices of Inner Engineering. One significant insight concerned the relationship between activity, rest and the need for recovery. Rather than focusing solely on the quantity of sleep, a more nuanced awareness of energy balance emerged. They noticed they needed less sleep after starting their practices:

"With five and a half hours of sleep I feel rested and awake." (I4)

While acknowledging the necessity of sleep, they referred to Sadhguru's statement that: 'if you sleep eight to ten hours a night, one third of your life is going away.' They emphasize that it's not about how many hours you sleep but about how well you rest. When the mind is at ease, sleep happens naturally, as several explained.

> *"There is a sleep that science talks about, and there is a sleep that yogis and shamans talk about that is quite different. You don't need much sleep, but you need deep sleep. And deep sleep comes when your mind is at peace."* (I7)

They also reported that their sleep quota naturally decreased, with one sharing that they now sleep between 4½ and 6½ hours per night.

"Earlier I would sleep for 8 hrs and it was not sufficient." (I3)

One noted that sleep was deep and more relaxed. When previously not even eight hours of sleep felt sufficient, whereas now they naturally awaken after five to six hours without an alarm, feeling fresh and well-rested.

"Sleep quota is definitely one thing people experience coming down during these practices." (I4)

Several shared that they now sleep only as much as the body requires, with experiences of insomnia disappearing entirely. Sleep was reported as deeper, more relaxed and more restorative, contributing to a sense of expanded time and greater overall efficiency during the day.

"For some sleep quota will come down, for some certain health problems will disappear." (I2)

Participants described vitality not simply as a product of rest or the amount of sleep but as something that comes from conscious engagement and maintaining inner balance throughout the day. They emphasized a heightened awareness of energy balance and the ability to regulate energy efficiently, reflecting a deeper sense of self-regulation.

"If we use the activities in a balanced way, we don't need that many hours to recharge." (I8)

Practitioners also mentioned a natural, intuitive relationship to the sun, rather than a clinical or technical one. For many, the sun was not a tool to be used, but a presence to align with, a rhythm to live by.

"Sadhguru says that all of us are solar powered. The Sun is the basis." (I2)

Practitioners explained that sun exposure is perceived as both grounding and energizing. Many emphasized the importance of catching the first morning sunlight, describing it as a natural source of vitality and mental clarity. The sun was described as a kind of natural charger, supporting both physical and emotional balance. Others noted that simply being outdoors in the morning, even without conscious attention to the sun, brought a sense of wakefulness and alignment.

“Sun exposure is important; it gives physical and mental health benefits.” (I2)

While some did not intentionally spend time in the sun, others acknowledged yogic practices designed in relation to solar rhythms, or aligning with sunrise as part of daily routine. A few expressed uncertainties about how the sun is used as a direct health-promoting source but still affirmed its felt influence on mood, energy and well-being. One described the early morning sun as a natural charger, something they seek out intuitively, not as a prescription, but as a practice like Surya Namaskar (Sun salutation), where the connection to the sun is both symbolic and embodied.

"We thank the sun for illuminating every step of our day, for giving unconditional love. Without the sun nothing would grow." (I7)

According to the practitioners of Inner Engineering, vegetarian food is more aligned with the body’s natural tendencies. They described it as easier to digest and supportive of a more conscious way of living. Practitioners often refer to Sadhguru who designed the program.

“Sadhguru spoke about humans being vegetarian by nature.” (I5)

Practitioners emphasized that vegetarian food was particularly supportive for the practices, describing it as easier to digest and more aligned with the system's needs.

“Here, for this space we want to create a space where food is enhancing the tendency to become less of a body.” (I5)

As a result, they reported eating approximately 40% less food, accompanied by a sense of greater balance in both eating patterns and sleep. Practitioners described a profound shift in their fundamental needs. They no longer ate to feel joy, because joy had become an internal state.

"I became conscious of how different foods are behaving within my system, how my body is responding to different types of food." (I2)

Practitioners described becoming more aware of how different foods affect their bodies and shared that previous compulsions around eating had diminished as sensitivity to the body's responses increased. Food was no longer reactive patterns but a conscious, thoughtful engagement. Practitioners spoke of a natural rebalancing, eating became mindful, and time felt expanded, as if more hours had appeared in the day through less food intake.

5.2. Emotional Resilience & Regulation

While challenges and sadness remain in life, practitioners report handling them with more ease and independence. Rather than being overwhelmed by emotions, they describe learning to witness them, experiencing their full range while remaining internally stable. Participants described an emerging sense of inner happiness that was not dependent on external circumstances. This inner stability enabled them to face physical, emotional and social challenges with greater ease and without rigid expectations. Rather than seeking control, they spoke of being in sync with life, navigating situations more smoothly through a grounded state of contentment and presence.

"Inner Engineering gave me the remote control of choice about how I want to feel, think, be." (I5)

Practitioners describe the transformation as gaining an internal capacity to pause, reflect and respond consciously rather than react impulsively.

"Do I want to feel sad, feel compassionate, feel pain and not get dragged down by it?" (I3)

Practitioners reported being less reactive, yet more sensitive as energy levels became more balanced. A sense of agency and inner strength, making emotional ups and downs easier to manage. Practitioners described Inner Engineering as a preventive approach that supports their ability to handle life's challenges, serving as a practical tool for conscious self-regulation. Participants described a shift toward navigating life with greater ease, clarity and adaptability.

“If people had the ability to be able to get a hold on how they are, conducting their body, their mind, emotions, they would be able to stop the vicious circle which eventually creates a physical disease.” (I3)

Practitioners observed that the practices had brought a certain alertness, kindness and energy to the system, which, in their experience, made them more productive. How every human being can become the ultimate possibility within themselves.
They explained that one of the most tangible benefits of the Inner Engineering process lies in its impact on emotional resilience. The tools taught through the program were described as enabling greater emotional self-management in daily life, particularly in response to challenges or setbacks. Rather than eliminating difficulties, the practices appeared to support a faster recovery and a more composed response to stressors.

"Yes, you might have a setback, but how quickly can you bounce back? That’s what it’s really teaching you.” (I6)

Practitioners also described a growing ability to surrender to life's flow, which supported a more stable emotional baseline and reduced reactivity. This form of psychological acceptance was seen as essential to maintaining internal balance. Inner Engineering practices helped participants move from automatic emotional reactions to more conscious self-regulation. This shift fostered a stronger sense of inner stability and increased confidence in managing their emotional experiences.

"The power of acceptance is another thing. You accept the situation as it is, and believe that it is all happening for a reason. Have faith, and when you truly believe, things will change for you." (I7)

They described approaching situations with a sense of mental preparation, while still going with the flow. Choices were made with attention to health and well-being, even when facing challenges. Participants emphasized that Inner Engineering offers not only tools for emotional management but a structural reprogramming of one’s inner experience. The process was described as an inwardly directed approach, likened by one practitioner to engineering the self with intelligence and purpose.

"You use the term Inner Engineering, look inside. Let's make a program from inside of you that makes you happy. So I think it is extremely intelligent, extremely beautiful." (I7)

This turning inward was seen as foundational to calming the system and becoming less reactive. By slowing down internally, participants described gaining access to deeper emotional layers and becoming more guided by intuitive awareness.

> *"So many of the things are obviously subconscious, you cannot see them, because if it was conscious, you would. Go inside, it changes your life because it makes you become slower. When you become slower, you don't react anymore, you go through the total feelings of your heart and you'll be guided. I think that's it. It makes you calm, it brings you a presence, you know. And if you continue doing those practices, you will stay in that presence."* (I7)

Practitioners described Inner Engineering as a way to cultivate joy and fulfillment regardless of external circumstances. With regular practice and self-reflection, they observed a gradual uncovering of deeper inner layers, accompanied by a growing sense of ease and lightness. Everyday tasks began to feel less burdensome, as a more balanced and joyful state became natural.

"I do feel, but I am empowered, I feel that I can handle it and come out of it on my own. That is very empowering." (I1)

This ability to remain steady and composed in the face of challenges was described as a key aspect of empowerment.

"It's a very powerful tool to create your life the way you want and without getting caught up with outside situations." (I2)

Practitioners described the deep, resonating sound of AUM as a central element in cultivating mental clarity, inner stillness and emotional resilience. With regular practice, many noticed lasting changes, particularly in thought patterns. They explained that AUM, the vibration itself, gives a great sense of calm to the body. It relaxes the nervous system, the breathing deepens, and a lot begins to shift internally.

"Each sound has an impact on our consciousness and energy." (I5)

Practitioners highlight that overexerting the throat or aiming for a high-pitched sound can block the experience. Instead, they point to the subtle internal resonance of AUM as the transformative element. Practitioners described AUM chanting as a simple yet powerful tool for stabilizing the system. It was especially helpful during periods of poor health, emotional turbulence, or sleeplessness.

In yogic tradition, they explained, all of creation is considered sound and AUM is its fundamental vibration. Each syllable is associated with a different energy centre:

A - body and solar plexus

U - Anahata heart chakra, the centre for love and creativity

M - sound activates the throat chakra.

They said that together, these elements are for stabilizing both body and mind. Practitioners noted that even a short period of chanting, such as 30 minutes, could lead to a stable sense of calm and balance. When they couldn't identify the cause of stress, chanting AUM helped them return to balance. The act itself brought a sense of grounding.

"People under medication for life were able to come out of it by just keeping doing the AUM chant." (I2)

Practitioners describe AUM chanting as a deeply transformative practice with both immediate and long-term effects on well-being. Practitioners emphasize its value in psychological and emotional regulation, particularly during times of unexplainable stress or low mood. When overwhelmed or unsettled, some turn to AUM without knowing the specific cause of their distress and often experience a sense of calm and clarity shortly after beginning the practice.

5.3. Relational Awareness & Connection

Before engaging in Inner Engineering, practitioners struggled with stress, anxiety and emotional reactivity in their relationships.

> *"I never had good relationships with anyone, I was always on the edge, ready to fight. Slowly as I practiced, I can clearly see that my relationships turned better. I am able to see where the other person is coming from."* (I1)

Practitioners noticed that relationships naturally improved, as shifting from conflict to understanding and from emotionally dependent or transactional connections to more giving and balanced interactions, looking at everything as a learning opportunity. Rather than seeking fulfillment from others, practitioners described becoming more willing to give, which led to a more effortless and abundant way of connecting. They became more giving and less transactional.

Everyday tasks, such as cleaning or working, were described as becoming more enjoyable through increased awareness and presence. Participants also described how the practices introduced through Inner Engineering brought about a transformation in their perception of relationships, both with themselves and others. Although not always described as directly targeting relationships, practitioners acknowledged that the effects of Inner Engineering on self-expansion naturally altered relational dynamics. One participant explained that as one expands in awareness, relational patterns may either deepen or dissolve.

"If the source of joy is you, you are not dependent on anybody else to validate your life and who you are." (I5)

According to the participants, this shift led to healthier and more fulfilling relationships with family, colleagues and communities. At work, conflicts became easier to navigate and interactions with others felt more effortless. Many realized that emotional barriers often stem from fear and as they let go of the need for validation, relationships became more open and enriching. The Inner Engineering program was experienced not only as a means of inner regulation, but also as a reorientation in how one engages with the external world. This shift in awareness seemed to foster a deeper sense of personal responsibility and conscious interaction.

"If there was an altercation, I would just look at that person and not feel bad. I would like to look at that person and see how I can help them." (I3)

A sense of gratitude emerged, practitioners explained, appreciating people for who they are, rather than for what they provide. This shift in perspective allowed them to prioritize

meaningful relationships and take greater responsibility for their own well-being. Being happy around people and not getting affected by them. As a result, practitioners experienced relationships that became healthier and the overall quality of life improved. Practitioners reflected that if more people prioritized inner well-being, it could create a ripple effect, fostering deeper connection and a more harmonious world.

One of the earliest changes following the program was a heightened awareness of their surroundings, practitioners explained. This increased awareness often brought a sense of inner stillness, clarity and joy. Over time, staying calm and centred in various situations became more natural. They noted that everyday patterns such as sleep, diet and thought patterns gradually adjusted, contributing to a smoother daily life.

"There was a heightened sense of awareness where I was able to avoid a situation which would have been damaging for me." (I3)

According to practitioners, the effects of the practice are often experienced before they are fully understood, as the process unfolds experientially rather than through intellectual reasoning. They described people coming to a certain stillness within, the way they walk, sit, stand, everything improved.

5.4. Before & After Inner Engineering

Several participants shared that, before Inner Engineering, they often sought meaning or beauty in external circumstances. Practitioners described their lives before Inner Engineering as marked by stress, anxiety and a general sense of dissatisfaction.

"Before the program I was at a low phase, even when everything was happening perfectly on the outside." (I3)

They reflected on being emotionally drained, caught in comparison, or unaware of how much better life could feel.

"I came from a field with a lot of stress, anxiety, a rat race." (I1)

One facilitator noted that societal definitions of success: better jobs, higher grades, constant achievement, create pressure and foster a sense of never being enough.

After completing the program, practitioners described a shift in their inner state, likening the practice to a “reset button” for the mind and energy, supporting greater self-awareness and emotional clarity. Feeling calmer and more stable, with an increased ability to navigate challenges.

> *“Outside situations are still the same but something within has changed and grown. You will better handle difficulties in career, relationships or any current difficulty. I am more conscious in responding, even if it’s in anger I am consciously responding to situations. I will not say I’ve reached 100%, it’s a process. I clearly see it’s growing over a period of time.”* (I2)

After the program, they described feeling more connected to an inner sense of contentment or clarity in their daily lives. Happiness was no longer seen as something to pursue externally but as an inner resource already available within. Several practitioners described Inner Engineering as a deeply transformative experience that redefined how they related to their physical body, their habits, their worldview, and their overall energy. The shift was often framed as both subtle and profound.

"I have lived in the most beautiful places in the world, but I have learned that beauty outside is not enough. There needs to be beauty inside." (I8)

Participants described changes not only in their physical state but also in how they think and make sense of life. Participants described how, over time, their focus shifted from seeking beauty and fulfillment in their external surroundings to recognising a need for inner balance and contentment. Several expressed that this realisation brought a clear change in how they experienced daily life and how they viewed themselves.

A recurring transformation described by participants was a shift in how they relate to life’s unfolding. Rather than striving to control outcomes, there was a movement toward trust and receptivity.

> *“Not gaining control, letting go of control in your life and trusting, having faith.”* (I7)

This inner shift from reactive living to intentional presence was seen as foundational. Through the practice, individuals reported becoming slower, calmer and more grounded.

Participants described a felt sense of alignment with what is, often articulated in terms of love, balance and surrender.

“I think it’s not even about building a future, I think it’s more about letting it happen fully and loving it fully, in love, in love and light.” (I7)

5.5. Challenges

While practitioners emphasized the transformative benefits of Inner Engineering, they also acknowledged that sustaining the practice can be challenging.

“The expectation to do the practice daily and for the first 40 days, twice a day, may be difficult to include in people’s schedules.” (I2)

Practitioners reflected that stress often arises when inner balance is lost, highlighting the importance of consistent engagement.

“It’s like a tool, if you don’t use it it doesn’t work.” (I4)

Applying the tools during real-life difficulties was seen as a demanding aspect. They also noted that certain program requirements, such as practicing on an empty stomach and following a two-meal-a-day routine, may not align with everyone’s physical needs or daily routines. Despite these challenges, practitioners viewed commitment to the practice as essential for long-term well-being. Practitioners stated that triggers do come, small things and moments of irritation. But what would have lasted five days earlier, gets resolved in five minutes or maybe a day. Making sure that whatever comes up, the choices they end up making, do not affect health and wellbeing.

"Inner Engineering still brings a lot of setbacks and obstacles with it, it is not a pink path." (I8)

While many participants described profound positive shifts from practicing Inner Engineering, they also emphasized that the process was not linear, effortless or without discomfort. The journey inward frequently confronted individuals with long-held emotional patterns, unresolved internal conflicts, and deeply rooted habits of control and avoidance.

Several described an initial intensification of emotional turmoil, particularly in the early stages of the practice.

> *"The first three weeks - so much anger, so much anger that I was shocked where it was coming from. Three out of ten would share that it is not easy at all and we are experiencing this anger, resentment, difficulties. It was like opening the door for inner anger to come out, but I was not able to see it at that time. Maybe it was generating anger in me, but it was actually clearing me from it."* (I8)

Participants described the practice as emotionally challenging at times. Noting that it brought up strong feelings such as anger and discomfort. It exposed a sense of vulnerability that had previously been hidden.

> *"I realized a very vulnerable part of me I cover with harshness and the spiky energy. I push people away from me. I am so vulnerable and I don't want to show that, so I am learning how to be ok with the vulnerability."* (I8)

Difficulties with letting go of control were also described. However, several also shared that doing so made them feel more at ease or calmer in daily life.

"Being okay with being out of control, that is very peaceful. I don't need that control. I actually need nothing. I feel enriched by what I am surrounded by." (I8)

Some participants described experiencing fear or resistance during the process, but also noted that they stayed with the experience instead of avoiding it. One practitioner described this shift as a willingness to remain present with discomfort, rather than escaping it.

> *"All my life I've been running away from some situation. And very often I will put myself in that challenging situation. But this time I said I will embrace that challenge. I'm so scared, I'm so afraid, but what is scared, is my mind. So what am I trying to escape from?"* (I8)

Participants acknowledged challenges during the process. One participant described these difficulties as part of moving through changes and personal growth. Participants described how they felt more emotionally stable and less reactive after the program.

Some noted that instead of being overwhelmed by emotions, they were able to respond more calmly and with greater awareness.

6. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the subjective experiences of Inner Engineering practitioners, focusing on how traditional mindfulness-based practices foster mental and emotional resilience and empowerment within the context of health promotion.

Self-Regulated Well-Being through Inner Engineering emerged as the main manifest category based on their experiences.

6.1. Results Discussion

The main category **Self-regulated Well-being through Inner Engineering** reflects a coherent narrative of transformation, similar to core concepts in health promotion and Positive Psychology (Park, 2016; Ryff & Singer, 1996; Wallerstein, 2006). Based on the qualitative interviews, several core categories emerged and most will be discussed in the sections that follow:

6.1.1. Vitality & Systemic Regulation discussion

Practitioners consistently reported improved energy levels, better sleep and enhanced immunity. Outcomes that may be associated with increased parasympathetic activation (vagal nerve stimulation) achieved through breathwork and meditative states (Behnke et al., 2022). While mainstream recommendations often prescribe specific sleep durations, Sadhguru has emphasized in public that sleep needs are more closely tied to the body's level of activity and recovery, rather than a fixed number of hours (Sharma, 2018).

Although some practitioners felt refreshed despite reduced sleep duration, individual variability and the potential long-term effects must be considered. Chronic sleep deprivation is linked to cognitive decline and impaired emotional regulation (Li et al., 2023). Brain health and resistance to neurodegeneration depend heavily on adequate metabolism and disrupted sleep significantly impacts well-being, by diminishing cognitive acuity and increasing vulnerability to physical and mental disorders (Li et al., 2023). Neuroscientific research emphasizes the importance of obtaining 7-8 hours of sleep per night for optimal brain

function, including the clearance of neurotoxic waste via the glymphatic system (Kaur et al, 2024).

Interestingly, a Danish study by Kjaer et al. (2002) showed that meditation and yoga nidra type meditation - yogic sleep and tantric relaxation technique, can reset dopaminergic and other neuromodulatory pathways involved in motor planning and execution (Kjaer et al., 2002). This may help explain why some practitioners reported feeling refreshed despite shorter sleep durations. Practices resembling Yoga Nidra, meditative states and breath-based relaxation, may induce deep parasympathetic restoration and neurochemical resetting, offering effects like those achieved during deep sleep (Kjaer et al., 2002; Pandi-Perumal et al., 2022).

A meta-analysis of 45 randomized controlled trials found that meditation significantly reduced cortisol levels, systolic blood pressure, heart rate, triglycerides and tumor necrosis factor-alpha when compared to active controls (Pascoe et al., 2017) like listening to music, expressive therapy or relaxation retreats. Different forms of meditation can modulate physiological indicators of stress reactivity (Pascoe et al., 2017). Meditation has been shown to modulate these stress-related physiological markers, particularly in individuals with depressive symptoms (Komariah et al., 2022). The effects were particularly pronounced in interventions involving extended practice duration and a strong emphasis on breath-focused techniques (Komariah et al., 2022).

While this does not replace the essential cognitive functions supported by regular sleep, it may contribute to a subjective sense of restoration, improved mood and enhanced daytime functioning (Pandi-Perumal et al., 2022).

Within Antonovsky's salutogenic model (1991), focusing on health promotion and wellbeing rather than disease, sleep contributes to the Sense of Coherence (SOC) by enhancing *comprehensibility* through its role in cognitive regulation, including memory consolidation and emotional processing. It also promotes *manageability* by restoring physical and mental capacity, enabling individuals to better cope with stress and navigate daily challenges. While practitioners at the ashram do engage in daily work, the environment's intentional structure and spiritual focus might make it easier to integrate meditation into everyday life compared to living outside.

The Inner Engineering program at the ashram offered a twice-daily vegetarian diet aligned with yogic principles. Meals typically included legumes and pulses such as beans, peas and lentils, along with carbohydrate-rich foods like rice and idiyappam made from rice flour (Isha Foundation, 2024). While such meals emphasize simplicity and digestibility, diets high in refined carbohydrates (rice and idiyappam) and low in minimally processed natural fats and high-quality proteins may negatively affect metabolic health (Mozaffarian et al., 2018). This imbalance can contribute to chronic low-grade inflammation and increase the risk of insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes, particularly among genetically predisposed populations such as South Asians (Mozaffarian et al., 2018).

A large systematic review and meta-analysis (n = 1.5 million) found that higher white rice consumption was moderately associated with an increased risk of type 2 diabetes, especially among women (Lay et al., 2023). Each additional 150 grams (about one cup) of cooked white rice consumed per day was associated with a 6% greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes. However, no significant association was found between white rice intake and cardiovascular disease, cancer or metabolic syndrome (Lai et al., 2023). These findings highlight a gender-specific health vulnerability, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality), which includes ensuring equal access to health information and empowering women to make informed lifestyle choices.

Diet and sleep are interrelated factors essential to overall health (Zuraikat et al., 2021). Plant-based diets (PBDs) are typically rich in magnesium and vitamin B6, micronutrients linked to improved sleep regulation. (Arslan, 2024). Diets high in fruits, vegetables and legumes -source of tryptophan and melatonin, have also been linked to better sleep quality (Arslan, 2024; Zuraikat et al., 2021). Although further clinical trials are needed, existing data suggest a bidirectional relationship: a healthy diet supports improved sleep and restorative sleep reinforces healthier eating behaviours (Arslan, 2024; Zuraikat et al., 2021).

Although vegetarian meals are often perceived as healthier or lower-risk diets, they may still pose hazards if not properly prepared or stored (WHO, 2023). Some natural toxins such as lectins or phytates present in plant-based foods can lead to a variety of adverse health outcomes (WHO, 2023). Health-promoting nutrition therefore involves more than simply having access to food. Individuals need both knowledge and contextual capacity to use what is available in ways that genuinely support health (WHO, 1986). This includes food literacy, safe preparation and alignment with biological needs (WHO, 2023). These elements reflect

Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence, where comprehensibility (understanding nutrition), manageability (having skills/resources) and meaningfulness (valuing healthy eating) jointly enable individuals to maintain health effectively (Antonovsky, 1991).

From a cellular perspective, pro-inflammatory foods pose a threat to mitochondrial function, the energy-producing engines of our cells, potentially contributing to a range of diseases and disorders such as depression, cancer and neurodegenerative disorders (Missiroli et al., 2020). The regular inclusion of refined carbohydrates such as white rice questions how consistently the dietary practices align with nutritional science and long-term metabolic health (Clemente-Suárez et al., 2022). At the ashram, the practice of eating only twice a day may encourage metabolic balance (Palmer & Clegg, 2022). Conscious eating, when genuinely practiced, supports the nourishment of the body's approximately 30 trillion cells and microbial symbionts (Mostafa, 2021).

A conscious diet aligns closely with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). As individuals cultivate greater inner stability - through mindfulness and self-awareness - they may develop a reduced reliance on external validation and material excess (Yoon et al., 2020). This internal shift can encourage more intentional and sustainable consumption patterns (Daniel, 2024; Yoon et al., 2020). Over time, such behavioural changes can contribute to SDG 13 (Climate Action) by promoting environmentally responsible choices and lowering the ecological footprint of daily living.

Practitioners, even if not explicitly fully aware of the benefits of sunlight, naturally align with the sun by seeking morning sunlight (near infrared [NIR]-light) which supports emotional regulation, energy balance, and overall physiological health (Barolet et al., 2021; Giménez et al., 2023). Sunlight, especially morning exposure, plays a crucial role in regulating the body's circadian rhythm (Hüberman, 2022). It stimulates retinal neurons, signaling the brain to initiate wakefulness and promote the timely release of cortisol, which is essential for energy, focus and metabolic activation. Two primary systems regulate sleep and wakefulness: adenosine accumulation and the circadian clock. Our circadian rhythm, operating on a 24-25-hour cycle, dictates when we naturally feel alert or sleepy (Hüberman, 2022).

Additionally, sunlight triggers the release of nitric oxide (NO), which aids vasodilation, improves blood flow and contributes to stress reduction (Barolet et al., 2021). UVB exposure enables the skin to synthesize vitamin D_3 (cholecalciferol), which is converted by the liver to

25-hydroxyvitamin D (calcidiol, -blood test measure) (Bertani et al., 2021; Giménez et al., 2023). Calcidiol is further converted to 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D (calcitriol) in the kidneys, the active form (hormone) of vitamin D. Calcitriol plays a key role in calcium homeostasis, bone health, enhancing immune function, regulating mood and supporting overall mental health (Bertani et al., 2021; Giménez et al., 2023; Holick, 2007). Moreover, sunlight regulates melatonin, a powerful antioxidant, aligning the circadian rhythm and improving sleep quality (Reiter et al., 2017; Tan et al., 2023; Zimmerman & Reiter, 2019).

This connection to sunlight supports a salutogenic framework (Antonovsky, 1991), where the natural environment can foster emotional balance and well-being, promoting health beyond the absence of illness. It helps regulate circadian rhythms, thereby supporting regular sleep-wake cycles that make daily life feel more structured and predictable (*comprehensibility*) (Antonovsky, 1991). Sunlight contributes to vitamin D production, immune function and mood regulation, which enhances an individual's ability to cope with stress and perceive life's challenges as manageable (*manageability*). Furthermore, the improved mood and emotional stability resulting from natural light exposure can strengthen a sense of engagement and purpose in daily life (*meaningfulness)*.

In this way, sunlight supports resilience and overall well-being. It also contributes to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by boosting vitamin D levels, enhancing immunity and improving mental health (Barolet et al., 2021; Giménez et al., 2023; Raza et al., 2025). Living in India, where the sun is a constant and abundant resource, small early morning and afternoon doses could be used supporting overall health, aligning with the body's natural rhythms.

6.1.2. Emotional Resilience & Regulation discussion

Practitioners' accounts of increased inner stability and improved coping align with the concept of emotional resilience -the capacity to regulate emotions, adapt to challenges and maintain psychological well-being (Pahwa & Khan, 2022). Emotional regulation is a foundational aspect of healthy development and functioning across multiple domains and represents a critical developmental task that warrants intentional support (Blair et al., 2015; Paley & Hayal, 2022). Appendix [2] Emotional Resilience Chart.

The practitioners' experiences of improved emotional regulation and greater inner stability suggest enhanced self-efficacy, a key component in building resilience and sustaining mental well-being (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation. Such beliefs play a role in determining how people think, behave and feel (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, strengthening emotional resilience and regulation can contribute to women's autonomy and decision-making capacity, both of which are central to advancing gender equality as emphasized in SDG 5 (Matud et al., 2014). In cultural contexts where caregiving roles are often prioritized over individual growth, practices that foster self-empowerment may enable women to set healthy boundaries, make independent choices and respond to social expectations more confidently (Matud et al., 2014).

The practitioners clearly linked their emotional shifts to specific practices, suggesting that Inner Engineering may serve as a catalyst rather than a coincidence. These experiences reflect key mechanisms in mindfulness-based stress reduction and mirror the psychological flexibility described in contemporary resilience frameworks: across life stages, individual, family, societal, personal, relational, community support (Southwick et al., 2014).

Several participants described early experiences of intense emotions, including anger, during the initial phase of Inner Engineering, which may reflect the surfacing of previously suppressed or unprocessed emotional material. In the context of contemplative practice, or a secure environment with empathic support, such responses are not uncommon and can signify the beginning of emotional processing (Julkunen et al., 2009). As participants developed tools for regulation, these states appeared to shift toward more adaptive expressions of resilience. This aligns with existing research suggesting that emotional expression, when supported by safety and containment, can facilitate psychological integration (de Bles et al., 2023).

Mindfulness exercises and physical exercises have both been demonstrated to be powerful modulators of non-pharmaceutical *glutamate and GABA* (gamma-aminobutyric acid) (Guglietti et al., 2013; Maddock et al., 2016; Novak et al., 2024). *Glutamate* stimulates brain activity like memory, cognition, and mood regulation (Pal, 2021). Meditative practice has been shown to enhance activation in the prefrontal cortex (PFC) and stimulate the reticular nucleus of the thalamus, contributing to the production and regulation of the inhibitory neurotransmitter GABA (Guglietti et al., 2013). Resulting in participants feeling energized

and focused while also experiencing psychological calm. A healthy brain requires a balance between the two neurotransmitters GABA and glutamate (Guglietti et al., 2013).

Notably, mindfulness meditation has also been shown to enhance emotion regulation by increasing grey matter density and network efficiency in the anterior cingulate cortex (Tang et al., 2016). A region functioning as a bridge between the limbic system *(emotion)* and prefrontal cortex *(cognition)* making it central to self-regulation, impulse control and adaptability (Tang et al., 2015; Tang et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2011).

The practitioners' reported enhancement in inner stability and coping capacity is supported by underlying physiological mechanisms and grounded in nervous system regulation. Some degree of personal growth may occur through life experience and natural maturation, individuals can also develop and evolve without participating in structured interventions (Verdoodt et al, 2024).

One important factor to consider is the possible role of a participant's pre-existing growth mindsets (Dweck & Yaeger, 2019). Individuals who believe in their capacity for personal development may be more inclined to reflect, adapt and improve over time, regardless of the specific intervention (Dweck & Yaeger 2019). Therefore, some changes attributed to Inner Engineering may, at least in part, reflect participants' intrinsic motivation and openness to transformation.

Ruiz-Íñiguez et al. (2023) found that although personality traits influence outcomes, no single personality profile guarantees success. Rather, various traits interact with different types of mindfulness practices to produce beneficial effects (Ruiz-Íñiguez et al., 2023). Similarly, Osman and Singaram (2023) reported that personality traits showed no consistent association with self-care behaviours except for neuroticism, which was negatively correlated.

From a psychophysiological perspective, a coherent internal state -where mind, body and energy are synchronized- supports greater resilience, emotional balance and clarity (Hüberman, 2025). Such coherence enables individuals to filter out depleting influences and create space for sustaining ones. This transformation is grounded in nervous-system regulation. Consistent practices such as breath work, cold exposure or journaling alter the body's stress responses, shifting from chronic hyperarousal toward homeostasis. This shift fosters self-regulation, mental clarity and emotional resilience (Hüberman, 2025).

When individuals consciously change their inner dialogue, they engage areas of the brain responsible for self-awareness, emotional regulation and motivation; the prefrontal cortex, the anterior cingulate cortex and the insular cortex (Hüberman, 2024). Each time an individual chooses actions that preserve calm, focus, or personal integrity, the brain reinforces these choices with reward signals, gradually increasing baseline dopamine and strengthening self-trust (Hüberman, 2025). Identity does not shift through grand declarations, but through consistent repetition of supportive behaviours. As this inner coherence deepens, external chaos often recedes, relationships or situations that no longer resonate tend to fade without force, freeing up energy to be redirected toward personal goals, peace and sustained growth (Hüberman, 2025). Practitioners' descriptions of inner stillness and ease resonate with emerging literature on contentment and self-acceptance, which are associated with parasympathetic activation and transformative shifts in worldview. As one stop searching for external validation and reacting to others dysfunction, the ability to be fully present and enjoy life, lies at the heart of transformational processes (Cordaro et al., 2024; Duarte & Pinto-Gouveia, 2017; Hüberman, 2025; Kiken et al., 2017). In the context of Inner Engineering practices in India, these constructs offer insight into how mindfulness and self-regulation may enhance mental well-being. This shift toward more mindful and emotionally regulated relational awareness aligns with the holistic perspective emphasized in health promotion, where social well-being is viewed as an integral part of overall health (WHO, 1986).

Practitioners described the practice of AUM chanting as a resource for emotional regulation and inner balance, both essential components of resilience (Pahwa & Khan, 2022). AUM served as an experiential anchor that enhanced sleep quality, stabilized mood and fostered emotional clarity. These self-reported effects point to possible psychosomatic mechanisms underlying the practice.

Emerging scientific evidence supports these claims. For example, Rajagopalan et al. (2022) found that OM chanting and Yoga Nidra -a deep relaxation technique practiced with awareness- significantly reduced depression, anxiety and stress while improving sleep quality and autonomic function in individuals with hypertension. These practices are increasingly recognized as safe complementary therapies for managing stress-related and cardiovascular conditions (Rajagopalan et al., 2022). Sound, including vocal vibrations like AUM, also engages multiple physiological systems. The participants in this study did not refer to such

mechanisms other than one participant mentioning that people under medication for life were able to come out of it through AUM-chanting. Instead, they emphasized the emotional dimensions of the practice. AUM was described as a central element in fostering mental clarity, inner stillness and emotional resilience. Therefore, its placement within the *Emotional Resilience* category reflects the participants' lived experiences and perceived impact, rather than biomedical knowledge, which would have placed AUM-chanting in the *Vitality & Systemic Regulation* category.

However, Bartel & Mosabbir (2021) describe how sound vibrations trigger responses across the hemodynamic, neurological and musculoskeletal domains. One key pathway begins with the stimulation of endothelial cells, leading to the release of nitric oxide (NO) and adrenomedullin, which promote vasodilation, modulate inflammatory processes and support cardiovascular health. Adrenomedullin in particular has been linked to fluid balance, bronchodilation and tissue repair (Bartel & Mosabbir, 2021; Martinéz-Herrero & Martinéz, 2022). These responses support not only emotional stability but also broader systemic vitality, indicating potential overlap between autonomic and physiological domains of health.

The role of nasal nitric oxide is also significant. Weitzberg and Lundberg (2002) demonstrated that humming enhances sinus ventilation, increasing nasal NO levels by up to 15-fold compared to quiet exhalation. These findings were confirmed by Granqvist et al. (2006) and Inbaraj et al. (2022), who further reported that even a brief OM chanting (5 minutes) activates the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation and a state of calmness.

These physiological responses not only support well-being but also correspond to Antonovsky's (1991) salutogenic model. By offering tangible bodily feedback -slower breathing, inner calm- AUM chanting strengthens the Sense of Coherence (SOC). *Comprehensibility:* The body's responses to chanting become understandable and predictable, allowing individuals to make sense of internal changes. *Manageability:* The calming effects enhance one's ability to cope with stress. *Meaningfulness:* The experience of groundedness and emotional regulation provides a renewed sense of purpose and self-efficacy (Antonovsky, 1991).

Further evidence comes from a randomized controlled trial by Anjana et al. (2022), which reported significant reductions in systolic and diastolic blood pressure, LDL cholesterol and

an increase in HDL cholesterol in an experimental group after two months of OM chanting ($p<0.001$). These findings underscore measurable physiological benefits of the practice, with implications for both mental and physical health (Anjana et al., 2022). This category also reflects key principles of health promotion as articulated in the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986), specifically the emphasis on strengthening personal resources for mental and emotional well-being. Moreover, it demonstrates how ancient contemplative practices can be aligned with contemporary understandings of neuroplasticity. As noted by Inbaraj et al. (2022) such practices cultivate focused attention, emotional regulation and embodied awareness, all of which contribute to resilience and sustained well-being.

6.1.3. Relational Awareness & Connection discussion

Relational Awareness and Connection aligns with foundations that mirror the shift practitioners described from reactive, need-based interactions to more balanced, giving relationships. Through Inner Engineering, the practitioners experienced a shift that fostered healthier relationships across the board, transforming conflict into understanding and the overall quality of life improved.

Experiences of deeper connection and presence in relationships reflect key elements of psychological well-being and relatedness as defined in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and "positive relations with others"- one of six key dimensions of well-being by Ryff and Singer (1996).

This category also aligns with research on mindfulness and its role in enhancing relationship quality, empathy and emotional regulation (Pahwa & Khan, 2022; Paley & Hajal, 2022). There is growing evidence and momentum supporting mindfulness not only as a practice, but as a way of being that facilitates growth across multiple domains; physiological processes, epigenetic expression, neural plasticity, telomere maintenance, social connectedness and moral and ethical development (Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 2021).

Mindful parenting, for instance, is described as a continuous, creative process that involves intentionally bringing non-judgmental awareness to each moment (Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 2021). This includes cultivating awareness of our internal experiences; thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations, as well as our external environment, such as our children, home life

and cultural surroundings. It entails learning to recognize reactive impulses and respond with greater clarity, creativity and compassion (Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 2021).

In marital relationships, compassion has been shown to enhance relationship quality by promoting supportive dyadic coping styles, how people together in the relationship deal with stressors, one spouse provides advice, emotional support and other help when the other spouse is facing stress (Bodenmann et al., 2018). It can foster more supportive communication by promoting attentive listening, emotional awareness and thoughtful, non-reactive responses (Abdullah et al., 2024).

This is particularly relevant given that women, compared to men, consistently report higher levels of perceived stress and are more likely to assume responsibility for emotional caregiving within relationships (Abdullah et al, 2024). Addressing this imbalance through relational awareness and mindfulness practices aligns with SDG 5 (Gender Equality), as it helps women recognize and manage relational stressors more equitably, promoting emotional sustainability and autonomy.

6.1.4. Before & After Inner Engineering discussion

Practitioners described their lives before Inner Engineering as marked by stress, anxiety and a general sense of dissatisfaction. They reflected on being emotionally drained, caught in comparison, or unaware of how much better life could feel.

After Inner Engineering, practitioners describe the practice as a “reset button” for the mind and energy, enabling greater self-awareness and emotional clarity, reflecting a more grounded and realistic sense of self.

Descriptions of change reflect Zimmerman’s (2000) framework of personal empowerment, gaining greater self-awareness, autonomy and agency in one’s emotional life. This shift aligns with Pahwa and Khan’s (2022) perspective on mental health promotion. In their model, emotional resilience and psychological empowerment are key components of sustainable well-being, supported by structured practices that enhance coping-capacity and self-regulation.
The participants' narratives illustrate how experience-based interventions can cultivate inner resources that buffer stress. However, since the data relies on self-reporting, there's a risk that

participants idealize or exaggerate positive outcomes, especially in spiritual or wellness contexts.

While Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) emphasizes the role of *autonomy*, *competence and relatedness* in fostering well-being, the practitioners described a period before Inner Engineering in which these needs were not accessible. Some reflected on emotional exhaustion and a lack of clarity or purpose, conditions that may correspond with physiological dysregulation such as cortisol depletion in burnout (Lennartsson et al., 2015). That raises a question: Can individuals fully access and benefit from *autonomy* or *competence* when foundational physiological and emotional resources are depleted?

The program as described by practitioners may serve as a preparatory step, rebuilding emotional clarity and calm, consequently enabling engagement with the deeper psychological needs outlined in Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The structured environment of the ashram appears to offer a dual form of support. On one hand it reinforces communal rituals and a shared sense of identity; on the other, it emphasizes personal transformation, self-discipline and inner autonomy. This interplay between collectivist and individualist dimensions may shape how empowerment and well-being are experienced by practitioners, particularly in relation to emotional resilience and self-regulation. Moreover, the practitioners' (I1-I5) relatively high subjective and objective social status as facilitators may have shaped their positive experiences. Curhan et al. (2014) found that subjective social status was more strongly associated with life satisfaction, positive affect and purpose in Western contexts, while objective status was more predictive in collectivist cultures such as India (Chadda & Deb, 2013; Curhan et al., 2014). Although this study did not directly assess social status, these findings offer a potential lens for interpreting variation in perceived well-being, and highlight the importance of including such variables in future research.

6.1.5 Common Sense, Embodied Wisdom & Cultural Framing

As Hüberman (2025) states, "choose what's right over what's easy." Each decision, choosing stillness over chaos, or self-respect over people-pleasing, reinforces the nervous system's sense of safety, autonomy and clarity (Hüberman, 2025). The ability to alter one's emotional

responses is central to overall well-being and to effectively meeting the demands of life (McCraty & Zayas, 2014).

While practitioners described the program as “life-changing,” the core strategies they highlighted; pausing before reacting, monitoring emotions, eating in moderation, showing gratitude, aligns with principles that could be labelled basic *common sense*. One facilitator also expressed that the program starts from common sense. Synonyms of common sense: logical, level-headedness, sound judgement, good sense, wisdom (Merriam-Webster, n.d).

Rapid technological and social changes in contemporary Western societies have contributed to a decline in reliance on intuitive reasoning or “common sense” in everyday life (Whiting & Watts, 2024). In collectivist cultures, shared norms are often internalized as self-evident, “obvious,” while individualistic cultures often emphasize personal insight, fragmenting what counts as “common sense.” Whiting and Watts (2024) found that only a small fraction of people agree on more than a small fraction of claims, challenging the assumption of universal commonsensicality - or the state of being in alignment with common sense. In their study 2,046 human raters evaluated 4,407 claims, revealing that what is "commonsensical" resembled common knowledge rather than universal truth, highly shaped by cultural and individual perspectives. For instance views on diet, authority, or time may appear intuitive in one context but counterintuitive in another (Whiting & Watts, 2024).

This observation may be relevant for understanding the reception of practices like culturally embedded practices like Inner Engineering. While its core components; awareness, physical posture and self-reflection, are globally recognizable and intuitively understood, they are delivered through a culturally ritualized framework. The use of Sanskrit or Tamil terminology, combined with structured ceremonial settings, imbues these practices with a sense of depth, reverence and legitimacy. This cultural framing may elevate the perceived value of otherwise familiar tools (Björkvall & Nyström Höög, 2019).

Programs like Inner Engineering may therefore succeed not only because of their practical content, but also because they recontextualize simple yet powerful introspective methods in ways that feel meaningful. In fast-paced modern societies, where embodied self-awareness is often neglected, these practices provide a structured path back to integrated, intuitive knowing. Embodied wisdom refers to the integration of internal processes, such as emotional regulation, self-reflection and interoception, with external influences, including cultural

narratives, social relationships and situational learning (Smith, 2018). Over time, this integration supports wiser reasoning and adaptive responses to life's complexities (Smith, 2018).

The findings from this study resonate with the tenets of Positive Psychology, which emphasize strengths-based approaches; inherent strengths, capabilities and resources. Meaning-making; understanding and making sense of life events, and psychological resilience (Park et al., 2014). Ryff and Singer's (2008) model of psychological well-being is also deeply interwoven with positive resilience-oriented approaches. The practitioners' reflections echo the principles of Self-Determination Theory [SDT] (Ryan & Deci, 2000), particularly in how they experience a strengthened sense of autonomy and competence. For instance, the voluntary nature of practice, the feeling of inner mastery, and the connection to a supportive environment align with SDT's core needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Although Self-Determination Theory defines relatedness as connection to others, practitioners' narratives suggest an expanded form of relatedness, one that includes connection to nature, to animals and to a larger cosmic or spiritual order. These broader forms of connection may similarly satisfy the need for belonging and support inner well-being.

6.2 Methodological Discussion

This study relied on practitioners' self-reported experiences. While these accounts are rich in insight, future research could benefit from triangulating perspectives, including those of peers or family members, asking: was there a change?

A limitation is that all interviews took place within the Isha Foundation's premises, a structured, spiritually oriented setting that may have influenced how practitioners framed their experiences in terms of social expectation and institutional alignment (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). These contextual factors should be considered when "interpreting" the data and assessing its transferability to everyday settings. Limited generalizability (Kamper, 2020) is a constraint, as findings are context specific. Replicating the outcomes of immersive environments such as the ashram may be challenging in everyday contexts as factors such as time constraints, socioeconomic barriers and limited health literacy frequently hinder individuals from engaging in sustained well-being practices (Allen-Meares et al., 2020).

It is also worth considering how the practitioners' teaching the program and their relatively high objective and subjective social status within the ashram may have shaped their positive experiences. Curhan et al. (2014) showed that subjective social status was more strongly associated with life satisfaction, positive affect and purpose in Western contexts, while objective status was more predictive in collectivist cultures. Although this was not directly measured in the present study, such insights may help explain variations in perceived well-being and should be considered in future research.
As the primary researcher, assumptions, biases and experiences may have influenced how the data were categorized, despite efforts to remain objective.

In an effort to enhance trustworthiness, qualitative methods were applied in both data collection and analysis, drawing on the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) as a guiding framework (Tong et al., 2007).
Credibility was supported by capturing participants' experiences verbatim, ensuring their voices were accurately represented (Olsson & Sörensen, 2021; Tong et al., 2007).
Dependability was addressed through a transparent and consistent research process. To ensure familiarity with the structure and content of the Inner Engineering program, and to enable the design of a relevant set of interview questions, the online version of the course was enrolled in as part of the preparatory phase. Confirmability was enhanced through reflexive practices such as field notes, aimed at minimizing researcher bias. Finally, Transferability was facilitated by providing somewhat rich, contextual descriptions to support broader relevance. The findings might apply, or at least offer insights to other groups, places, or situations if the context is similar enough (Tong et al., 2007).

The study sought to highlight accessible, non-clinical practices that promote emotional and mental well-being. While the participants were all engaged in Inner Engineering practices and not representative of vulnerable or marginalized groups.
Although the sample does not reflect socioeconomic diversity in a systematic way, the narratives emphasized low-cost, widely applicable strategies, such as exposure to sunlight, AUM-sounding, conscious diet and sleep, which align with equity-based health promotion principles (WHO, 2021).

Despite the researcher's background as a trained opera singer and several decades as a performer, with deep practical and theoretical knowledge of breath regulation, no interview questions specifically addressed participants' experiences of breathwork or conscious breathing. In hindsight, this represents a missed opportunity to explore a potentially significant dimension of embodiment and autonomic regulation within Inner Engineering. As someone professionally trained in deep breath regulation through opera, the absence of questions on breathing reflects a taken-for-granted familiarity. Ironically, this blind spot might underscore the depth of embodied knowledge that might not be captured unless explicitly addressed. Knowledge that, in practical settings, often requires guided instruction and experience to fully transmit.

A strength of this study was the depth and richness of the interview material, (97 A4 pages Verdana 12 font) with participants providing detailed and reflective narratives, with follow-up questions to clarify or deepen the participants' narratives, which allowed for richer and more nuanced insights. Data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015) was approached, supported by four additional pilot interviews (I6-I9) (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). Triangulation through field notes further enhanced credibility. Reflexivity (Barrett et al., 2020) was practiced throughout the process and a manifest approach ensured that the results text stayed close to the participants' actual words. Both the field notes Appendix [4] and the extracted Meaning units Appendix [6] are included in the appendices to enhance the credibility and traceability.

The sample consisted of participants selected through snow-ball and purposive sampling, which aligns with qualitative research standards that emphasize depth and richness of data over statistical representativeness (Palinkas et al., 2015). By interviewing multiple participants from diverse backgrounds with varied experience levels of Inner Engineering (2-25 yrs), male and female genders, cross-validated the findings through varied perspectives.

The study may help to fill a gap regarding how Inner Engineering practices are subjectively experienced by experienced participants, offering qualitative insights.

7. Health Promotion and Health Promoters

Health promoters can facilitate meaningful improvements in mental and emotional well-being by designing adaptable, culturally relevant and empowering interventions. Low-threshold practices, like early morning walks, time in nature, movement, Om-chanting, humming,

conscious breathing. Brief, accessible sessions with practical stress management tools designed for easy integration into daily routines, requiring minimal resources and perhaps being particularly effective. Digital platforms can enhance their reach by offering scalable, personalized support (Wright et al., 2023).
Such tools are especially valuable for reaching underserved populations and especially relevant for youth, as nearly half of all mental disorders begin during adolescence, and in more than a third, the disorder emerges by the age of 14 (Wright et al., 2023). During the transition period from childhood to adulthood, young people face a number of social, physical and emotional challenges (academic expectations, physical changes, identity and role development) which make them highly vulnerable. Peer-based models, such as online communities or group-based programs, can boost connectedness and accountability, factors for lasting change (Wright et al., 2023).

One effective strategy is to foster a growth mindset -the belief that abilities can be developed through effort and perseverance (Dweck & Yaeger, 2019). This study may inspire individuals to utilize easily accessible tools that support recovery from setbacks, enhance intrinsic motivation and focus on modifiable factors such as effort and strategy use, which enhances both emotional resilience and empowerment (Pahwa & Khan, 2022; Zimmermann, 2000). Interventions that promote positive self-talk and reflection on personal growth further strengthen psychological flexibility and a mindset of continuous development (Burnette, 2013; Claro, 2016; Dweck & Jaeger, 2019) Evidence from neuroscience further reinforces the possibility of meaningful change through consistent practice (Burnette, 2013; Claro, 2016; Dweck & Jaeger, 2019).

While digital interventions improve access and convenience, they may not fully replicate the depth or transformative capacity of immersive, embodied practices. Nevertheless, combining accessible formats with evidence-based content can form a bridge between everyday life and longer-term well-being.

8. New Research Questions

1. What are the long-term physiological effects of Inner Engineering practices at Isha Foundation, particularly in relation to sleep, diet and metabolic health.
2. How do levels of GABA and glutamate differ between engaging in Inner Engineering, walking, breathwork, meditation or time in nature?

3. Can guided humming be used as a low-threshold, community-based intervention to promote self-regulation and mental well-being?
4. What physiological and psychological effects can be observed from integrating vocal vibration techniques (humming, toning) into preventive health routines?
5. Does vocal sounding practice improve sleep quality, emotional resilience, or perceived well-being over time?
6. What is the impact of sunlight exposure on mood in urban environments compared to rural areas?
7. Why is there a lack of common sense in the modern world?
8. In what ways can contemplative practices enhance mental and emotional well-being within diverse populations and public health settings?
9. How does highly processed, carbohydrate rich foods affect mood in adolescents?
10.To what extent can autonomy and competence be accessed or utilized by individuals with diminished emotional and physiological capacity, such as those experiencing depression?

9. Conclusion

Emotional Resilience and Regulation, understood as the capacity to navigate emotions, adapt to challenges and sustain psychological well-being, emerged as a central category in this study. Participants' described a perceived shift away from reactive stress responses such as fight and flight, toward a more stable, self-regulated state. This transformation appeared to be facilitated through daily contemplative practices and aligns with the holistic emphasis found in contemporary health promotion and stress management frameworks.

While Inner Engineering offers a structured and user-oriented program that integrates various elements, it is important to acknowledge that none of these components are proprietary or unique. Rather they reflect universal, time-honored tools found across spiritual and secular traditions worldwide.

There is currently no empirical evidence indicating that Inner Engineering is more effective than other established modalities for enhancing well-being or reducing physiological markers. Comparable outcomes may be achieved through other methods, such as mindful breathing, silent sitting, humming, or even time spent in natural settings.

The strength of Inner Engineering arguably lies in its coherent conceptual architecture. Its brevity, systematic structure and accessible language may support motivation, retention and integration into daily life.

For the participants this practical framework appeared to create space for more conscious self-regulation, emotionally, physically and mentally.

The metaphor of "gaining a remote control" over one's emotions, mirrors Bandura's (1977) concept of self-efficacy and aligns with mindfulness-based models of detachment and witness consciousness (Kabat Zinn, 2025), observing one's thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations without over-identification. Participants' narratives suggest that when individuals are supported in developing deeper self-awareness, they also tend to gain greater agency over their emotional and behavioural responses. This aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which emphasizes autonomy, competence and relatedness as key drivers of intrinsic motivation and well-being.

By integrating insights from neuroscience, behavioural science and Eastern contemplative traditions, this study may contribute to a growing interdisciplinary conversation on how self-regulatory practices can support health and flourishing.

While the small and specific sample does not allow for statistical generalization, the findings may offer analytically valuable insight into how low-threshold, daily practices could support resilience, particularly among individuals facing long-term illness, caregiving responsibilities, or socioeconomic challenges.
From a health promotive standpoint, these practices shift the focus from symptom management to the proactive development of internal protective resources.

Emotional resilience is not a fixed trait (Kuldas & Foody, 2022) but a capacity that can and should be cultivated, ideally from early age. Schools, families and community programs that promote emotional literacy, psychological flexibility and self-awareness create stronger foundations for long-term well-being. These findings resonate with salutogenic and empowerment-based approaches in health promotion, which emphasize the strengthening of internal capacities over risk reduction alone. Inner stability, self-awareness and emotional agency represent crucial components of sustainable mental health, particularly in a time of increasing complexity and external uncertainty.

While this study does not address structural factors directly, the findings suggest that inner-directed, low thresh-hold, accessible approaches may serve as valuable complements to broader systemic efforts at societal, institutional, and policy levels. Valuable in public health promotion beyond clinical or therapeutic settings that aim to create environments supportive of emotional resilience and sustainable well-being, particularly in contexts marked by chronic stress or emotional strain.

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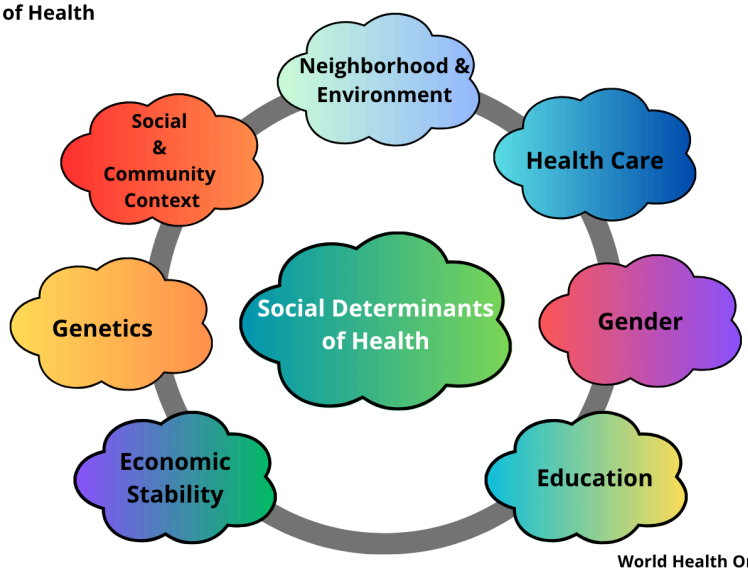
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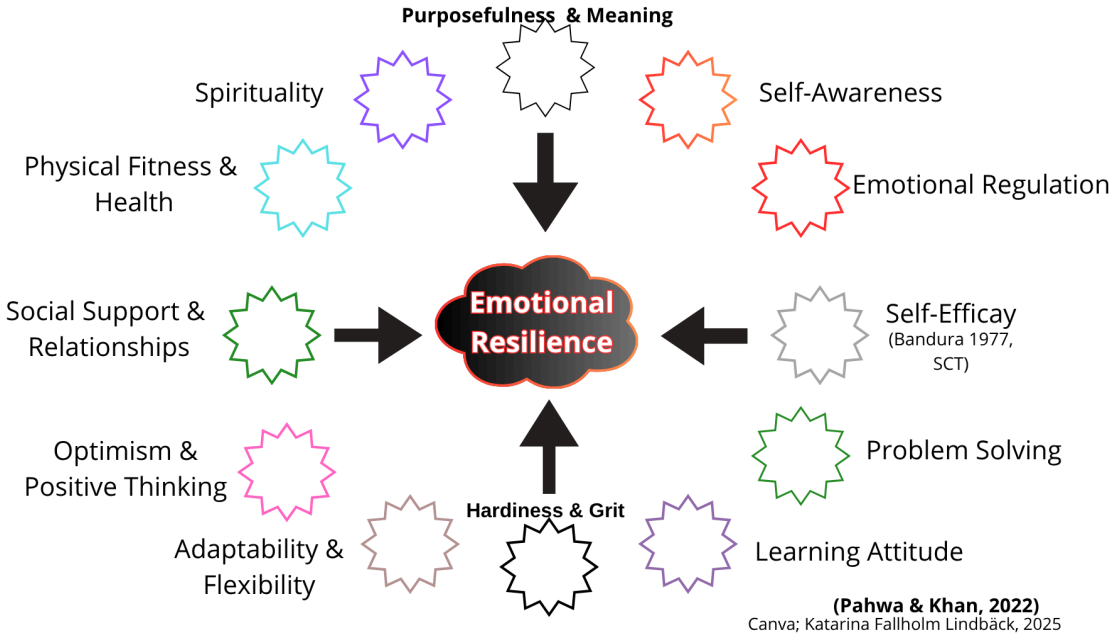
Appendix 1: Social Determinants of Health Chart

Social Determinants of Health
chart



World Health Organisation (2024)
Canva; Katarina Fallholm Lindbäck, 2025

Appendix 2: Emotional Resilience Chart



Appendix 3: The Stress Response System

The Stress Response System

Two Core Axes:
SAM Axis (Sympatho-Adrenal-Medullary Axis)
HPA Axis (Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis)

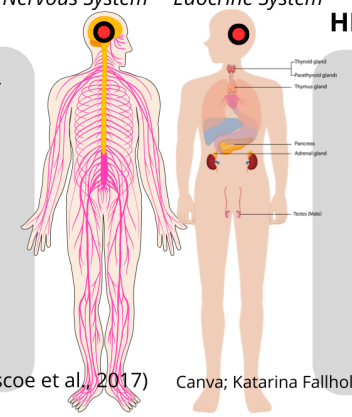
The HPA axis is activated both during acute and prolonged stress situations and regulates a broader and more sustained stress response through the release of cortisol into the bloodstream from the zona fasciculata in the adrenal cortex.
The activation is endocrine.

Constant activation of the SAM axis can lead to

- chronically elevated levels of adrenaline and noradrenaline,
- which may result in
- prolonged increases in
- heart rate, blood pressure, anxiety,
- and sleep disturbances.

(Nesse et al., 2016; Pascoe et al., 2017)

Nervous System *Edocrine System*



Canva; Katarina Fallholm Lindbäck, 2025

Constant activation of the HPA axis can lead to



- Insulin resistance
- Hypertension
- Central obesity
- Dyslipidemia
- Type 2 diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease
- Suppressed immune function
- Chronic inflammation
- Disruption in reproductive and metabolic hormones

Appendix 4: Summary of Field Notes

The ditches from Coimbatore, along the way to Isha Foundation, were filled with garbage and plastic and several fires were made to burn the garbage creating a toxic smell, so I held my breath. Having lived in India previously this was not entirely surprising, but 40 years later, one might expect some environmental progress.

Located approximately 40-45 minutes by taxi from Coimbatore, the winding access roads were shared with cows, goats and dogs.

As we were getting closer the area: Isha Foundation, was framed within high stonewalls and barbed wire, with several lines of very tall palm trees and guards at the entries/exits. My booking confirmation was checked by an armed guard and luggage was checked through an x-ray machine at arrival. I found myself smiling instinctively, as a way to disarm.

Interviews were to be conducted within the premises of the Isha Foundation in Tamil Nadu, Velliangiri Foothills, Coimbatore, India, a vast area spanning several square kilometres.

In early February, the climate was hot during the day and a bit chilly at night.

Noisy

The campus was bustling with activity. Golf carts, mopeds, bicycles and other vehicles moved swiftly between the welcome area and the various residential quarters. From what I gathered, a high level of noise was coming from the kitchen area, a large building located directly across from the food service section.

Cows pulling carts with visitors and luggage, accompanied by their characteristic bells, seemed like an attempt to give the bustling centre a more rural atmosphere.

This busy and noisy environment was not what I had anticipated from an ashram.

From 4:30 a.m. until 10 or 11 p.m., the sounds of drumming, chanting, vehicles and shouting (including artificial bird-chirping made by people) filled the air.

Interestingly, as I had prepared myself by bringing a mosquito-bed with me all the way from Sweden, I did - thankfully, not encounter a single mosquito within Isha, as I am highly allergic, though they appeared immediately upon stepping outside the compound after sun

set. There was no air-conditioning in the living quarters that I noticed or heard summing either. Only ceiling-fans. And on top of my residential building was a landscape of solar panels. And I noticed a helicopter landing pad from the roof top.

Interviews

I worried about a lot of things before my trip; vaccines, visa, packing, housing, food, logistics, but never the interviews.

I had already made four pilot interviews during my first two days at the ashram and had started to transcribe them. Interviews with women staying at the ashram coming from different parts of the world, three of them living and working there as volunteers. Aged between 48-73. From a range of global regions like Europe, Latin America and Southern Africa.

And a very helpful and supportive male Indian staff member (volunteer) at the Welcome Point connected me with a senior female "monk" a Maa, who promptly facilitated five more interviews -exactly as outlined in the PM submitted to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) via the university's international office. I also shared the aim of the study with her. Facilitators of the Inner Engineering program reached out almost immediately via WhatsApp and we could book meetings within the week I was staying at the foundation.

Participants

Most interviews were conducted at the outdoor garden within the walls of Spanda Hall area, one sitting on plastic chairs under a beautiful mango tree and four on tree benches under a small stone pergola immersed in growing plants by the entrance gate. A beautiful setting with calming quiet energy and a lot of small squirrels.

One interview was conducted near Spanda Hall, on the stairs of a private cottage in the sun and three interviews just beside welcome point administrative spaces, at nighttime, sitting on the stone floor under a tree with one person meditating beside us. And two other interviews in the same space during daylight close to the welcome point.

The interview locations were selected based on participant preference and availability of quiet surroundings. Despite occasional environmental distractions, each session provided

valuable insight into the lived experiences of Inner Engineering participants. And I really liked them all. The interviews actually made my stay at the foundation.

Interviews varied in tone and depth. While some participants were initially reserved, requiring time to build rapport, others were immediately expressive and reflective. I got the feeling they were happy to do the interviews despite initial nerves.

In my mind they were completely different personalities. One was very calm and pleasant, blinking with beautiful eyes and a smile for every question, answering with a beautiful voice, wanting to explore and give in-depth answers. One was sharp as a razor and waited impatiently for each new question, sitting with a straight back and a serious demeanour. One felt like an old friend and another lost in deep thoughts somehow.

One seemed more anxious about the situation and mentioned that Harvard had already made a study on Inner Engineering. So I explained that my study is a qualitative, not quantitative study like the Harvard study by Upadhyay.

One participant was like a teacher explaining with metaphors and real-life stories. Yet another was interested in my persona with the underlying question “friend or foe?” and as they decided on “friend” elaborate answers were given as well as personal anecdotes.

In one case, the participant appeared to be monitored, as a tall male monk suddenly stood nearby and came closer during the interview.

Though all participants in the study had extensive experience of Inner Engineering differences in expression and depth of engagement were evident. Notably, they expressed diverse motivations for joining the ashram, often linked to a desire for inner stability, detachment from previous stressors, or a shift in life priorities.

Several described the program as a turning point in their lives, some reporting a beautiful life prior to Inner Engineering, yet their narratives also suggested underlying tensions, such as real world past trauma, social withdrawal, or dissatisfaction.

One interview had to be terminated earlier due to the participant’s health-related issue, a consistent cough (in line with a world spread influenza at the time). Which limited the opportunity to ask final questions. Nevertheless, the data collected up to that point was sufficiently detailed for inclusion in the study..

Overall, the field experience revealed a complex interplay between personal transformation, institutional structure (food, sleep, noise) and spiritual aspiration.

While all participants were fluent in English, I found it necessary to review the recordings multiple times due to some differences in accent, dialect and linguistic rhythm. And although I have a good command of the English language, many expressions were new to me. So I learned a lot.

I conducted nine interviews at the ashram which may seem like a small number, but they yielded over 97 A4-pages of transcribed material with in-depth responses to my questions. This kept me fully engaged throughout my whole stay (56 days in India), together with zoom-meetings with my university from my Brahmaputra room, my home-stay in Coimbatore and a villa by the Arabic Sea in Goa.

The interview process felt highly meaningful, and I briefly considered recruiting additional participants. I reached out to the Isha centre in Goa but received no reply and there appeared to be no current programs running there either, at the time. I also contacted the Isha centre in New Delhi, as I planned to spend a few days there before returning home (after completing the 56-day stay required by Sida), but no response was received from that location either.

Since the practitioners' responses were consistent and revealed similar themes, a sense of saturation was reached, and I doubted whether additional interviews would have yielded significantly different insights. When considering both the pilot interviews and the facilitator interviews together, they provide a coherent and rich picture of the perceived effects of the Inner Engineering program.

During the data collection phase, I noticed a subtle but meaningful difference in tone and content between the pilot interviews and those with the facilitators. The pilot participants tended to share experiences that felt more esoteric, reflecting a deeply personal and spiritual engagement with Inner Engineering. In contrast, the facilitators' accounts were noticeably more grounded, practical. This variation offered valuable insight into the diverse ways the practice is embodied and articulated across different participant groups.

From my personal perspective, I approach esoteric or spiritual experiences with a grounded mindset aligning with the facilitators approach. While I acknowledge and value our connection to the universe and the expansive nature of consciousness, I do also emphasize the

importance of remaining present in the physical reality of the body and its limitations. It is essential in my mind not to lose oneself in abstract or purely spiritual ideas to the point of neglecting the practical and embodied aspects of human life. This balance between openness to inner growth and grounded awareness of the body's reality informs both my personal approach and my "interpretation" of participants' experiences. And as we are living in a body with 35-40 billion cells and an equal amount of bacteria we need to give them - that keeps us alive, what they need in order to do a "great job" so we can live a long and healthy life until we die. Science (Einstein's E=mc2) has found that everything in the universe, including atoms, molecules, and electromagnetic waves, has a measurable frequency or vibration, and I acknowledge that all beings emit an energetic frequency or vibration that influences well-being, emotions and interactions.

My perspective bridges scientific understanding of physical vibrations with holistic views of energetic interconnectedness, providing a framework for interpreting subtle influences on well-being and consciousness, for sure.

My own experience with the program through the internet (I did not complete step 7- the last step) was that it was based on *common sense*.

To me, much of what Inner Engineering teaches reflects basic common sense, principles that many have simply lost touch with. Common sense is not something easy for everyone, it also needs some hard-core practice.

"Reflection rather than reaction".

We had a "similar" program at the university of Gothenburg Theatre and Opera school, to wait **"three seconds"** before an action or reaction. A Stanislavski-based acting method. If we sustain the reaction further than three seconds we might stop the automatic impulse and instead allow a conscious, embodied response to emerge, one that is more aligned with intention, presence and awareness rather than old patterns or reactivity.

In today's fast-paced world, younger generations are often not taught these foundational life skills. And when such common-sense ideas are wrapped in Tamil or Hindi terminology, they may appear more profound or exotic, though at their core, they often address universal human needs.

Being at Isha felt a lot.

Stressful noise disturbing sleep, traffic, hierarchist behaviour from store workers, guards and functionaries spread across the area.

Additionally, the volunteers I interviewed for my pilot, - mature women - like myself, displayed a form of submission that, in my view, appeared unhealthy. Based on the lived experiences they shared with me, I sensed they were not always treated with the respect they deserved, which left me feeling uneasy. Thinking they should pack up and leave.

I also personally encountered some disrespect at the site store on the way from Brahmaputra, where I stayed and around the Chandrakund area.

On the way from Brahmaputra to the welcome point, I saw a small shop and decided to stop.

Just as I reached the entrance, an Indian woman exiting the store snapped at me:

"You have to take your shoes off."

Standing on the doormat outside, I replied:

"I only have a question."

From inside, the two cashiers responded in unison:

"Take your shoes off, and then we'll answer your question."

"Okay, bye!" said I and walked away.

As if I would remove my sneakers and socks just to ask a simple question: *"Do you sell towels?"*

I am, and have always been, very resistant to pointless rules, especially when people overinterpret them. Rules should have a purpose, not just be followed blindly.

Would they have asked their own mother (I'm 60) to take off her shoes just to ask a question?

Chandrakund is a large water reservoir, designed as a sacred energy space, used for ritualistic immersion. The pool is housed in a domed, stone structure and is filled with energized water, said to help balance and purify the lunar energy channel in yogic physiology.

Chandrakund is intended specifically for women (while *Suryakund* is for men), supporting inner receptivity and preparing the system for deeper meditative experiences.

Inside, the female functionairs behaved like prison guards from the series “Orange is the new black” screaming: “AKKA take shower, AKKA Schsssss, AKKA stand here, AKKA wait, AKKA hairnet…” harsh, stressful and unsettling, especially in a setting otherwise associated with inner peace and reflection.

The Brazilian asked if I felt anything from the energized water, I answered “No” disturbed by the stressful “back-stage” environment, but I actually did feel something. Sadly I never wanted to go back there again.

Having experienced Mumbai 38 years ago (1985-87) while traveling back and forth from my home in New York, I recognized the familiar patterns of deference and hierarchical behaviour. These dynamics, still present today, (2025) were not surprising to me. As evolution takes time. It highlighted a broader concern: when rules are enforced without warmth or context, they risk alienating the very people such spaces aim to serve.

Considering that guests contribute financially to the ashram and long-term volunteers often dedicate their life savings while working without pay, this treatment was disheartening. I started asking myself: What happens to long term volunteers spending decades volunteering at the ashram, once they are old and not able to volunteer? Since they volunteer full time, they probably will not have money saved up for retirement. Does an ashram provide any safety net for them? That could be a new research question for ashrams all over.

Still, I’m grateful to have had the opportunity to visit the site, even briefly and to have met the remarkable individuals who generously shared their stories during the interviews.

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Appendix 5: What, How and Why - Interview Questions

This appendix includes the full set of questions used during data collection.

Interview Questions

1. Is the program easy to follow and understand?
2. What are the main reasons individuals engage in Inner Engineering?
3. How do you believe the practice of inner engineering can affect your daily life, for example, work, personal, health or other areas?
4. What are the general outcomes from regular Inner Engineering practice?
5. What aspect of Inner Engineering can be most helpful?
6. How has Inner Engineering provided You with tools to promote Your health?
7. What is the most difficult when practicing Inner Engineering?
8. How can anyone overcome those obstacles?
9. How does the program influence work, relationships, family, friends?
10. How has Inner Engineering influenced your perspective on promoting health?
11. What aspects of Inner Engineering do you find most supportive for long-term health and promoting health?
12. How can Inner Engineering help others improve their health?
13. How can Inner Engineering influence your ability to handle difficulties in life?
14. How can Inner Engineering strengthen individuals' sense of control over their life?
15. How can Inner Engineering help individuals build a more optimistic view of the future?
16. How can Inner Engineering help you stay resilient when facing setbacks or obstacles?
17. How does the sounding AAA…UUU…MMM (AUM) affect health?
18. Is there a question you would have liked me to ask concerning Inner Engineering as health promotive?
19. What makes you happy?
20. When do you feel the happiest?
21. Why is there only vegetarian food?
22. How do you use the Sun as a health promoter?
25. How is sleep important in promoting health?
26. In your experience what types of people seem to benefit the most from the program?
27. What are the main objectives of Inner Engineering?
28. Are there any common challenges that the participants face during the program?
29. Have You observed noticeable transformations in participants over the course of the program?
30. Do participants report changes in their daily life after completing Inner Engineering?
31. What are the expected outcomes?
32. How does the setting contribute to the experience? architecture, nature, rituals?

Appendix 6: Meaning Units (Verbatim, by Interview)

Interview 1 (I1):
The program is well structured. I used to be unhealthy and unfit. The Program was easy to understand and the understanding goes deeper each time. I had no expectations of the program Looking for a support system I came from a field with a lot of stress, anxiety, a rat race. Dealt with physical health issues and a neural disorder. Hormonal issues. Physicians blamed stress. Needed to address health and stability in terms of emotional, mental anxiety and stress. I see teeneagers are looking for something more. Middle aged are seeking something more. It's like life has come to a standstill, with a lot of health issues. I see 30-40 yrs old people with high blood pressure, diabetes, stiffness, arthritis, a sedentary lifestyle. Participants are looking for physical health benefits and some relief from anxiety from the day to day hustle. Some participants seek something beyond the physical. They are seeking meditation and yoga. They want to deepen the experience of meditation and yoga. Before the program I was at a low phase, even when everything was happening perfectly on the outside. I was not able to deal with life because of my health. I struggled with anxiety and stress.

I just felt nothing makes sense.
What's the point of living?

I could see after three four days that sitting on the floor became effortless

Slowly I felt the body settling in, and I had become more flexible.

Stress and anxiety affected relationships during day to day activities.

I’m sleeping less and am physically so active

I’m sleeping just what's needed for the body.

Insomnia just went.

I just released whatever is there and I felt very different.

I just felt this is magic

I could clearly see my health getting better.

I was able to handle situations better.

I was able to see, okay I made a mistake.

I was drowning and this was something which step by step came out of it.

I would still never say it’s a cure.

I’ve seen people are able to handle their rage, anger, emotions better.

They handle Love more gracefully and the day to day stress and anxiety.

Everybody have their own journey and things that they are struggling with.

I’ve seen them coming out of it.

I see it as a complete package with many tools.

Different people relate to different aspects.

If you do it, if you use it, it works.

It has definitely helped me come out of ill health.

People say they don’t have time, but they lack commitment.

So step by step Your body just slowly gets into the practice.

By the time they leave they are feeling amazing, and the body is also used to it.

Most keep up the practice because of the wonders of the experience.

I never had good relationships with anyone, I was always on the edge, ready to fight.

Slowly as I practiced I can clearly see that my relationships turned better.

I am able to see where the other person is coming from.

I am able to see their best.

Now I feel there's a balance within me after five six years. It’s not even good and bad.

This is how I am moment to moment reality check that I am not perfect.

I also have my own drama and limitations.

Whomever is coming I am able to include them much more.

The only direction the youngsters could think of to cope with anxiety and stress is alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, one night stands.

Meditation is not just about being serious.
You can be playful, you can be joyful in whatever you are doing, your chores, your job, everything.

People staying at home have their own stress, and in general their health has gone down.

Physically if you’re not doing well it’s like a cycle you’re not mentally doing well either.

Do the practice and You can see how you’ll be able to sail through your day.

Outside situations are still the same but something within has changed and grown.

Awareness has come.

I am more conscious in responding, even if it’s in anger I’m consciously responding to situations.

I will not say I’ve reached 100%, it’s a process.
I clearly see it’s growing over a period of time.

You may not have control over outside situations, but what's happening within you.

You can plan things better, you are clearer on what you want in life, your priorities.

You are much more aware of situations around you, you start seeing what you really want.

You are able to plan your future without getting stuck.

I will not say I don’t get sad or feel bad about a setback, but I am able to handle it more gracefully.

I am able to handle it on my own.

I do feel, but I am empowered, I feel that I can handle it and come out of it on my own. That is very empowering.

You can experience all kinds of emotions but not get carried away.

It’s a very powerful tool to create your life the way you want and without getting caught up with

outside situations.

Inside things are still settled.

My lifestyle food choice was always vegetarian.

And I feel vegetarian food helps my body.

The sun makes you feel more alive , and vitamin D is there.

There are physical, mental, emotional health benefits and it's a very powerful tool to empower you to create your life.

Engineering yourself.

They are struggling on set, but when they leave they have tears of gratitude in their eyes.

If you sit without expectations, that is the best way.

You can be wherever you are and do the practice

Interview 2 (I2):

The program is easy to understand.

Some is searching for some meditation or yoga.

When I started to practice I felt a little more relaxed, a little more conscious about my thoughts, a little more pleasant within myself.

There was an improvement in my personal relationships with parents, family members, even the workplace.

My physical stamina had huge improvement.

In terms of efficiency I'm a little more focused and pleasant.

I got the courage to explore what I really wanted.

The concern that 'I should earn my living' is gone.

I struggled so I was exploring various spiritual places in India.

I was looking for a "real thing".

There is a lot of improvement in terms of physical and mental health.

Being calmer, peaceful, joyful.

You are able to function better in terms of relationships.

Once you are pleasant within yourself you're not trying to use other people as an instrument of joy.

Your joy is not dependent on another..

You are not expecting anything from them, just sharing your pleasantness.

How we can keep ourselves pleasant, joyful and conscious of what is happening within,
and doing the Shambhavi mahamudra practice for a few weeks, will make a difference in physical and mental health.

The practice does something to our physics, intellect and energy.

If participants don't understand we tell them to just be with the session

Just being with the process is important.

A certain level of involvement is needed.

Food I previously had a compulsion to eat has reduced naturally.

I became conscious of how different foods are behaving within my system, how my body is responding to different types of food.

The acidity in digestion and constipation I now know how to manage.

I manage certain kinds of thought processes, stressful situations.

I've become more conscious of how, what and when I eat.

And also mentally feeling very low, I was not a very happy kind of person.

I could see the distance between my thought process, emotions and me.

But being more aware and using the Inner Engineering tools I can stay away from getting entangled.

It is not a difficult practice, but if you have injuries, it can be difficult to do certain things.

But they also suggest modifications in how to do the practice even if you have an injury

Slowly over a period of time the body will get more flexible.

The expectation to do the practice daily and for the first 40 days twice a day, may be difficult to include in peoples schedules.

But with some adjustment and the kind of long term impact the practice will have on life in terms of health, prioritizing the program could easily be done.

People may also find the empty stomach condition difficult. Four hours gap after a meal and two and a half hours gap after a snack and one and a half hours after beverage.

Two meals a day.

Snacks when available, I prefer a fruit.

Juice is also fine.
More physical activity craves a snack.

If it's a fruit I'm fine, but if I'm eating something fried, not.

I eat both meals until I am full.

The basis of a relationship should be an expression of joy from your side, it should not be attracting the joy from the other person, only then it will be a healthy relationship.

Once we are aware of our thought process and emotions the dependency and expectancy on the other person being in a certain way for us to be joyful is not there. And the relationship will improve.

I feel I was able to understand my parents and close relatives better

I feel the way I conduct my relationships has improved a lot with Inner Engineering.

Basically there is a lot of improvement in how I conduct my relationships.

Once I understood myself better, becoming more calm, pleasant and conscious my capability to handle situations enhanced.

You will better handle difficulties in career, relationships or any current difficulty.

When I am not able to continue my Sadhana [like a reset button for mind and energy]I can see I am not pleasant or getting agitated.

But once I come back (to Sadhana)
I am seeing a huge level of freedom within me.

So the tools, whether it's physical Sadhana or just intellectual, by consciously looking at things it helps me handle situations, keeping myself calm and pleasant.

When I am consciously asking for a situation to be better, it happens.

And when I become conscious I am not asking for something out of desperation.

Being a little more aware within, I am able to see the solution.

I become more settled when I become conscious:

Am I approaching this correctly?

So talking to myself may be a little casual talk like 'why are you doing this?'

If you invest time in inner wellbeing it will take care of your life the way you want it.

Once we are capable, balanced and pleasant within ourselves, naturally we have more control over our life-situations.

So becoming successful in career will not be difficult or definitely better.

Being a realist is important rather than being an optimist or pessimist.

Being balanced and pleasant within, naturally I see the future.
If I can act better right now, the future will be better.

If I am aware that my mind, emotions, the situation around me is not the way I want, just being aware makes a huge difference.

If You know what the problem is, 50% of the problem is solved.

If I'm aware that the situation is unpleasant or I am unpleasant within, there is more scope for me to find the right thing to do.

You're seeing what is there right now and what could improve the situation.

AUM- chanting is very helpful for a weak health situation, psychological conditions, lack of sleep.

It will definitely impact health.

People under medication for life were able to come out of it by just keeping doing the AUM chant.

Personally I see the difference whenever I chant AUM for a certain period of time.

When I don't know the reason why I am feeling stressed I do the AUM.

When I do the AUM for a certain duration I can see the instant difference.

If I keep up for a few days I can see improvement especially in the mental thought pattern, and emotionally I am more settled and pleasant.

The vibration that happen when you chant is key, the pitch doesn't matter.

Some people come and say they are not able to feel the vibration, doing it in a very high pitch and using the throat too much.

I suggest they go lower.

The rest are figuring it out by themselves.

In the world people are running behind comforts.
Comfort is Success.

Being successful in terms of studies, being better than the person next to you, the competitive things is being keyed into everyone.

We need some tools to adjust our inner well-being on a daily basis which can keep us pleasant and balanced.

I can see the clear difference within before and after the program.
If I skip the practice, there is a huge difference.

People in the world should have access to these tools which can make them pleasant.

All of us are connected, so a sense of belonging or sense of taking care of the other should be

brought back.

Having access to these tools of inner well-being is important.

For a larger change to happen the fundamental is to bring a shift in human consciousness.

It is not limited to mental or physical wellbeing, it's deeper, addressing the source of creation.

Sleep is important for health.

There is a lot of reduction in sleep quota since I started doing the practice.

With five and a half hours of sleep I feel rested and awake.

Sadhguru says that all of us are solar powered.
The Sun is the basis.

Sun exposure is important, it gives physical and mental health benefits.

I see that all types of people benefit and yoga works for people who do it.

Anyone who is able to keep up with the tools of practice will benefit.

I have observed that someone who is looking forward to the program and is involved in the process benefit more.

Fundamentally I see someone who trusts and is involved with the process definitely benefit

Someone who is not fully involved with the process are not able to derive much from the program.

It is fundamentally offering tools we can use in our daily lives.

A way of living consciously every day.

Tools which can help us keep the muddle of the mind aside.

Inner Engineering is a complete package of inner well-being.

If we keep ourselves, our body, mind, emotions and energy pleasant, joyful and blissful it can work miraculously.

Interview 3 (I3):

The many people that come, come to explore.

I would say almost 50% come to explore.

Then there are other people who could be having a crisis moment in their life.

They want to come to a place within themselves, where they want to think with more clarity.

Generally be more joyful.

I think about 10% might be coming because of health issues.

We don't offer the program as a therapy but generally the perception is that people feel much better, their health issues as well.

It is more meant for people who want to get to know themselves, the nature of what being a human could mean.

The consistent is that they are joyful, lighter, more playful, more relaxed and at ease with themselves.

I was not looking for a program.
I thought my life was fantastic.

Life was generally on track.

I didn't even know that the program could make such a huge difference.

One of the first things I started seeing while doing the program was that everything seemed brighter.

I was paying more attention to the details around me in terms of life.

I was noticing the flowers, birds, bees, small details of life around me.

I was probably to caught up in my mind.

I really started smelling the rain, the grass, the soil…everything around me.

The first thing I noticed was a heightened sense of perception.
I was much more alert and aware.

My need for food and sleep had gone down and I had so many more hours in my day.

I needed less sleep.

Earlier I would sleep for 8 hrs and it was not sufficient.

Now I woke up after 5 or 6 hrs without alarm. I was fresh, not tired.

My sleep was deep and more relaxed.

I started exploring more things and my inner life became richer.

Energy-levels were bouncing to the roof.

My social life became richer because I was able to give more time to people that matter to me.

I was satiated with the food I was eating much earlier.

There were times where I would eat to feel happy.

Because I was just happy by myself, food was bringing joy, but not about filling myself up with joy.

Consequently I was eating almost 40% less food.

But there was no difference in terms of my energy level or how healthy I felt.

So food, work, energy, sleep and relationships with people, - more thoughtful.

It came effortlessly to me to connect with people.

I realised I was paying more attention to people I worked with.

I was looking out for my colleagues more.

If there was an altercation I would just look at that person and not feel bad.

I would like to look at that person and see how I can help them.

Explosive situations at work just got defused.

This was happening with my subordinates, colleagues, seniors at work.

I was looking at everything as a learning opportunity.

I was just grateful to life, getting this opportunity to learn from these situations and people, learning something new.

I felt a huge sense of ease, learn better, pay attention better, be happy around people and not get affected by them.

There was a heightened sense of awareness where I was able to avoid a situation which would have been damaging for me.

I was realizing that walking through life with a little more awareness, being with people. situations, your emotions became more effortless.

After 21 yrs of doing the practice has made a huge difference.
I am able to do a lot more things without getting bogged down.

Things happen and you´re carrying it on your shoulders, in your head and body and it will manifest as health issues.

The immediate things people experience is physical wellbeing.

I’ve seen people come to a certain stillness within, the way they walk, sit, stand, everything improves.

The physical impact is something you can see immediately.

He said the stillness was bringing him a lot of joy and peace, feeling settled and at ease with himself.

People are feeling mentally much more at ease, relaxed.

The sleep, the food definitely get impacted, more balanced.

People find a lot more clarity in the way they think and function.

General outcomes, physical and mental, emotionally the world opens up because the boundaries dissolve.

People keep up very strong boundaries because they don't want to get hurt.

They only allow a certain number of people in their life, whom they feel safe with.

When you don't have an agenda trying to be safe, you're much more open.

A sense of connect with their community, with themselves increase.

If people had the ability to be able to get a hold on how they are conducting their body, their mind, emotions, they would be able to stop the vicious circle which eventually creates a physical disease.

I realised a preventive medicine truly would be the ability to conduct our bodies, minds, emotions, energies with more awareness and understanding.

If people had those tools 90% would not fall sick, and those who would , would be able to conduct their illness.

They will be able to look at the illness, see where they went off and turn it around much faster.

Health issues would be more impacted if people had these tools in their life.

You should want to take care of yourself.

It starts with You.

If You don't step up for yourself and look at where you're going wrong, not really addressing who you are, blaming the rest of the world , you are living in a bubble.

For people to take responsibility for what they've created takes time and needs being a little more straightforward with yourself.

Being more courageous and say 'okay these are my words, I'd better fix them'.

The program begins the process for those who are not able to do it by themselves.
It's a matter of holding on to the process and take it seriously, enhancing life by keeping at it.

Health starts with you.
Health is a byproduct of what Inner Engineering offer.

Yoga does not know disease.
Yoga means Union.

You are part of this creation not seeing yourself as separate from everything else.

When you lose that sync, that is when you start falling sick, start being at dis-ease.

Inner Engineering helps you arrive at the place where health is a natural consequence.

Stress is like a story you tell yourself and you believe that story and then it becomes a real story.

Nobody is trying to get you, everybody is just fighting their own survival in their own bubble.

Keeping the kriya on definitely keeps you going.

When your physical chemistry is something that you take care of on a daily basis, then being in sync with life happens much more effortlessly.

When you are joyful by yourself and your chemistry is joyful, then it becomes effortless to just see another human being as a part of you.

Difficulty could be described as either a physical, emotional or community situation that you are not able to deal with.

If You start looking at the realm of 'How do I get it done?' then you'll look at situations differently.

If you don't have the physical capacity you set an expectation: 'Let me figure out a way to get it done'

Emotional expectation:

If the source of joy is you, you are not dependent on anybody else to validate your life and who you are.

When you don't need anybody else to validate you, you are not affected or hurt by expectations, you only deal with the situation.

When you are not dependent on somebody else for emotional happiness, you are just happy, you don't need anyone else to fill your bucket.

Community situation:

Things are happening in your community that are not okay with you and you want to look at what you can do about it.

You simply see life the way it is

The physical, emotional and community social situation is dealt with, without expectations.

If you are simply happy by yourself you go out and deal with it.

Everything is so much easier If you are simply happy by yourself.

Just being in sync, at ease, you know how to navigate the terrain better. Not by being in control.

I go with the flow, but with more clarity, still being focused.

I go with the terrain mentally prepared because I understand the reality of it.

Whatever comes up I make sure that the choices I end up making do not affect my health and wellbeing.

Setbacks and obstacles are more about; you're not happy things don't happen your way.

But if you approach every situation like 'Let's explore and see what happens' then you're not dependent on the situation to make you happier.

We still want it to happen our way but we're not setting an expectation.

It's more where do I need to nudge, what are the tools I need and lets go and find them.

The whole creation is a sound, and AUM is supposed to be a universal sound.

In my experience I realised that whenever I'm doing aum-chanting, there is a lot of stillness, there is a lot of ease in my breath, I'm still, more aware of my breath.

I feel at ease in the way I speak, the way I think.

It brings a lot of stillness and a lot more peace.

I usually don't have boundaries with people, I don't need a lot of time to strike a rapport, I'm enjoying people, seeing how beautiful people can be.

Getting out catching the first morning sunlight is great.

I think sun is like a natural charger.

The sun just wakes you up.

Sleep is just for rest.

If you are well rested and your mind and body is not all over the place, then naturally you sleep well.

It's not the number of hours you sleep, it's more about how at ease you are within yourself.

So when you go to sleep you should just put all the demons that you fought with in the day away.

The demons will come just before you go to sleep if you give them that kind of importance.

Earlier I had an idea that people that are more open or more expressive, understand the program better would benefit most from the program.

There is absolutely no such thing because the program is happening beyond a psychological level.

The program opens things which are not in your normal perception, maybe, because I have had people come to the class not understanding a word of English, but went through the program beautifully.

There is really no category of people.

I think anybody can benefit.

I have written off all the categories of people I thought would benefit more.

There is no such thing.

Objectives of Inner Engineering: Get your life back to you.

How every human being can become the ultimate possibility within themselves.

And once you arrive at that place or have a glimpse of it, taste of it and you know it's possible for you, then everything else will happen as a side effect.

You get physical, mental, emotional well-being as a side-effect.

The purpose of the program is getting the human being to really boom into the highest expression of life that they can be.

The training is about unlearning your conditioning.

Deconstructing ingrained patterns, beliefs and emotional responses that have been shaped by past experiences, societal influences and personal identity.

The whole process of training is to keep bringing up face to face with all the conditioning you have and seeing how to use the tools of inner Engineering to get past those conditionings.

The city taught an introvert like me to be a fighter.

When I first came to the ashram I was still a fighter, I spoke fast, I walked fast, I did everything fast because in my work life we were always running.

You're always on your toes.

But here (in the ashram) even though the activity was very intense, people found a way to be gentler and thoughtful.

During the course of training I found that there were times I would get incensed.

I asked Sadhguru: Why hasn't anger gone completely out of my life?

He said something like: The tools have been given to you the more you practice them the more you watch yourself, the more you observe, the more you witness yourself, you'll end up coming up against layers of you that you hadn't known existed.

I was just learning to recognise those layers and realising 'that's not who I am', it's just a part of me that I've learned over a period of time, and I can uncondition myself over a period of time or in a moment.

As a trainer you're always in training as long as you are facilitating the programs.

One of the reasons I wanted to become a trainer was that the training never ends.

Triggers do come, but what would have lasted five days earlier, gets resolved in five minutes or maybe a day.

Small things and moments of irritation still trigger me.

With different people, different situations the source of irritation could be different.

So for me every opportunity that I get to facilitate the program or nudge forward another human being, I see that as a life well lived.

Interview 4 (I4):

In my opinion the program is easy to follow.

People are looking for some kind of happiness, something more.

Some have psychological problems, body pains, body aches they want to get rid of.

Some just want to experience something different.

The practices brings certain alertness, kindness, a certain energy to the system which at least in my experience have made me more productive.

I'm calmer, it has increased my work efficiency quite a bit.
In terms of happiness I don't depend on anything outside, because I know it is something that comes from inside.

Inner Engineering from what I see it's not like everyone has the same experience.

It will be different from person to person.

For some sleep quota will come down, for some certain health problems will disappear.

It is increasing my energy , making me more joyful.

Every aspect of Inner Engineering has a lot of value to it.
It's not like I am not falling sick, but the frequency has come down.

Mentally now everything is calm and relaxed.

Emotionally also very stable, no big drama happening.

The most difficult with Inner Engineering is to apply it.

It's like a tool, if you don't use it it doesn't work.

It's life long, otherwise it will not work.

In the past I would have a lot of trouble if I don't know someone very well, I would be very hesitant to be with that person.

Being here doing the volunteering activities and being part of Inner Engineering, for me the people are, is all one.

Relationships have become easy.

Many things are proven, some people get rid of their medications, some get rid of their mental problems.

This definitely has the most impact in terms of holistic health, in every aspect of it.

Doing the practices is definitely a big support.

What can you control in life?

What you can control is how you experience the situations that come.

Inside, definitely more control.
Outside, depends on the situation.

If a person is living happily and joyfully and doing what really matters to them, the future will be a joyful thing.

There are so many times where we get frustrated, but if we just keep going and apply the tools of Inner Engineering, do the practises, the mind becomes calmer, the body is relaxed and solutions will come.

If you are stressed nothing will come.

We don’t speak about content.

Generally the whole point of Inner Engineering is that you can be happy no matter what happens on the outside.

I think everyone should do Inner Engineering.

It’s not like Inner Engineering is the only way, but it works for so many millions of people.

It’s very technical and logical, so it’s really easy to apply.

I don’t know anything consciously about the sun, just being outside.

I don’t spend any specific time in the sun.

We’re getting up early because we want the first rays of sun.

The sun has a big influence on the body.
There are yogic practices to incorporate the sun also.

I don’t really understand how this works, but these practices are designed according to the sun.

Sleep is important.

Sadhguru says like ‘if you sleep 8-10 hrs a night, one third of your life is going away’.

Sleep quota is definitely one thing people experience coming down during these practices.

I sleep between 4 ½ and 6 ½ hours.

The main objects of Inner Engineering is that it gives you a set of tools to manage your life, your interior, in the way you want.

People come with long faces, closed and suspicious, then at the last day they stay in front of you and cry, their experience is so overwhelming for them.

I don’t know anything else which has that kind of transformation.

There is no expectation, it’s not like a therapy.

Definitely it brings a certain stillness, calmness to the system which brings more physical and mental health into a person.

Interview 5 (I5):

The program is easy because it starts from common sense.

It talks about life and real life situations, exploring humanity’s deepest longing.

23 years ago I could see 30% or 40% coming because of some health issue.

Either back-pain, headaches, some health condition that drove them to pursue yoga.

We say in the Inner Engineering introduction that the health benefits are not the main purpose.

Even though they come for this, somewhere inside is a longing to know more about life.

I was at the top of my social life, I was an athlete, so many things going well, great job, great family.
But I knew something was missing.

There has to be something more to a human life than just eating, sleeping, reproducing and dying.

If human beings are not just struggling for survival, that question comes up.
What else is there to life?

The privilege of watching the ice melting from inside of the room is mindblowing.

People come with their arms crossed and look at you suspiciously.

But in the space of these four days people transform, their eyes open up, the trust happens, love starts flowing.

That is the biggest transformation, the biggest benefit to me.

There is a human connection and an awakening of that being we call ourselves, somewhere inside that comes to light.

Those who practice Shambhavi Mahamudra can see their health improving.

For me my lung capacity increased,my inhibitions, and creativity flows.

Challenging things became easy, simple, effortless.

My phobia to speak in front of people disappeared.

It's not dramatic changes, it's slowly over time.

You'll notice little things getting fixed.

So many health benefits, emotional stability, mental clarity, ease in decision-making.

When people come back after six months and say 'my life is transformed' and they're lit, their eye are lit.

I know my immunity is stronger.

Yoga is not a replacement for exercise or proper nutrition.

But it gives the whole system resilience, strength that comes from within.

Sadhguru speaks about four dimensions; energy, body, mind, emotions, where Shambhavi mahamudra is the energy.

If You work on the energy it reflects on all the other three, working from the inside out.

This human mechanism we call our body and mind is so complex, amazing, undiscovered and we have the capacity in our minds to reshape the world if we are conscious.

So similarly we should have the capacity to reshape our own health.

In todays age the commitment to do the practice is the most difficult when practicing Inner Engineering.

Mothers feel guilty taking 40 minutes to themselves.

It's okay to be a little selfish, take time for yourself for well-being is important.

AUM- sound, so each off them activates one aspect.

The Manipura Chakra (solar plexus) the Ana Hata chakra for the heart and the throat chakra Vishuddi center for sound.

I was going back to my family every year and they could see that I'm happier and happier.

If you by thirtyfive or forty have dead eyes, if you are blasé and sarcastic it's considered normal.

But if you're shining and saying 'the world is a beautiful'
something is wrong with you.

We are human, we are supposed to connect, to be able to look at someone, and smile at them.

My relationship with my boyfriend became much smoother because I fixed so many things unconsciously, I was no longer incomplete within myself.

Relationships with others become less need-based and more giving-based.

I became a giver, I found a source of love within me, now I just want to give.

I am not expecting anything in relationships and that sorted all the relationships I had.

The shift from need-based relationship to a giving where you don't feel depleted at any point.

You feel like you can just go on giving.

You are not sharing your misery, you are sharing your exuberance.

You learn to play the game of reminding the other that noone is going to live forever.
I didn't even want to take a chance of being with someone who's less happy than me.

I live every day like it's my last day on this planet.

When I did the program and saw the effects on my health I realized this is a preventive tool.

The program is a step towards empowering yourself so that you need less external support.

I understood that if you do something internal for your inner well-being, it reflects on other aspects so health promotion is prevention.

Being powered from within with the Shambavi mahamudra and the kriya in combination, is laying the foundation and building an energy system that depends less on external influence and more on the inner awakening of your nadis, energy nodes.

When the pathways of energy are all active and alert, alive, firing you become less prone to the surroundings.

The practice gave my endurance level a boost, my lung capacity, my strength.

I could hold my breath much longer underwater, when you're relaxed it works better.

My trust in humanity was down.

When you are doing the practice you feel everything much more, you become like a sponge, but you also have a strength that allows you to keep yourself floating and stay stable.

If I get depressed at least I know it's not going to help anyone, not me and not my chemistry and not the world.

I have to decide what I want to be.

Do I want to feel sad, feel compassionate, feel pain and not get dragged down by it.

Inner Engineering gave me the remote control of choice about how I want to feel, think, be.

I didn't even have control over my own thoughts.

Through the AUM chanting in the Shambhavi I found the key.
I was just doing AUM chanting half an hour and at some point something eased.

Since then I decide what I want to be thinking about.

If every individual is willing to change and look into the nooks and corners and take out all that is not needed, we can shape reality, we can shape the world for humanity.

If everyone of us spends at least a few minutes a day to tend to our inner well-being the world will change.

So I wouldn't say optimistic.
Realist is what we want, we shape reality.

Inner Engineering is like building a strong foundation from within.

For me it has been solid rock, unshakeable, no matter what happens in my life.

I find a strength within which is unshakeable.

It builds resilience and balance beyond mental strenght.

It is more like a silent inner strength that carries you.

It is buoyant but at the same time a like a strong foundation

They say a lotus flower has its roots in filth and the more filth there is the more it blossoms.

And that is the representation for yoga. You don't get tainted by everything that happens to you.

The more difficult situations you face the faster it will happen because you become more inclined to look within.

Everyone thinks it's coming from the outside, but thoughts influence everything so much.

Each sound has an impact on our consciousness and energy.

The A - sound is connecting all the 72 000 pathways of energy in our body and activates one dimension of maintenance because when we are in our mothers womb the maintenance part is there (umbilical cord).

And after we are born the maintenance center is still here.

So the 72 000 nadis redistribute themselves from this center (solar plexus)

U- sound activates Ana Hata (heart chakra) the center for love and creativity.

M- sound activates the throat chakra.

When you say AUM together it stabilises the body.

Helps insomnia, nightmares, it stabilizes mood fluctuations and tendencies to get depressed,

You are working with frequencies on a sound level.

In the yoga tradition they say everything is sound.

It's only if I decide to be unhappy that I am unhappy.

If I find myself slipping away towards an unwanted mood I redirect.

So no matter what is happening I make a decision.

Even when I do things I don't necessarily love to do, it does not affect my happiness.

I can still do it joyfully, effortlessly, it doesn't become a burden.

Happiness is a natural state for everyone, we just lose it.

Happiness is just the baseline.

Vegetarian food works best for this system, it's easiest to digest.

Here, for this space we want to create a space where food is enhancing the tendency to become less of a body.

Sadhguru spoke about humans being vegetarian by nature.

I just couldn't eat meat anymore, I still have fish once in a while. I have B12 supplements.

Most people in India are deficient in vitamin D, and are covered head to toe.

But they wake up with the sun.

I don't know how we use the sun as a direct source in promoting health.

I don't see people in India using the sun much for health.

Interview 6 (I6):

We are taught certain ways of seeing, how we interact with the world and what our responsibility is towards ourselves and others.

That's a massive shift. It kind of washes over you. You're not only managing yourself better, but you're also relating to others differently.

It makes everything more enjoyable, actually, because you have that sense of control over yourself.

Yes, you might have a setback, but how quickly can you bounce back?
That's what it's really teaching you.

We're not overly focused on the future, instead we're trying to stay present.
Still, it gives you confidence.

You feel more capable of handling situations because the tools we're taught help us manage ourselves.

Even when things come up, you're not as flustered or stressed out anymore.

Interview 7 (I7):

Going inside changes your life because it makes you become slower, when You become slower you don’t react anymore, you go through total feelings of your heart and you’ll be guided, I think that's it. It makes you calm, it brings you a presence, you know, and if you continue doing those practices you will stay in that presence.

You as an Engineer is saying: look inside
Let's make a program from inside of you that makes you happy, so I think it is extremely intelligent, extremely beautiful.
So many of the things are obviously subconscious You cannot see, because if it was conscious you would see it

On the plane I always used to get my sinuses exploding, and it was such a pain I thought I was going to die and I never thought anyone could help me with that. But Sadhguru has a practice in one of those 21 days that was part of the application, he talks about cleaning your lymph nodes, all your energy blocks, so when this happens to me in the air I thought I was gonna die I started doing that and it went away. And now every time the plane is about to land I do it and I never had it ever again.

So physically it has helped me. But ee.. I never in my life I thought I could sit in a lotus, never even thought I could sit in a lotus,

I don't think the program has a direct effect on your relationships and family but it has on you.

When you expand your consciousness you start becoming a better person you start acting differently so when you act differently then your reality will change, your relationships will be better, not necessarily better, sometimes you might…let go of that relationship which will no longer serve you, in that consciousness, so it will bring balance for you wherever you are.

Not necessarily keeping or letting go of a relationship, but it will bring something for you that is balanced for you.

You know one can only speak about themselves but I certainly see that change in myself, because it made my life much easier.

Physically you'll be more fit, mentally you'll be more balanced, your life will change, once your vibration is in a balance point, it changes so abundance will flow in every aspect of your life.

It balances your masculine and your feminine in your brain. So that brings a certain amount of balance.

It balances the desires, fiery desires that are unnecessary because you are acting on reactions.

Because you don't look at difficulties as difficulties anymore.

Not gaining control, letting go of control in your life and trusting, having faith.
I think it's not even about building a future, I think it's more about letting it happen fully and loving it fully, in love, in love and light.

You don't look at things as setbacks anymore you will look at it "it is what it is" and want to deal with it and letting it go and be fully in love. You won't even look at it that way.

So the A in AUM will go to your main chakra two fingers under Your belly button
So once you make the A over there, there is where all the chakras all the nadis will come from here…Solar Plexus, so then from there you send this sound of your entire body,
now you are changing your vibration in your body.
And U will stretch your heart and M activates your throat chakra which is one of the most powerful chakras, which you see Shiva also has. They talk about shiva holding everything in his throat and using it in the right way that can bring you a lot of power.

The power of acceptance is another thing that Inner Engineering will bring, you accept the situation as it is, and believe that it is all happening for a reason, have faith, and when You truly believe that things will change for you.

People are mostly in the past or in the future.

Vegetarianism is much lighter, you can digest that food.
When you are light you vibrate higher.

We thank the sun for illuminating every step of our day, and we thank the sun for giving unconditional love to whomever or whatever that exists on earth and without sun nothing would grow. The growing in this earth is happening because of our sun.

There is a sleep that the science talks about, and there is a sleep that the yogis and the shamans talk about that is quite different. I don't think that you need much sleep but you need deep sleep.
And your deep sleep comes when your mind is at peace. And in Yoga and any shamanic practices, I consider yoga as a shamanic practice. It will bring that to You.

It is for everyone who is willing to let go of control and the mind, and to tell you the truth the most educated are the ones that need it more, because they are so stuck in a paradigm. Their lives become so much into laws and directions, that is a problem…

For me to sit in the positions that I'm sitting in, it took me one year, because I wasn't trying to get anywhere I was just doing my practices and eventually I realized I was o..what this is and the beautiful thing about this program he doesn't tell you that you're doing this to get into this he just says just do this and a year later I'm sitting in a full lotus and my back pain is gone.

Sadhguru puts it in a short, funny, intelligent and scientific way. So I could see people understanding those terms much faster than my terms.

Interview 8 (I8):

Focusing first on what's inside gives us a completely different attitude, so we can create our everyday experiences.

Being okay with being out of control is very peaceful.

I don't need that control, I actually need nothing. I feel enriched by what I am surrounded by.

I was challenged with feminine energy in my life and masculine energy was always clearer and more comfortable…I realized a very vulnerable part of me I cover with harshness and the spiky energy.

I push people away from me. I am so vulnerable and I don't want to show that so I am learning how to be ok with the vulnerability....

Inner Engineering still brings a lot of setbacks and obstacles with it, it is not a pink path....

The first three weeks were so much anger, so much anger that I was shocked where it was coming from....three out of ten would share that it is not easy at all and we are experiencing this anger, resentment, difficulties, in the program but also following it in the day.

It was like opening the door for inner anger to come out, but I was not able to see it at that time. Maybe it was generating anger in me, but it was actually clearing me from it....

The sound of AUM changes every day with my emotions and my situation.

The AUM balances our frequency....

All my life I've been running away from some situation. And very often I will put myself in that challenging situation but this time I said I will embrace that challenge of ten thousands of people.

I´m so scared, I'm so afraid, but what is scared, is my mind, because it's .. so what am I trying to escape from....

It's not the amount of hours we need to sleep, it's about active hours, how we use them.

We exhaust ourselves, and then we need more time to sleep.

If we use them in a balanced way, all the activities we don't need that many hours to recharge.

I have lived in the most beautiful places in the world, but I have learned that beauty outside is not enough. There needs to be beauty inside.

Interview 9 (I9):

I really wanted to dive deeper, and that was the reason for me.
Not for health issues, but to proceed with my inner growth, I´ve been searching half of my life.

It's good to do it in a way like you brush your teeth. You start the day to see everything different.
…and my body became more flexible,...

It takes more and more space inside of you which you can bring into the outer world.

You'll have to see it as a whole thing.
It has a specific way to follow to bring yourself in a connection, inner connection.

My whole body became another strength and specifically also my back more flexible but in the same way it became stronger.

Europeans are not used to sit on the ground and to stretch our leg muscles in this way, though the first months I had pain in my knees.

I do not see Inner Engineering just for health, it's also for mental health, holistic health.

I'm working on it, to have a holistic life, in every aspect.... I had so much tension inside, and I even broke a bone in my foot and I knew the reason, - tension in my system.

The more You do it the more You become aware.

You can decide, do I want to be in this bad mood?

The more you surrender to what is now in the moment today, you create a wonderful future, isn't it?

I mean this is training your mind, and not to give up even if it's mmm.. to become aware.. which games you play, you know.

I always say like; the movies we have in our mind and how we are working on it, working to notice the movies and then to say, cut off…
to sit down, take some breaths, focus and do Yoga.

If you breathe deep, because your diaphragm is flexible, you massage your intestines. You improve your digestion, your whole system is more released, the tension is released. …ahh…it's a breathing, we never have learned really…it's wonderful.

Appendix 7: Informed Consent Document

Study (working) Title:

Exploring Inner Engineering in India: Perceived Impact on Promoting Health.

Purpose of the Study:

You are invited to participate in a research study aimed at exploring how Inner Engineering practices influence health and well-being. The goal is to better understand how these practices promote health in a modern context.

What Participation Involves:

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an interview lasting approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview questions relate to the effect of Inner Engineering practice.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or explanation. You are free to decline any question or stop the interview at any point. The interview will take place in a quiet and private place of your choosing. Your participation is of great value in helping us gain a deeper understanding of this topic, and I truly appreciate your consideration.

Confidentiality:

- All data collected will be anonymized to protect your identity.
- Your personal information will be securely stored and accessible only to the research team.
- Any quotes used in the final study report will be anonymized.

Compensation:

There will be no monetary compensation for participating in this study.

Contact Information for Questions:

If you have questions about the study, your rights as a participant, or would like to withdraw, you may contact: Katarina Fallholm (katfal-0@student.ltu.se)

Data to outside the EU/EEA Lulea University of Technology may transfer personal data to third countries outside the EU/EEA, especially in the case of international research projects or e.g. exchange studies. The university will then take all reasonable legal, organizational and technical measures necessary to achieve an adequate level of protection for your personal data.

Coordinator:

Jimmy Ingemansson, Jimmy.Ingemansson@ltu.se , Lulea University of Technology, Sweden.

Consent to Participate in the Project

I have received oral and/or written information about the study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I will be provided with a copy of the written information.

☐ I consent to participate in the project: Exploring Inner Engineering in India: Perceived Impact on Health Promotion.

☐ I consent to my personal data being processed as outlined in the provided information.

I understand that:

- My participation in this study is voluntary.
- I have the right to withdraw my consent at any time without providing a reason and without any negative consequences.
- All personal data and information I provide will be handled confidentially and used solely for research purposes.

Place and Date: _____

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____