



# Spark Inside – The Hero’s Journey Life Coaching Programme

## Interim Evaluation Report 2016-2019

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## Methodology

This evaluation aims to understand the contribution of Spark Inside to the outcomes of participants engaged in the programme, utilising a quasi-experimental (pre- and post-), post-hoc analysis. This report contains two parts: (i) quantitative and qualitative evaluation for 2018/2019, and (ii) combined analysis of quantitative evaluation data from 2016 to 2019.

For 2018/19, pre-intervention and post-intervention questionnaires have been conducted with participants in HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMP Wandsworth, HMP ISIS and HMP Belmarsh to measure and evaluate the impact of Spark Inside's Hero's Journey Life Coaching Programme. This research has successfully collected 152 responses for the pre-intervention questionnaire and 106 responses for the post-intervention questionnaire. The results were analysed using Microsoft Excel.

As the surveys used were consistent throughout the past three years, it was possible to gather the data collected from 2016 to 2019 and conduct a combined analysis. The table below shows a breakdown of the number of questionnaires collected for each year.

	Pre-intervention questionnaires	Post-intervention questionnaires
2016/2017	84	42
2017/18	88	53
2018/19	152	106

As the sample size was sufficiently large, a paired sample t-test was run for the year 2018/19 and the combined analysis. This is a statistical technique that is used to compare two population means and therefore well-suited for 'before-after' studies. By using the paired sample t-test, one can statistically conclude whether or not the Spark Inside's Hero's Journey Life Coaching programme has improved the relevant outcomes for the participants. In addition to the combined analysis, findings from previous reports were gathered to compare results over the past three years.

### Interviews

The survey informed the drafting of interview questions in order to augment quantitative with qualitative findings; and subsequently, 12 interviews were conducted with participants of Hero's Journey Life Coaching Programme in HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMP Wandsworth and HMP Belmarsh.

### Future Evaluations

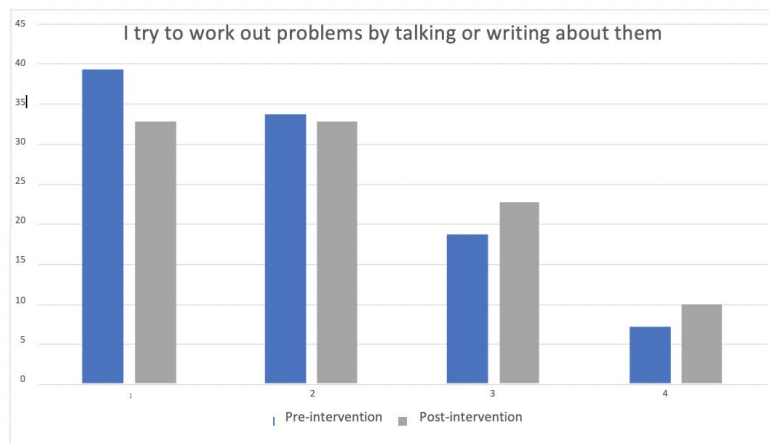
Since 2016, following this quantitative methodology, the impact of Hero's Journey has demonstrated relatively small, but statistically significant increases, in all relevant outcome areas. This methodology, however, only allowed outcome measurement of part of the programme; the initial 6 hours of workshop. As a result of this limitation, Spark Inside has decided to change its approach to evaluation, moving to the widely recognised Outcomes Star (Youth Star), which will enable evaluation of the impact of the entire programme, from initial workshops to one to one coaching sessions, over time. It is anticipated that this approach will continue to demonstrate statistically significant increases in outcomes and will be used in conjunction with semi-structured qualitative interviews, as before.

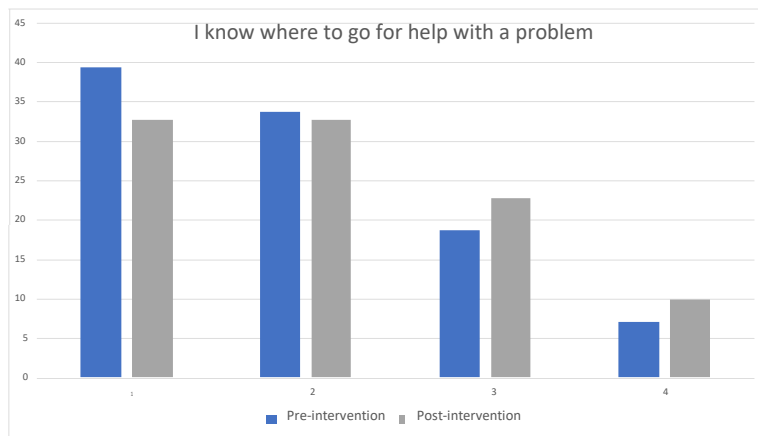
## Impact

### i. Outcomes

#### Decision-making and problem-solving skills

The survey findings show a positive impact on participants' problem-solving skills. Three questions in the survey aimed to capture change related to this outcome: "When I need help I find someone to talk with", "I know where to go for help with a problem", and "I try to work out problems by talking or writing about them". The score for this outcome area increased by 5% from pre- to post-intervention, but this improvement is not statistically significant.





However, qualitative data suggests that participants experience improved decision-making skills and control over themselves. When asked how they would handle a difficult situation and whether this has changed after the Hero's Journey, 11 interviewees reported that, after the programme, they approached their problems or stressful situations in a more reflective way and avoided acting impulsively.

*"Yes...now I sit back and think...before I would have acted on instinct. Now I sit down and think about it, I talk to someone about it, like a friend."*

*"If I had had the programme before I would not be in that situation I think. It helps you take a step back and think."*

Some of them also referred to strategies that they have learnt on the programme.

*"(..) so if I'm upset I'll just listen to music instead of banging the door and going crazy."*

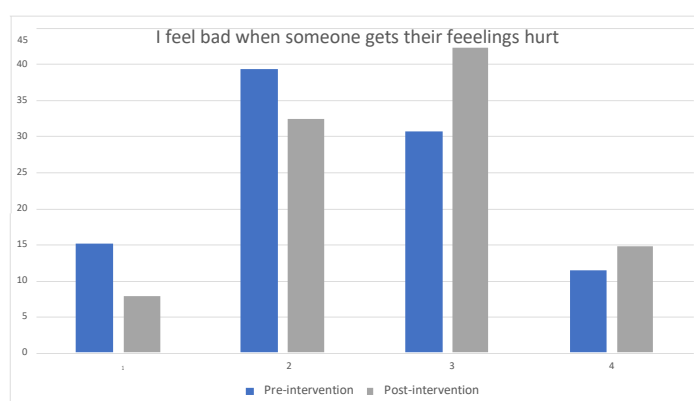
*"I talk to people more....I get their advice...especially with my close friends. There are a lot of people I met in the programme that I didn't talk to before."*

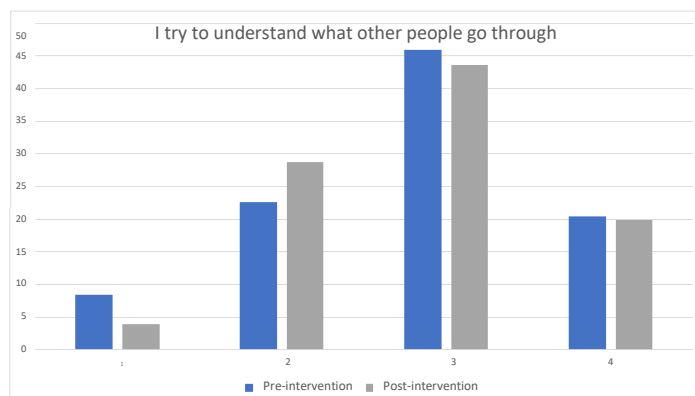
## Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

On average, respondents reported a slight increase in empathy after the programme. This is reflected in the average score of the two questions "I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt" and "I try to understand what other people go through" which increased by 6% (from 2.55 to 2.71) and 2% (from 2.86 to 2.93) respectively. However, the t-test analysis shows that the difference in scores pre and post intervention is not statistically significant.

However, findings from qualitative data suggest that the impact of Hero's Journey on participant's emotional intelligence and empathy might have been stronger. Six interviewees mentioned clear improvement in the way they treat their family and friends – with more patience and sensitivity, or because they are calmer – and three others said that the impact might be clearer when they go home. When asked about how they get on with staff in prison, nine participants answered that they were better at avoiding confrontation, either by being more relaxed, adopting strategies to calm down or because they were able to understand what the staff required from them:

*The staff here is okay (...) I put myself in their shoes and we're all human at the end...it's all about how you conduct yourself. If you're good to them they'll be good to you.*





## Resilience and confidence

According to the surveys, respondents reflect statistically significant but limited increase in resilience and confidence after the programme. They felt it was less difficult to snap back when something bad happens, that they come through difficult times with little trouble and that they tend to take less time to get over set-backs in their life.

Some improvement has also been observed for questions related to confidence. The average score for the question “I’ve been feeling confident” increased by 1.4% (from 3.84 to 3.9) and 3.3% (from 3.7 to 3.83) for “I’ve been feeling good about myself”.

These results are reinforced by findings from qualitative data that shows a clear improvement in confidence. All 12 interviewees answered that they were feeling more confident after the programme, and in particular more confident in their decisions and expressing them.

*“I’ve never had confidence issues but more confident in the decisions I’ve made...they are more useful and efficient and I’m satisfied with the steps it takes me to.”*

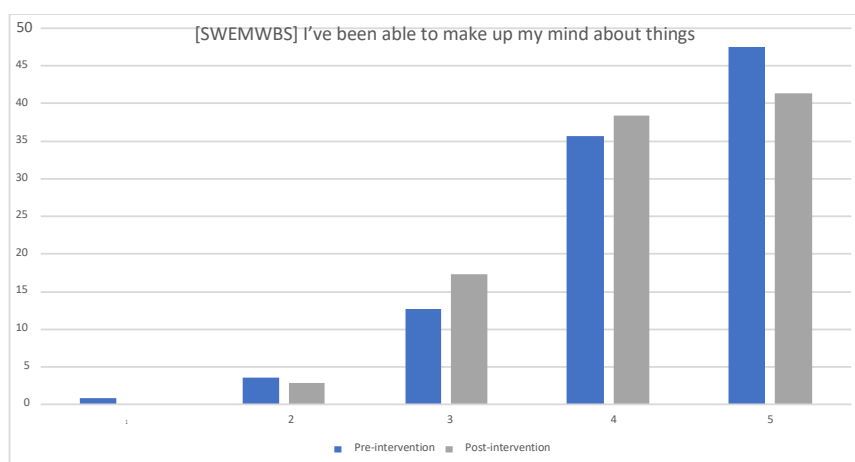
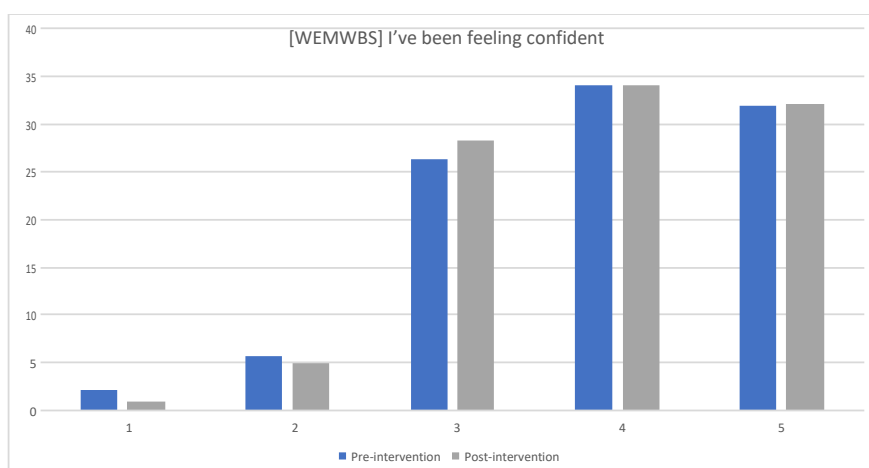
*“Oh I’m a confident and lovely guy anyway but... you know when it comes to interviews or job interviews, that there is 2-3 people and I have to sell myself...that’s the hard part of it... but I think I have improved coz now I know what I’m good at and what I can do and I can sell myself.”*

Group sessions also seemed to have boosted participants’ confidence. Seven interviewees explained listening to others’ experiences and having the group describe them helped them realise their skills and potential. Two of them explain:

*“when you sit in a room together, and you face a wall and you hear them speaking about you...it can be*

*long-term...you really sit down and think: that can be me."*

*"I like the one where you sit down with the back towards other groups members and they say positive things about you. Coz often you forget that you've got skills and there are good things about you... and you can actually get out of the little bubble you are in and face the problem."*



## Self-image and self-conception

Comparably to results for 2016/2017, responses related to self-image and self-conception<sup>1</sup> show no change or very little impact on average. According to the survey, the programme has also a limited impact on the sphere of personal autonomy, reflected in a 1% increase in the average score for the question "I have no control over my day-to-day life". When analysing the average scores of the questions reflecting this outcome, we found an increase of 0.3 % and a p value superior to 0.05, which indicates that this difference is not statistically significant.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to survey questions, "It is important to think before you act", "To make a good decision, it is important to think", "If you work hard, you will get what you want", "I am responsible for what happens to me", "When I try to be nice, people notice", "Other people decide what happens to me"

However, qualitative data shows a more nuanced picture. When asked “Do you think you know more about yourself and who you are after the programme?”, all interviewees explained that the program has helped them think about their life, understand themselves and why they were in prison. 11 out of 12 interviewees explicitly say that this thinking process has helped them make better decisions:

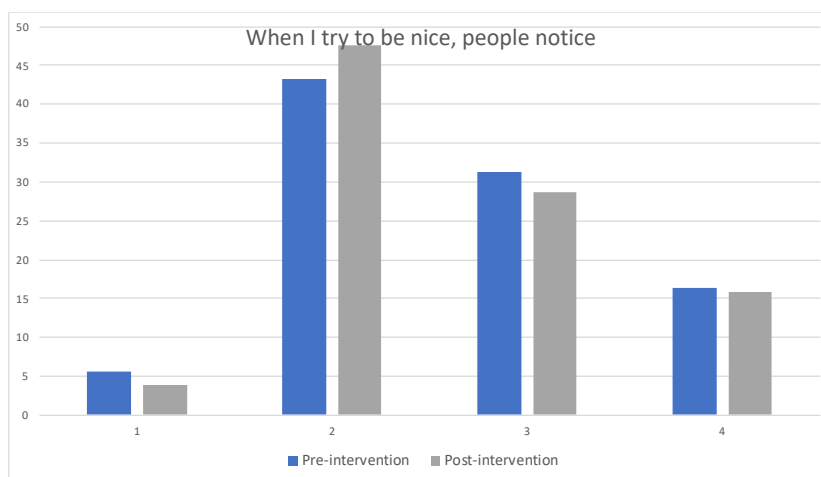
*“when I’m in a situation I thought that’s the situation that’s it but no....(but) that situation was part of a cascade of decisions that I have made... and once I realized that I was able to make better decisions...”*

*“It (the programme) told me what my strongest qualities and what my weaknesses are... cause before I was narrow minded and I didn’t think before I do stuff and...but then I did the Spark Inside ... and it made me structure things and breaking down into what do you do, what is doable, what did you do wrong (...)”*

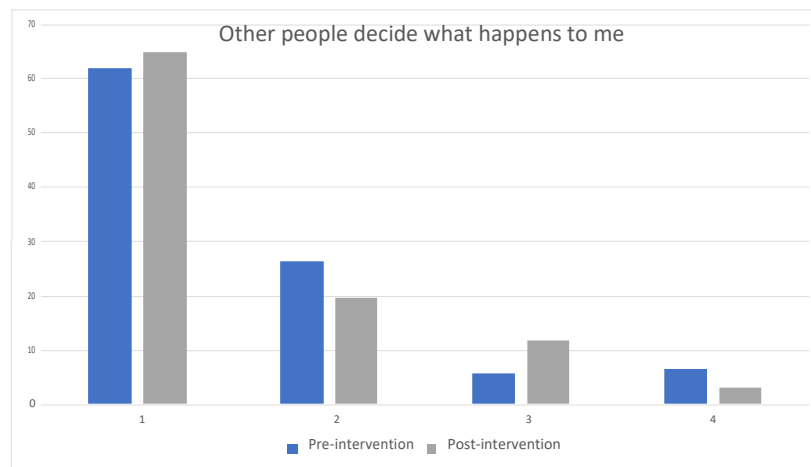
Even though the answers to the question “How much control do you feel you have over your life now? How much control do you think you will have after your release?” reflect the fact that interviewees find themselves in a restrictive environment, nine out of twelve participants also mention that the programme has helped them have more control over their life. One of them refers to one of the tools used in the workshop (the circle):

*“I still got the little circle in my cell...it does make you remember where you’re at and where you’re heading. It’s a good tool to stay on point and focused.”*

Data from interviews suggest that the programme had a positive impact on participants’ self-image, by helping them understand their past actions, and control over their future actions.

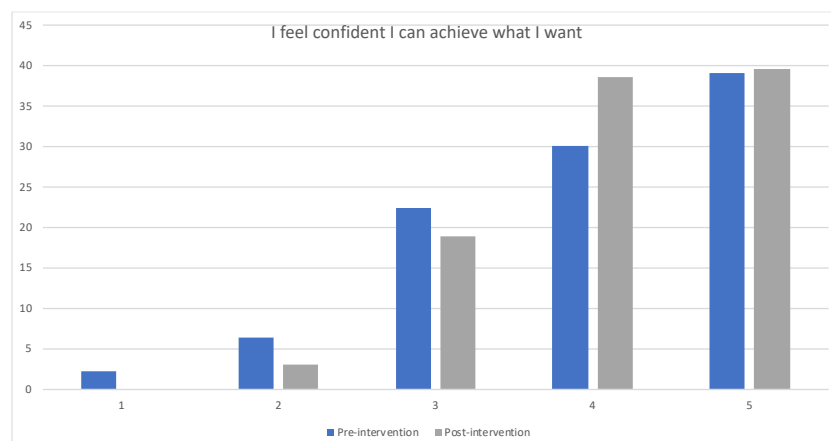
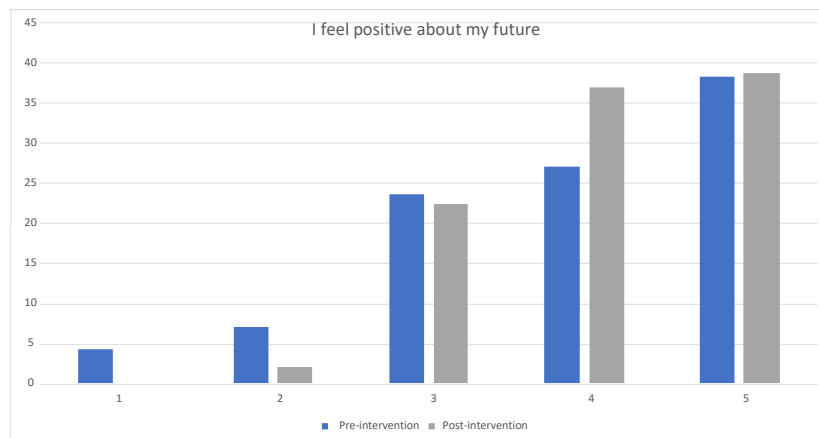


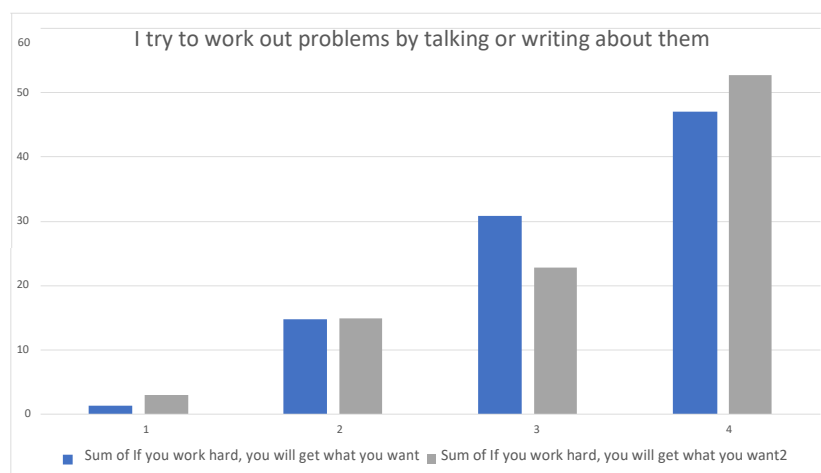




## Future outlook

Survey respondents are generally slightly more optimistic about the future following the programme, with the score for questions related to their feelings about the future increasing by 4%. This change is statistically significant but relatively limited.





The qualitative data confirms the fact that participants feel positive about their future – with all of them saying that they are optimistic. This results might be influenced by the fact that most of them expected to be released in the coming months. However, five of them explicitly said that the programme helped them see their future positively. As one interviewee said:

*“I’m optimistic, I’m not coming back... I want to do something with the university course I’ve taken. The program made me realized that my goals are reachable.”*

## Well-being

The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) is a scale of seven positively worded items, with five response categories, which have been specifically designed to measure both the feeling and functioning aspects of positive mental well-being. This scale has been recommended to measure well-being before and after an intervention.

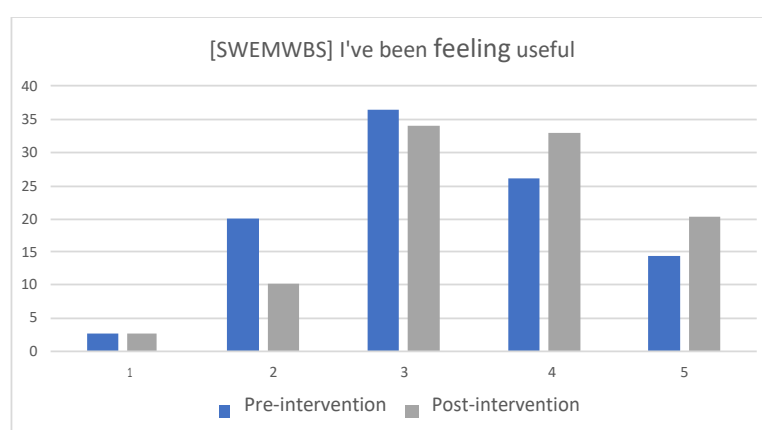
Survey findings for these seven questions show on average a positive change in well-being after the intervention: the mean change in well-being is 1.23. However, for SWEMWBS a two to four points increase can be considered meaningful. In order to further strengthen this finding, a t-test for two samples paired for mean has been conducted to check for statistical significance. The observed difference between the sample means allow us to say, at a 95% confidence level, that the increase in well-being after the programme is statistically significant, with a p value of 0.04.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	SWEMWBS Pre-intervention	SWEMWBS Post-intervention
Mean	24.36082474	25.59793814
Variance	24.62886598	24.55541237
Observations	97	97
Pearson Correlation	0.636244061	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	96	
t Stat	-2.880558883	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.002448109	
t Critical one-tail	1.66088144	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.004896218	
t Critical two-tail	1.984984312	

## ii. Results for 2016-2019 combined

### Well-being

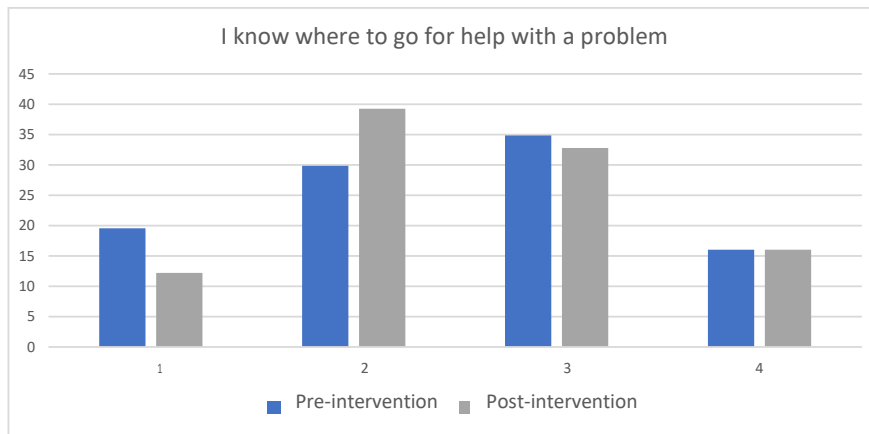
The analysis of data collected between 2016-2019 shows that the programme positively impacted participants' well-being. As shown in the table below, the average score on the SWEMWBS increased by 1.5 points after the programme. The analysis shows that the difference between the means is statistically significant, with a confidence level of 95%.



### Decision-making and problem-solving skills

The programme helped participants develop their decision and problem-solving skills. When combining the questions "When I need help I find someone to talk with", "I know where to go for help with a problem", and "I try to work out problems by talking or writing about them", we found an increase of 0.18 points.

Even though this improvement might seem limited, it is statistically significant with 95% confidence.



### Empathy and emotional Intelligence

Survey responses show that Hero's Journey had a positive and statistically significant impact on the participants' ability to show empathy and exercise emotional intelligence. This is reflected in the average score of the two questions "I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt" and "I try to understand what other people go through", which increased by 0.13. The p value indicates that we can be 97% confident that this difference did not happen by chance.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Average pre-intervention	Average post-intervention
Mean	2.673758865	2.808510638
Variance	0.57852077	0.591641337
Observations	141	141
Pearson Correlation	0.533433248	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	140	
t Stat	-2.165451839	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.016023656	
t Critical one-tail	1.655810511	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.032047311	
t Critical two-tail	1.97705372	

### Resilience and confidence

The analysis shows that Hero's Journey has helped increase participants' resilience and confidence. Based on the Brief Resilience Scale, we measured an increase of 0.14 points. The paired t-test below indicates that this increase is statistically significant with a high level of confidence.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Average pre	Average post
Mean	3.186904762	3.323690476
Variance	0.27556669	0.286886762
Observations	140	140
Pearson Correlation	0.542855694	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	139	
t Stat	-3.191409885	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000875343	
t Critical one-tail	1.655889868	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001750686	
t Critical two-tail	1.977177724	

## Self-image and self-conception

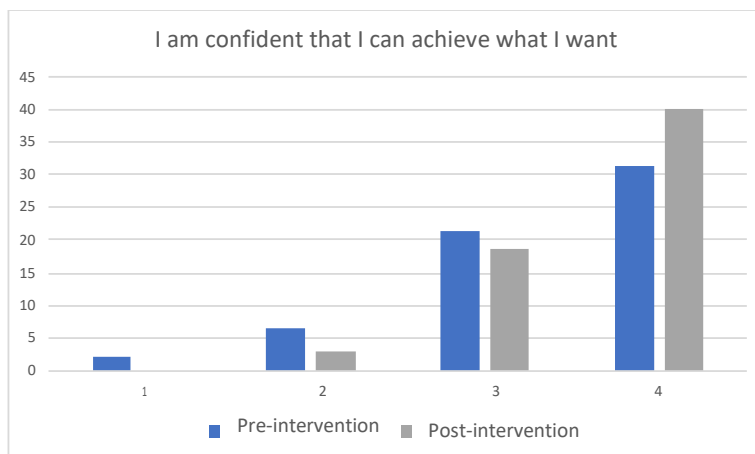
The survey results show a limited impact on self-efficacy, reflected in the question “Other people decide what happens to me” and “When I try to be nice, people notice”, with a very slight increase of 0,9% from before to after intervention. Moreover, the paired t-test shows that this result is not statistically significance, with a p value above 0.05.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Average pre	Average post
Mean	2.947610294	2.977022059
Variance	0.137859988	0.085521344
Observations	136	136
Pearson Correlation	0.400814297	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	135	
t Stat	-0.928924003	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.177293218	
t Critical one-tail	1.656219133	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.354586437	
t Critical two-tail	1.977692277	

## Future outlook

Survey responses show that participants are generally more optimistic about the future following the programme, with the average score for questions related to this outcomes (“If you work hard, you will get what you want”, “I feel confident I can achieve what I want” as well as “I feel positive about my future”) increasing by 0.2 points. When conducting a t-test looking at the two means, we found the change to be statistically significant with 95% confidence, as the p value (0.009) falls below 0.05.

t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Average Pre	Average Post
Mean	3.725060827	3.897810219
Variance	0.576630409	0.468238634
Observations	137	137
Pearson Corr	0.443951748	
Hypothesized	0	
df	136	
t Stat	-2.647014162	
P(T<=t) one-	0.004539563	
t Critical one	1.656134988	
P(T<=t) two-	0.009079127	
t Critical two	1.977560777	



#### iv) Evolution over three years

The table below shows the results over the three past years as well as results from the combined analysis.

	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2016-19	
	% Change	Significant?	% Change	Significant?	% Change	Significant?	% Change	Significant?
Decision-making	9%	Yes	0%	No	5%	No	8%	Yes
Empathy	6%	No	9%	Yes	5%	No	5%	Yes
Resilience	2%	Yes	6%	Yes	4%	Yes	4%	Yes
Self-image	1%	Yes	2%	No	0%	No	1%	No
Future outlook	5%	Yes	7%	Yes	4%	Yes (one-tail)	5%	Yes
Well-being	27%	Yes	7%	No	5%	Yes	6%	Yes

While the impact on participants' future outlook and resilience is clearly established, with significant results obtained each year, the improvement of self-image seems to be very limited and unsupported by statistical tests. Other outcomes such as well-being, empathy and decision-making were shown to have statistically significant impact in at least two analysis.

## Conclusions

Overall, Hero's Journey's has had a positive impact on the programme's participants. While quantitative data shows limited increases for most of the outcomes, qualitative data from interviews indicates that the programme had a significant impact on participants in all outcomes. The difference in findings between the two methods might come from the difficulty to collect data on sensitive and complex topics.

### 2018-2019

Compelling quantitative evidence has shown that the coaching intervention has led to i) improved ability to make reasonable decisions and control oneself; ii) impact in terms of confidence and resilience level; iii) a more optimistic attitude towards the future; iv) greater overall wellbeing among young male inmates.

### 2016-2019

Combined data collected over the course of three years have shown that Hero's Journey's has had a positive and statistically significant impact in the following areas: i) greater overall wellbeing among young male inmates, by 1.5 point ii) increased empathy and emotional intelligence by 5%; iii) improvement in terms of confidence and resilience level; iv) more optimistic future outlook.

Impact evaluation has played a key role in shaping The Hero's Journey since its inception in 2014, and these results demonstrate that the programme is supporting the organisation's aim of supporting individuals in the prison system to have a more productive and fulfilling future.