



Bobby Goldsmith

Foundation



Impact Report 2021

Health & Wellbeing Programs

Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction:

- a. HIV in Australia
- b. 90-90-90-90

Health and Wellbeing Programs

Physical Health

- a. Zen Movement
- b. Qigong

Social Health

- a. Creative Writing
- b. Novel Connections
- c. Daily Rituals

Psychological Health

- a. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) Training
- b. Better Sleep Training

Financial Health

- a. Better Money Management

Future Activities

- a. Online
- b. Diversity
- c. Conclusion

References

Executive Summary

This report provides an introduction to the Health and Wellbeing Programs at Bobby Goldsmith Foundation (BGF). This is a summary and analysis of past and existing programs up to March 2021, and it will help to inform the strategic direction of future BGF Health and Wellbeing Programs.

This report analyses the areas of improvement in participants' (n=58) lives following attendance in 8 of BGF's Health and Wellbeing Programs: Zen Movement, Qigong, Creative Writing, Novel Connections, Daily Rituals, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Training, Better Sleep Training, and Better Money Management.

- **Approximately two-thirds of participants (67%, n=39) experiencing an improvement in their mental health.**
- **43.5% of participants experienced improvements in their physical health, social relationships, anxiety, and stress on average (physical health: n=25; social relationships: n=24; anxiety: n=28; stress: n=24).**
- **Programs included in this report were held during the COVID-19 pandemic period from 2020-2021.**

BGF's Health and Wellbeing Programs Report concludes that the programs delivered were very beneficial to participants, particularly in terms of improvements in mental health. Future programs will take into account participants' feedback and recommendations, tailoring them to their needs and interests.



Introduction

HIV in Australia

90-90-90-90



BGF is Australia's oldest community-based HIV organisation, providing practical, emotional and financial support to all people living with HIV in NSW and SA. BGF provides a safe, open and inclusive environment for everyone living with HIV. BGF's mission is to ensure that all people living with HIV feel welcome and supported.

While HIV treatment has come a long way since the 1980s, the need for psychosocial support remains strong.



HIV in Australia

Australia's success in responding to the HIV/AIDS epidemic can be attributed to its grassroots activism.

From the outset, community-based efforts came together to provide peer-led care and support, leading to a strong bi-partisan response from Federal politicians supported by the health and medical research sectors. This collaboration provided a solid framework for the implementation of HIV/AIDS policies that encompass prevention, education, treatment, care, and research.

"Australia can end HIV transmission by 2025 if we renew policy and investment so that by 2030 we will avert thousands of HIV transmissions and free up health resources."

afao

- **The introduction of antiretroviral medication in 1987 contributed to a decline in AIDS-related deaths over time (Kaldor 1993: S3).**
- **Concerted and sustained Federal and State-funded HIV prevention strategies have resulted in the number of new HIV diagnoses in Australia remaining stable since 2013.**
- **The NSW Health campaign 'Ending HIV by 2020' has resulted in a further reduction in HIV transmission.**
- **Compared to other high-income countries such as the United States (0.49%), Australia has an extremely low prevalence rate of HIV at 0.08% (Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network. Global Burden of Disease Study 2017).**

90-90-90-90

90%
Diagnosed

90%
On
Treatment

90%
Virally
Suppressed

90%
Quality of
Life

In 2019, approximately **38 million people worldwide were living with HIV**. Of these, 36.2 million were adults, and 1.8 million were children under 15 years. In 2016, the World Health Organisation (WHO) adopted a new Global Health Sector Strategy on HIV (2016-2021) which established the concept of **90-90-90**, a set of goals with the aim that **by 2020, 90% of people who live with HIV are diagnosed, 90% of people who have been diagnosed with HIV are on antiretroviral treatment, and 90% of those on antiretroviral therapy attain an undetectable viral load (UVL), which prevents the onward transmission of HIV (undetectable = untransmittable, or U=U)** (Lazarus et al. 2016).

By 2019, Australia became one of only a few countries in the world to achieve the UNAIDS' target by achieving **90-91-97**. Reaching this target has not only delivered tremendous benefits to individuals living with HIV, it is also important from a public health perspective. Achieving such a large increase in the number of people who have attained an UVL greatly reduces the onward transmission of HIV in the community. The Kirby Institute, which collates national data on HIV, Hepatitis, and STIs in Australia, has set a new target of **95-95-95 to be reached by 2030**.

The WHO's agenda, however, does not stop there. It's added a new goal – to ensure the well-being and healthy living for people living with HIV by 2030. This goal has given rise to the addition of a **'fourth 90'** to the diagnosis, testing and treatment targets: **to ensure that 90% of people living with HIV have a good health-related quality of life** (Lazarus et al. 2016; Safreed-Harmon et al. 2019). This approach provides a target that is more holistic and person-centred by acknowledging that having an UVL is not the only measure of success when combating the disease.

Health & Wellbeing Programs

BGF's mission is to help people living with HIV to thrive. BGF aims to improve the well-being and quality of life of people living with HIV in Australia through the delivery of programs.

BGF's Health and Wellbeing Programs began in early 2000 with the Phoenix Programs. The Phoenix was chosen as a metaphor for rising from the ashes or, in BGF's instance, clients rising up and overcoming adversity. Following the introduction of several successful programs such as Art Phoenix and Phoenix Ink (Creative Writing), BGF looked to expand its program delivery to address issues surrounding stigma, health literacy, and resilience. **In 2016, BGF became the first fully accredited organisation in Australia to deliver the Stanford University's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) with a focus on the Positive Self-Management Program (PSMP).**

BGF's Health & Wellbeing Programs provide people living with HIV an opportunity to meet and connect as peers, to share their stories and their lived experiences, to cultivate new skills, and to reach their personal goals. The programs offered are categorised under the **4 key areas of Social, Psychological, Physical, and Financial health.** The creation of a safe, supportive network of people with shared experiences provides people living with HIV with social support, positive influences, healthy distractions, and if necessary, professional referral for specialised care.

This 2021 Health and Wellbeing Programs Report provides an overview of BGF's current programs and their positive impacts on the program participants. The report hopes to garner possible funding support opportunities, as well as to inform the strategic direction of future programs.



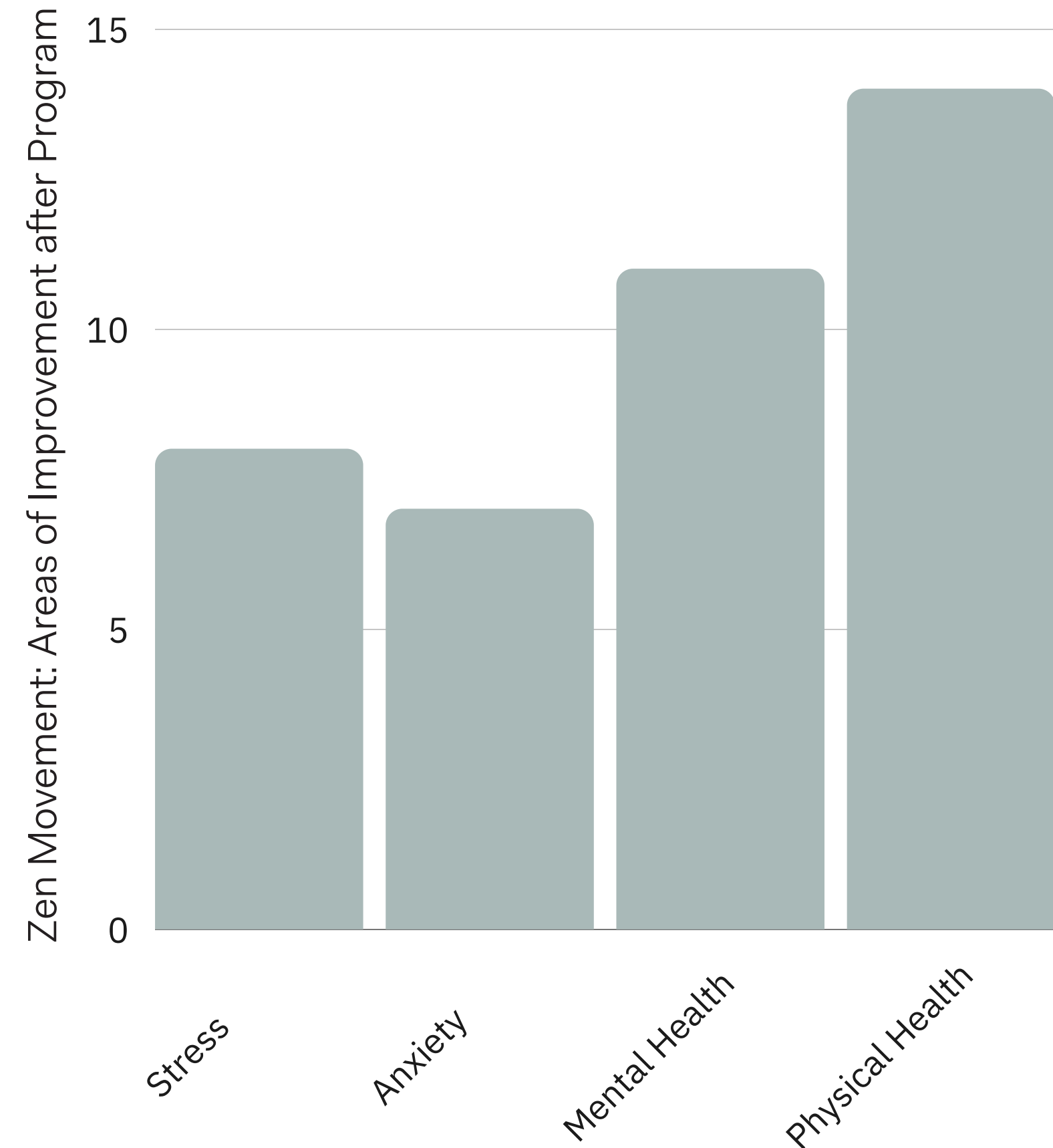
Zen Movement

Physical Health

Zen Movement is a 6-week functional movement workshop that aims to provide people with HIV with the necessary skills to maintain their own physical fitness within the comfort of their own home. Functional training focuses on purposeful movement patterns that help to increase mobility, flexibility, and control over one's body. This program was designed just as the COVID-19 pandemic was unfolding, and concerns about client health, such as the potential for mobility loss due to being housebound, were increasing.

Zen Movement combines the benefits of yoga and the peace of Zen, to not only help improve participants' physical health, but also their mental health.

- **93.9% of Zen Movement participants (14 out of 15) reported an improvement in their physical health**
- **73.3% (11 out of 15) reported an improvement in their mental health.**
- **Respondents felt that Zen Movement was “perfectly set for (their) needs and abilities” as beginners.**
- **They commented that “the yoga and meditation (were) useful techniques for everyday life but especially during difficult times” and were “surprised at the calmness” they experienced after the program.**
- **A few were “now looking for a local yoga group” and were keen to participate in similar programs.**

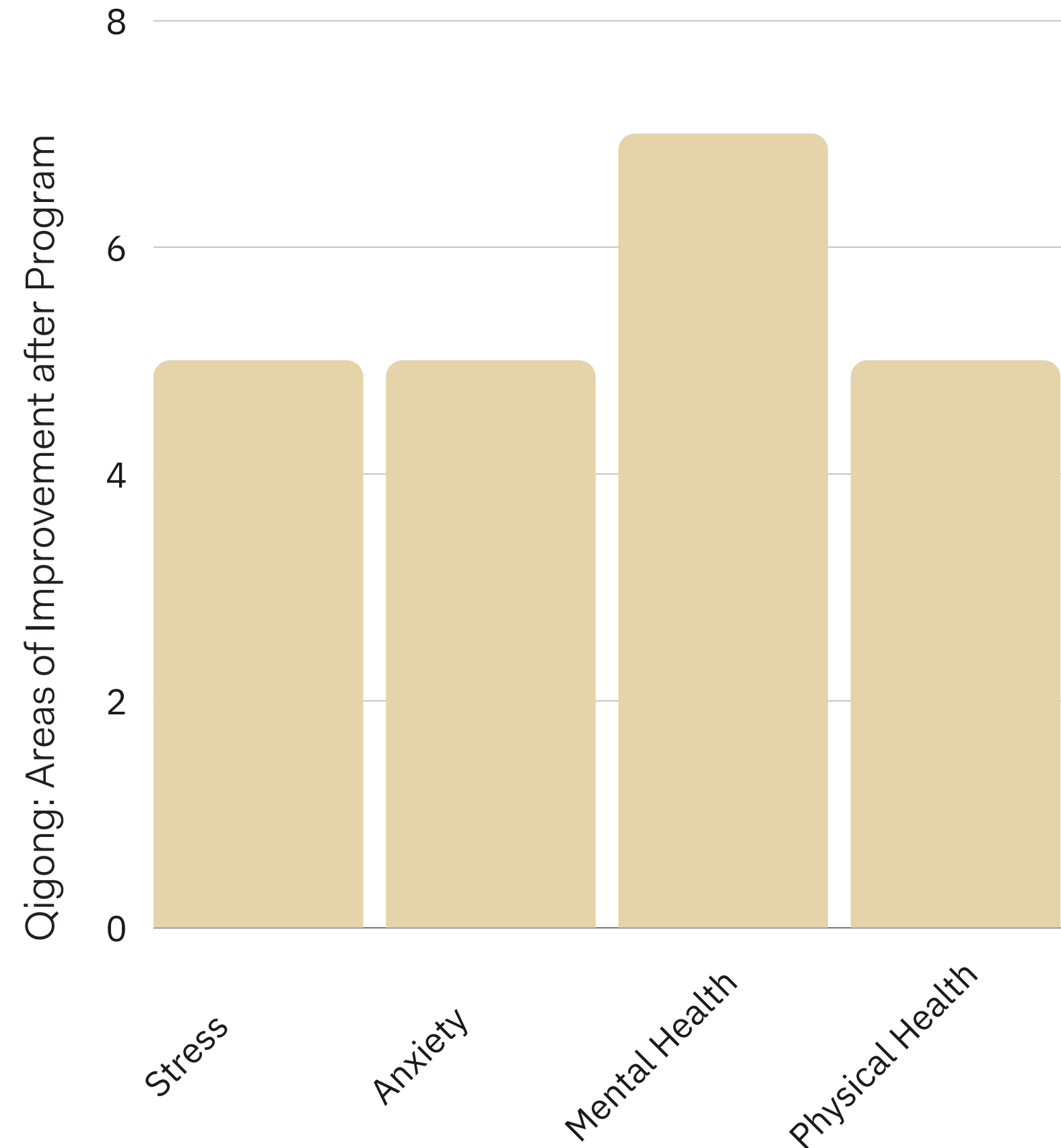


Qigong

Physical Health ❤️

Qigong is a 6-week gentle exercise routine that promotes mindfulness and flexibility taught by a trained Qigong and Tai Chi practitioner. Qigong exercises combine slow, graceful movements with mental concentration and breathing to increase a person's vital energy. These exercises activate naturally occurring physiological and psychological mechanisms of self-repair and health recovery. According to Traditional Chinese Medicine theory, Qigong sustains well-being, assists in healing disease, and has a fundamental influence on all life (Jahnke et al. 2011).

- **87.5% (7 out of 8) of participants experienced improvements in their mental health**
- **62.5% (5 out of 8) experienced improvements in their physical health, stress and anxiety levels.**
- **Qigong program provided an “excellent additional tool in managing asthma/breathing issues, stress, and overall self-care”.**
- **Participants gained techniques to address anxiety, and some expressed an interest in attending lessons in guided meditation in the future.**





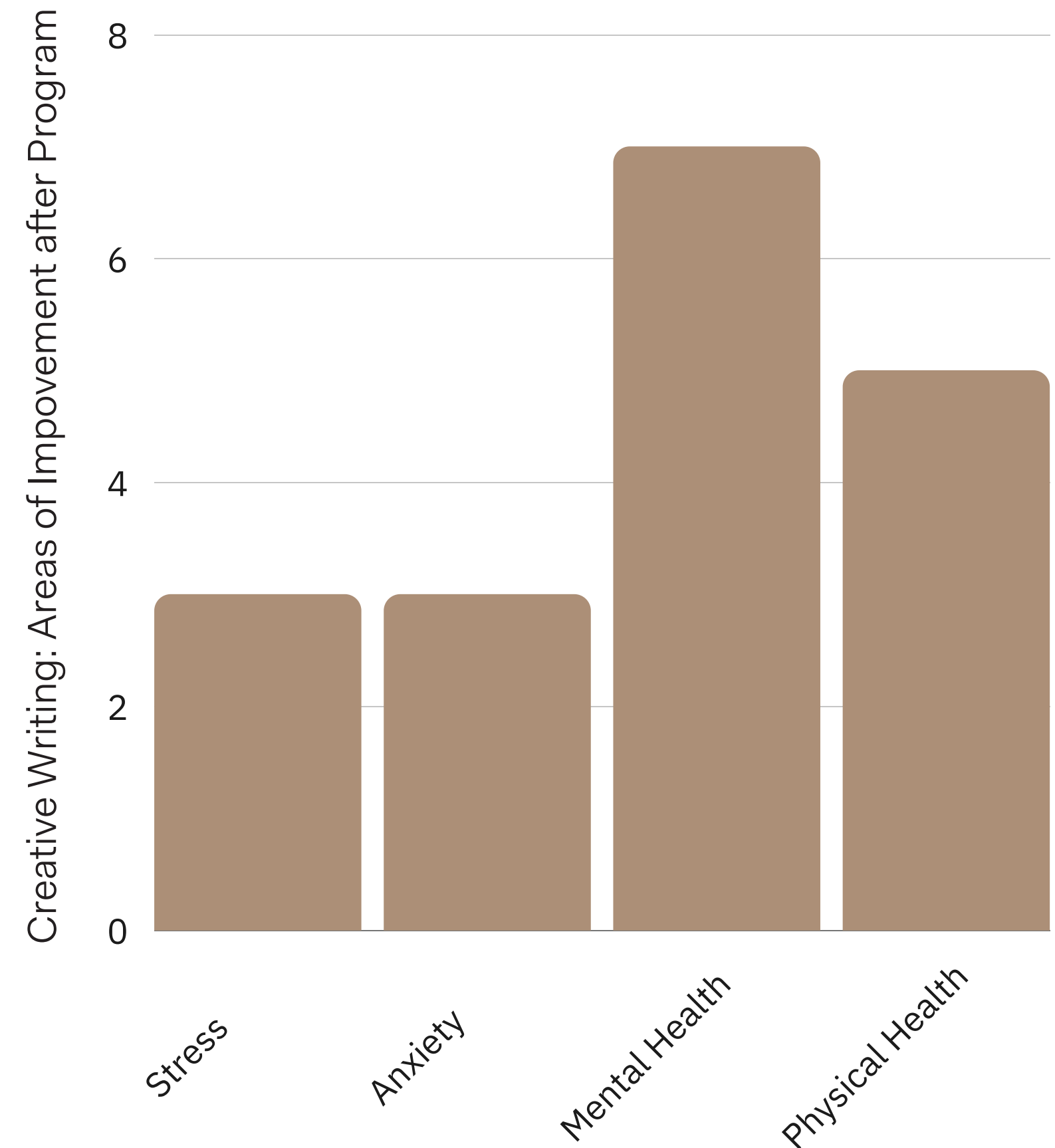
"Excellent additional tool in managing asthma/breathing issues, stress and overall self-care."

Creative Writing

Social Health 

The practice of writing as a form of expressive therapy to heal emotional trauma has been around since the late 1980s, when studies revealed the striking benefits of writing about trauma. BGF's Creative Writing program is a series of 6 weekly workshops that aim to foster self-expression through the written word. Each Creative Writing program is themed: previous themes include Haiga (Japanese Genre Poetry) (July 2019), Life Writing (October 2019), Writing from a Place of Truth (February 2020), and Oldenburg's Statements (November 2020). The latter theme saw participants choosing a line from Claes Oldenburg's 1961 manifesto "I Am For..." and articulating their thoughts about the statement. Participants were required to lead discussions with the guidance of the facilitator to develop their writings further and present them.

- **100% (7 out of 7) participants noted an improvement in their social relationships**
- **71.5% (5 out of 7) noted an improvement in their mental health**
- **42.9% (3 out of 7) noted a decrease in their stress and anxiety.**
- **Participants developed a newfound "respect for writing about illness and imperfect bodies", "new ways of generating ideas", and were able to "(let) go of preconceptions for how writing must begin".**



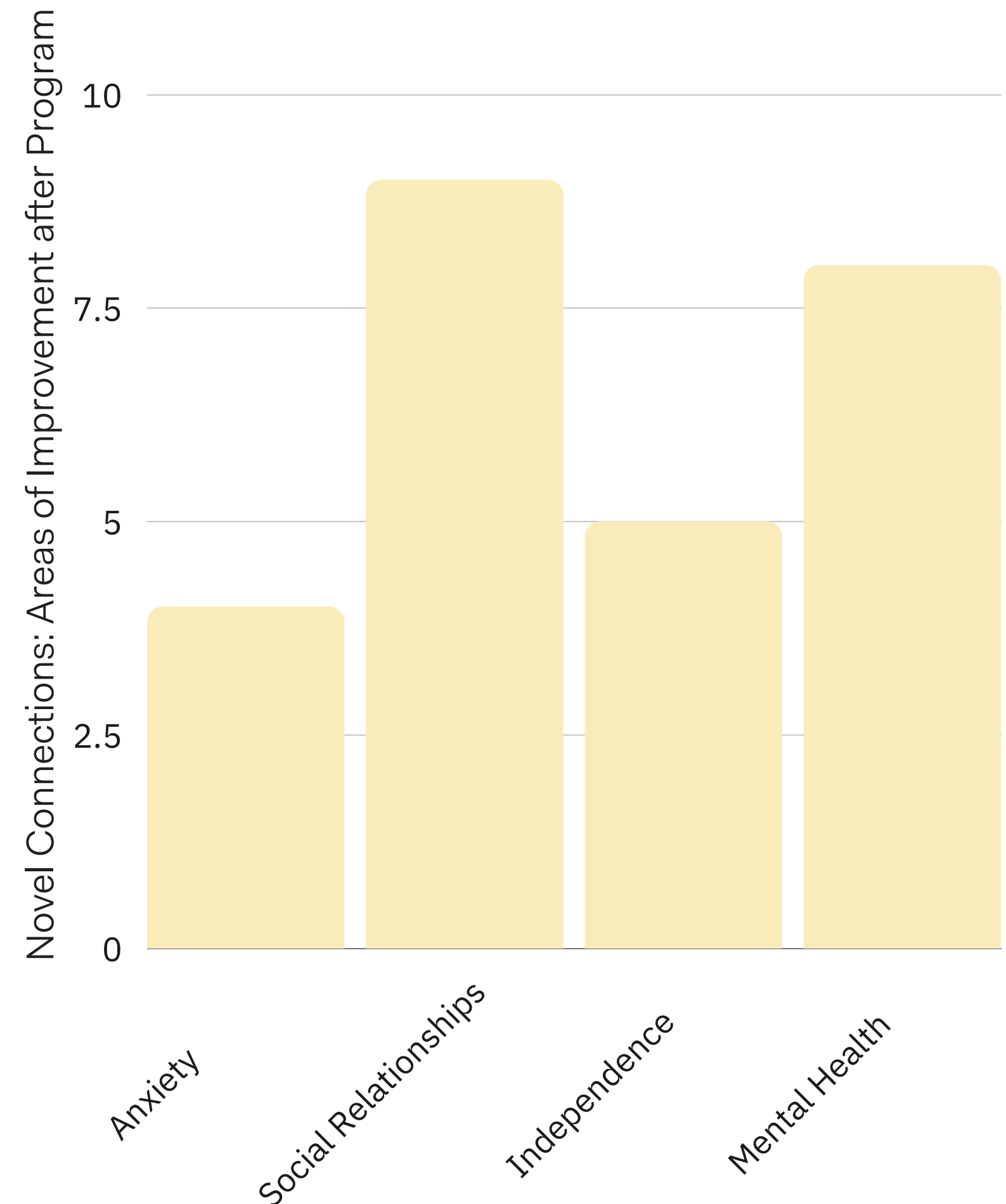
Novel Connections

Social Health 

Novel Connections is a 6-week online book club for people living with HIV and is one of the cornerstones of BGF's programs. It provides participants with a weekly opportunity for social engagement and wellbeing, especially for individuals experiencing social isolation exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Committing to a book club provides participants with structure and the discipline to complete weekly tasks and enables them to gain new perspectives they would not otherwise gain without a book club (Bachman 2017).

BGF's Novel Connections participants were provided with a free, hard copy of *The Velvet Rage* by Alan Downs from April-May 2020, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* by Mark Manson for June-July 2020, and *Caste: The Lies That Divide Us* by Isabel Wilkerson in November 2020.

- **90% of participants (9 out of 10) experienced improvements in their social relationships**
- **80% (8 out of 10) experienced improvements in their mental health.**
- **Novel Connections prompted engaging discussions surrounding culture, religion, and living with HIV.**
- **They noted that the book club prompted them to “examine (their) own tendencies, ideals, and habits”, and “offered a fresh take that cut deeply into many of (their) habitual preconceptions”. They found it “deeply rewarding.”**





NOVEL
CONNECTIONS

"Deeply
rewarding."

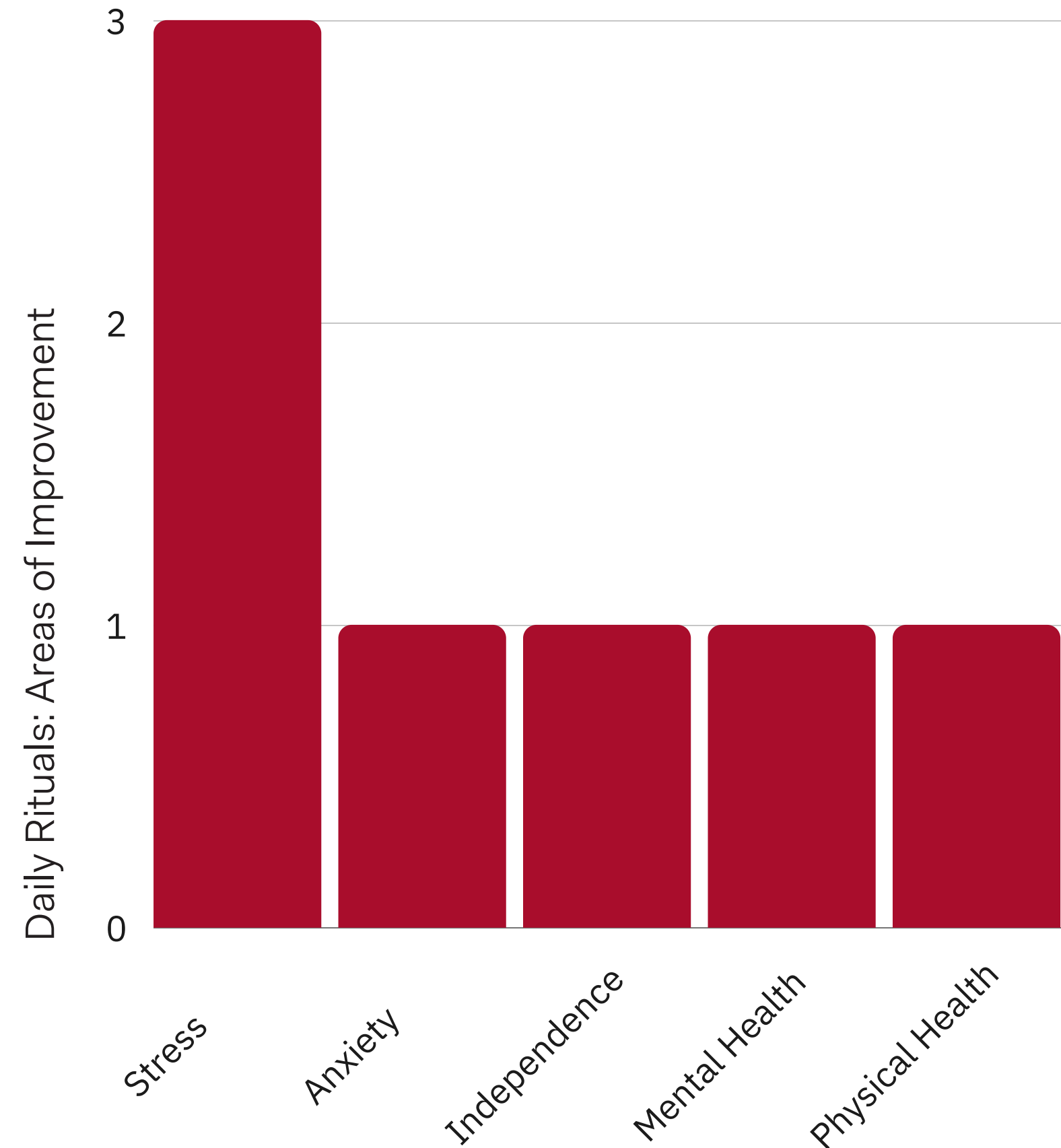
"Offered a fresh take
that cut deeply into
many of (their)
habitual
preconceptions."

Daily Rituals

Social Health 

BGF's Daily Rituals is a new 4-week alternative health program that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people with HIV through the creation of their own energy-management toolkit. Participants learn techniques in meditation, breathing, and journaling that help them relax, and manage anxiety, complemented with a bespoke essential oil blend from BGF. These practices also facilitate restful and restorative sleep and allow participants to begin their day with balanced state of being and a clear mind.

- **75% (3 out of 4) of participants observed an improvement in their stress levels**
- **25% (1 out of 4) experienced improvements in their anxiety, mental health, physical health, and level of independence.**
- **The workshop provided them with techniques and strategies to improve their health and wellbeing and to start and end their day correctly, particularly through relaxation and breathing exercises.**
- **Participants have also expressed the hope that a future Daily Rituals workshops will be in-person, with take-home activities and practices.**



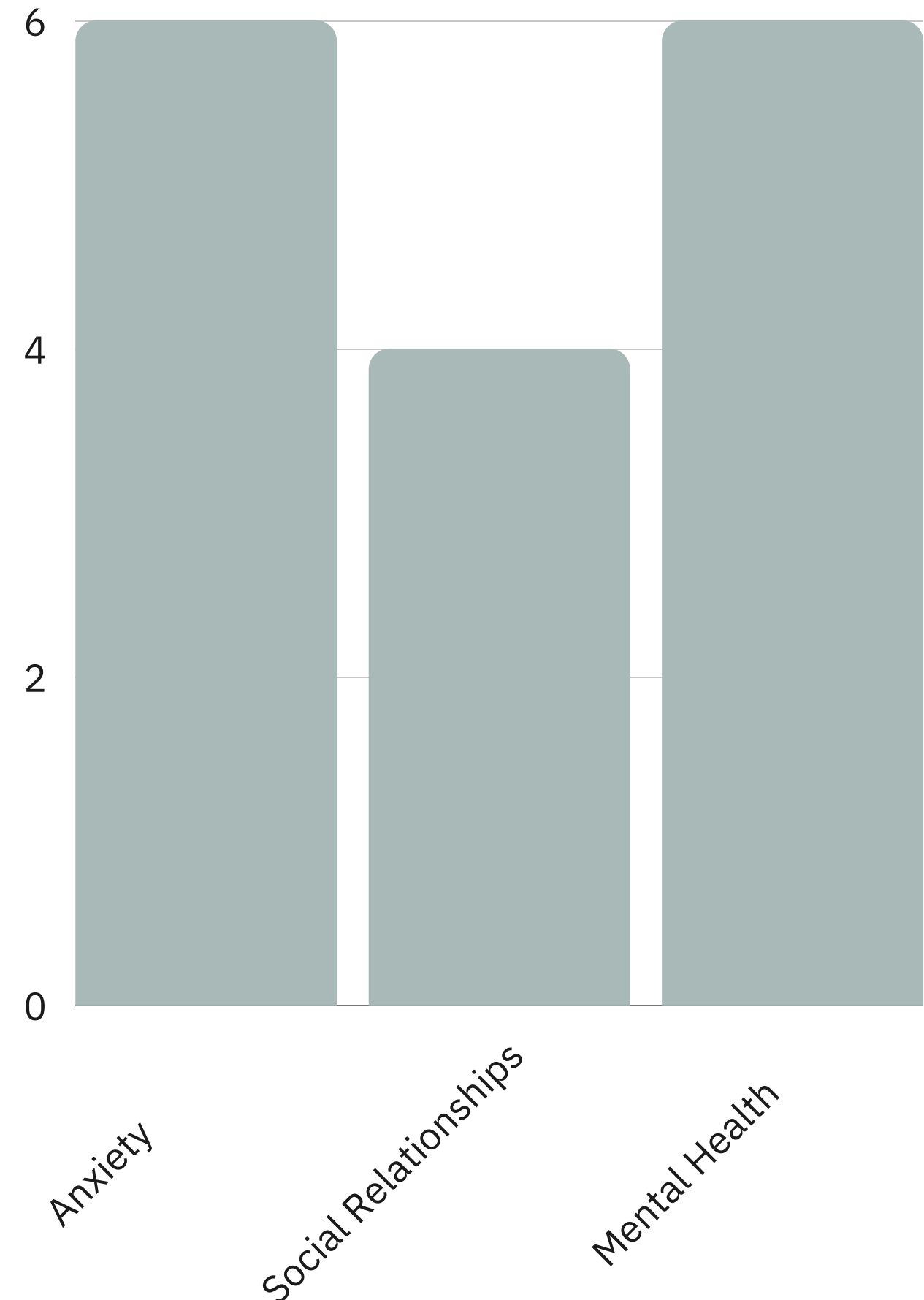
Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) Training

Psychological Health 💡

BGF's Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) Training workshop is a 6-week online mental health program led by a trained psychologist from RewireMe, a Sydney-based psychology practice specialising in exceptional therapeutic experiences. The program identifies, challenges, and replaces automatic negative thoughts with more objective, realistic ones through strategies such as journaling, relaxation techniques, and mental distractions. Participants learn how to effectively say no, set appropriate personal boundaries, and deal with their HIV status. These skills are vital life skills particularly for vulnerable people who often find themselves being taken advantage of.

- **66.7% (6 out of 9) of participants reported an improvement in their anxiety and mental health**
- **44.4% (4 out of 9) experienced improvements in their social relationships.**
- **They valued “the practical techniques that were taught... in particular learning to challenge negative thoughts, neutral thinking”, “assertive communication skills such as ‘I feel’”, and “techniques to overcome anxiety” and the development of a “goal setting plan”.**
- **The social setting of the workshop also facilitated group discussions, enabling participants to listen to different thoughts and ideas which “(made) it feel like (they are) not alone”.**

Daily Rituals: Areas of Improvement





"Keep them (BST programs) coming."

"Sleep deprivation is a huge problem."

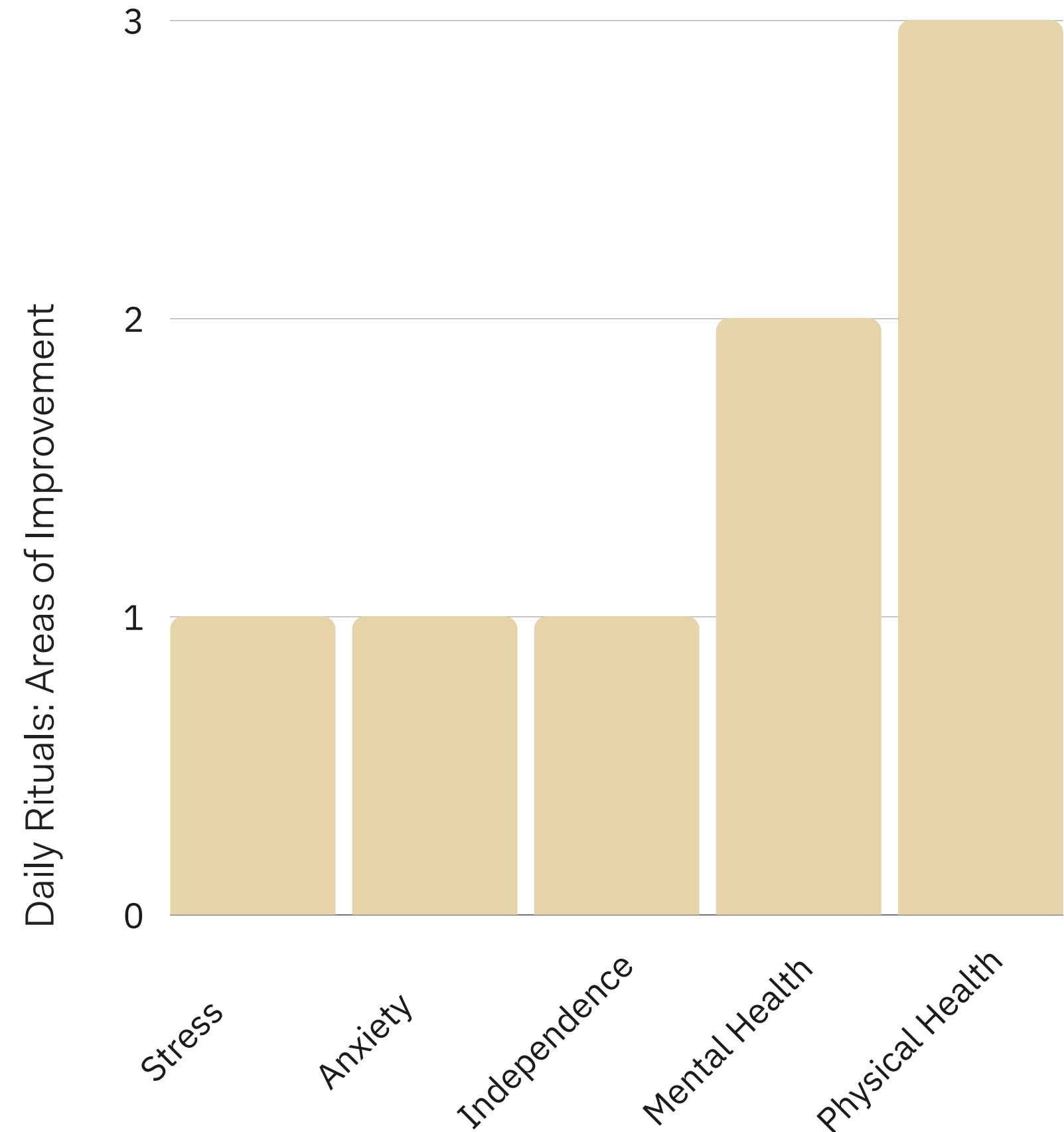
BST helped "establish (their) sleep boundaries."

Better Sleep Training

Psychological Health 

BGF's Better Sleep Training workshop is a 4-week program created and facilitated by the Sleep Health Foundation to help BGF clients attain quality sleep in the short and long term. The workshop utilises Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Insomnia (CBTI), and mindfulness which have been scientifically proven to improve sleep quality as well as general health and wellbeing. During the sessions, participants learn about the basics of sleep, factors that impact sleep quality, strategies to improve sleep hygiene and sleep quality, and are offered referral information for professional support if required.

- **75% (3 out of 4) participants of the Better Sleep Training workshop experienced an improvement in their physical health**
- **50% of them reported similarly for their mental health**
- **At least one (25%) reported a resultant decrease in their stress and anxiety levels, and an increase in independence.**
- **The workshop helped them “establish (their) sleep boundaries” and realise the “value of developing a positive approach to sleep and rest”.**
- **They were keen on attending future workshops (“keep them coming”, “sleep deprivation is a huge problem”) that provided “more details and examples” for improving sleep hygiene and quality.**



Better MoneyManagement

Financial Health 

BGF's Better Money Management program is facilitated by BGF's Financial Counsellors who assist people living with HIV to address the financial challenges of living with a chronic disease and to improve their quality of life. The 2.5-hour workshop provides participants with a stress-free, step-by-step process and tools for budgeting, goal setting, debt-tackling, the do's-and-don'ts of money lending to enable them manage and develop a good relationship with their finances.

Participants are tasked with utilising these skills to:

- **develop a budget plan from scratch and are provided with a one-on-one follow up session with a BGF financial counsellor to discuss their financial situation and plan**
- **Receive advice and support from the counsellor that is tailored to each unique circumstance.**
- **100% (4 out of 4) of participants feel that the skills learned in the program will be useful to them in the future.**
- **It provided “good ideas to apply to a much-needed personal budget”, “offered ways of thinking (they) never contemplated” and taught them to “address current situations and (develop) a plan for future finances”.**
- **They appreciated the “calm, long-term analysis” which “undid (their) short term anxieties” and tips for saving from the facilitators, as well as the subsequent 1-to-1 follow-up consultation.**

"Good ideas to apply to a much-needed personal budget."



Future Activities

Online

BGF's Health and Wellbeing Programs were delivered online in 2020 as a result of restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic has disrupted much of our lives, BGF has taken the opportunity to expand into and deliver our programs to communities in other states such as Western Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania. As the government directives change, all programs will progressively shift into one of three styles: **in-person only**, **blended-delivery (in-person and online)**, and **online-only**. BGF's current capacities allow for in-person attendance in NSW and SA only; online attendance will be available for all people living with HIV across Australia.

During 2021, the Western Sydney region will be a key area of focus for the expansion of BGF's Health and Wellbeing programs as there is a dearth of support services including programs of the nature BGF delivers for the approximately 900 people living with HIV in the region.

Diversity

Currently, BGF's clients are overwhelmingly from the White, 50+, LGBTIQ+ community, but as the demography of people living with HIV in Australia changes, so do their needs and expectations. BGF is committed to delivering a diverse range of programs that are accessible to all people living with HIV, regardless of ethnicity background, gender or sexual orientation.



Conclusion



Many people living with HIV are dealing with not only the full array of age-related health and social challenges such as decreasing physical mobility, cognitive decline, chronic comorbid diseases, and social isolation, but also the systemic stigma and discrimination commonly faced by marginalised groups and the resultant financial challenges it encompasses (Safreed-Harmon et al. 2019).

For them, and for the community organisations that serve and represent them, living simultaneously with HIV and the consequences of ageing is the 'new frontier' (NAPWHA 2019: 4).

BGF aims to be at the forefront of this frontier, developing and implementing innovation health and wellbeing programs that strive to help people living with HIV to thrive.

