

Choose Again Program Evaluation

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Submitted to:

Choose Again Society
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Executive Summary

Choose Again is a registered Canadian charity that offers a variety of intensive mind training programs to enable clients to heal anxiety, addictions, depressions, dysfunctional relationships and other issues. They offer a holistic approach to mental, emotional and spiritual well-being through attitudinal healing, applied transpersonal psychology, and universal spiritual teachings.

In December of 2011, Warren Helfrich, a program evaluation consultant in private practice, was contracted to complete an evaluation of the services offered by Choose Again at their Healing Centre in Costa Rica (El Cielo). The primary purpose of the evaluation was to measure the impact (outcomes) of Choose Again's services in the lives of the individuals they have served and to provide useful information for improving the quality and effectiveness of their services. The evaluation had two phases; a cross sectional survey of a sample of individuals that had attended the Centre prior to the February 2012 and time series (pre/post/follow-up) evaluation of individuals attending after that point in time.

The report on the first phase of the evaluation was published in June of 2012 and highlighted very positive outcomes experienced by those that had attended the Centre over the previous years. Roughly four out of five individuals experienced lasting improvement in their quality of life and would have recommended the service to someone close to them. While this phase of the evaluation was able to establish a baseline of program impact for the Centre, the use of cross-sectional survey design is subject to many limitations that were described in the first report. The second phase of the evaluation was explicitly intended to address those limitations.

As with the cross-sectional survey used in phase one, this phase of the evaluation measured outcomes that had been defined in an agreed upon program logic model. A total of 60 respondents ended up participating in the pre-post evaluation on-site in Costa Rica between February 2012 and November 2013. Follow-up surveys began in May of 2012 and continued until May 2014. A total of 36 individuals (60% of the total sample) ended up participating in the follow-up surveys.

The overall sample of individuals attending the Centre during at El Cielo during the study period was predominantly University educated females in their early 40's. They typically stayed at the Centre for between two and three weeks. The follow-up sample was also mostly female, but had achieved slightly higher levels of education on average and was older by an average of three years. While their average length of stay was longer (by four days), their typical (median) length of stay was four to five days shorter.

The following were the main findings from this phase of the program evaluation:

- 95% of those attending the Centre reported having 'very good' quality of life at the time of exit, an 89% improvement over the pre-test result.
- For the three most commonly identified issues of those attending the Centre – anxiety/worry concerns, communication issues, and depression/severe sadness – the decreases in the proportion of individuals rating them as serious, extreme or life threatening were 79%, 78% and 76% respectively.

- The changes individuals experienced were highly durable in most instances. The severity ratings they assigned to issues and concerns from the time they exited to the time of follow-up stayed the same or decreased in 9 of 16 areas. In areas where there was some increase in the proportion of individuals rating the issue as serious, extreme or life threatening, it was general small and averaged less than 5%.
- 77% of individuals exiting the Centre indicated that they had a strong sense of the purpose and value of healthy relationships, an increase of 148% over pre-test results.
- The total number of individuals indicating that they had a very positive relationship with their spouse/partner more than doubled from pre-test ratings to follow-up (a 132% increase).
- At the time of exit, fully 89% of individuals felt that they 'somewhat' or 'definitely' had a sense of their passion in life (an increase of 98%) and 85% had a sense of their purpose as an individual (an 89% increase).
- 32% more individuals (from 60% to 92%) indicated that they were able to 'somewhat' or 'definitely' incorporate their passion or purpose into their personal lives (a 53% increase).
- Engagement in spiritual practices at follow-up was above the levels identified at entry in all categories. Regular contemplation and reflection were practiced even more frequently at follow-up.
- Individuals were much more likely to indicate that they were 'always' happy in terms of their relationship with themselves from pre to post-test, going from 6% at pre-test to 53% at post-test (a several hundred percent increase). Most (37%) had been able to maintain that gain at the time of follow-up.
- Two thirds of individuals were able to maintain active use of all of the steps for resolving interpersonal conflict taught at the Centre at the time of follow-up.
- All but one (59 of 60) of the individuals that attended the Centre agreed or strongly agreed that the services offered to them met their needs. Similarly, all but two (58 of 60) agreed that the facility and accommodations met their needs.
- All individuals that exited the Centre during the study period indicated that they would recommend Choose Again to someone close to them, while all but two individuals indicated they would recommend it at follow-up.

The results of this evaluation provide additional evidence for the effectiveness of the services offered by Choose Again at its Centre at El Cielo, both confirming and extending the results of the cross-sectional survey conducted for the first evaluation. Individuals attending the Centre experienced positive benefits in terms of their relationships with significant others in their lives, their sense of passion and purpose in their life, their integration of spiritual practices, their overall quality of life, and freedom from self-destructive behaviors, including addictions. Although the magnitude of the changes varied from outcome to outcome, it appears that the overwhelming majority of those attending the program experience some positive benefits.

One of the key findings from this phase of the evaluation is in regards to the durability of the gains made by individuals during their stay at El Cielo. In general, individuals were able to maintain or improve upon those gains from the time of exit to follow-up. While a larger follow-up sample would have increased confidence in the findings, there is little to suggest that the results would have been substantially different had a larger sample been attained.

Table to Contents

Introduction	5
Background on the Program Being Evaluated	5
Background on the Evaluator	6
Purpose of the Evaluation	6
Evaluation Strategy/Methods.....	6
Sampling & Data Collection	7
Program Logic Model (Theory of Change).....	8
Key Activities.....	8
Short Term Outcomes (during/at the end of residential program)	9
Mid Term & Long Term Outcomes (4 months to 3 years post program attendance)	9
Client Characteristics & Services Utilization Data	10
Characteristics of Individuals Participating in the Pre-Post Evaluation Survey.....	10
Gender	10
Age	10
Length of stay	11
Characteristics of Individuals Participating in the Follow-Up Evaluation Survey.....	11
Gender	11
Age	11
Length of stay	12
Discussion	12
Issues & Concerns Precipitating Attendance at the Centre	13
Evaluation Results.....	14
Outcome #1: Clients will maintain healthy relationships.....	14
Outcome #2: Clients will incorporate their identified life passion and purpose into their personal and professional lives	18
Discussion:	21
Outcome #3: Clients will integrate spiritual practices into their daily lives (e.g., meditation, reflection, and contemplation).....	22
Discussion:	22
Outcome #4: Clients will experience improved overall quality of life	23
Discussion:	25
Outcome #5: Clients will live free from addictions and other self-destructive behaviors.....	25
Discussion:	27
Substance Use:.....	28
Hospitalizations	28
Suicide Attempts/Ideation.....	28
The Choose Again Process	29
Measures of Service Quality (Process Measures)	29
Conclusion & Recommendations.....	32
Appendix A: Measurement Plan	34

Choose Again Society Evaluation Report

Introduction

Dr. Warren Helfrich, a program evaluation consultant, was contracted to complete an evaluation of the services offered by Choose Again at their Healing Centre in Costa Rica (El Cielo). The evaluation was performed by gathering data on clients as they participated in services at the Centre (pre and post-test) as well as at follow-up. This evaluation is the second phase of an evaluation of Choose Again's services. The first phase was conducted in 2012 utilizing a cross-sectional survey design of a sample of individuals that had attended Choose Again in previous years. The results of that evaluation can be accessed on Choose Again's website (<http://www.choose-again.com/home/testimonial/choose-again-program-evaluation-2>). The following report reflects the results of the second phase of the evaluative process with some reflections and comparisons with the results of the initial evaluation where appropriate.

Background on the Program Being Evaluated

Choose Again offers a variety of intensive mind training programs to enable clients to heal anxiety, addictions, depressions, dysfunctional relationships and other issues. They offer a holistic approach to mental, emotional and spiritual well-being through Attitudinal Healing, Applied Transpersonal Psychology, and universal spiritual teachings.

Choose Again's mission is to *"help others and ourselves to remove the barriers to love we have erected and to then experience peace and joy in life, regardless of our stories, symptoms and diagnoses"*. The organization operates a residential healing centre in Costa Rica and offers circles, family support, workshops and speaking engagements in Vancouver and internationally. Mind training is the core of the program in Costa Rica and this is achieved through circles (group processing sessions), private counselling sessions, and meditation as well as numerous complimentary therapies. The goal of the these activities is to;

- Identify recurring patterns
- Commit to a process to release these patterns
- Identify and begin releasing limiting beliefs which attract negative life experiences
- Acquire tools for deep, full and fearless communication
- Master processes to quickly resolve any conflict
- Learn the purpose and value of healthy relationships and how to maintain such relationships
- Discover a true passion and purpose and be on a path to incorporate that purpose into their personal and professional life
- Develop a spiritual practice of meditation, reflection and contemplation
- Develop a lifestyle conducive to being a happy, productive member of society

Background on the Evaluator

WRH Consulting offers forward-thinking solutions to human service providers, including research support; third party program evaluation services; hands-on training and facilitation services; and program development consulting. Dr. Warren Helfrich served as WRH Consulting's lead investigator for this evaluation. Dr. Helfrich is a human services researcher, consultant and trainer focusing on the areas of performance measurement, organizational behavior, leadership, program evaluation and human services accreditation. Warren has extensive consulting experience in the human services sector working with both public sector and private organizations. Warren is also registered with the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors. Warren holds a Masters of Social Work from the University of Toronto and a PhD from the University of Calgary. His dissertation focused on the impact of leadership on client outcomes within human service organizations. A current copy of Warren's Curriculum Vitae can be accessed at www.warrenhelfrich.ca.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to measure the impact (outcomes) of Choose Again's services in the lives of the individuals they have served. Although the organization felt confident about the benefits experienced by those that attended the Centre based on feedback from those that had attended the Centre over the years, they believed that having an independent evaluation of their services could provide confirmation of those benefits as well as provide useful information for improving the quality and effectiveness of their services. An evaluation framework (described below) that reflected specific program outcomes was developed through a collaborative process and forms the basis for reporting on the impact of their services. Information was also gathered on client characteristics, services utilization, and service quality in order to provide context to the outcomes information and inform future quality improvement initiatives.

Evaluation Strategy/Methods

This phase of the evaluation utilized a time series design, with measurements taken at the beginning of service (pre-test), at exit from the Centre (post-test) and at follow-up (between 4 and 6 months post exit). The cross-sectional design used for the first phase of the evaluation provided a useful baseline of program impact. The reason for choosing a time series design for this phase of the evaluation was to address some of the specific limitations of the cross-sectional design. In particular, the cross-sectional design was subject to recall bias and captured individuals at varying lengths of time post-exit. The intention was to confirm the findings of that phase of the evaluation and to add more depth in terms of the nature and magnitude of any changes that might be experienced by individuals that had attended the Centre. A program logic model, detailed evaluation plan and data collection instrument was developed as part of the first phase of the evaluation and were utilized for this phase as well. Details of the development process are provided in the evaluation report on the first phase (referenced above). This phase of the evaluation focused on data collection monitoring (for the pre-post surveys

being completed on-site in Costa Rica), administration of the follow-up survey by the evaluator, data analysis and reporting.

Sampling & Data Collection

As was described in the report for the first phase of this evaluation, Choose Again staff at the Centre in Costa Rica were involved in a process of developing the data collection instrument to be utilized for both the cross-sectional survey and for the pre/post/follow-up surveys. Once the design was complete, the survey tools were then set up in survey administration software utilized by the evaluator (Fluid Surveys). Choose Again staff in Costa Rica piloted the pre-test survey tool with a client attending the Centre at the time the evaluator was on site in January 2012, providing an opportunity for fine tuning the questions and ensuring that staff were clear on the process for administering the survey tool.

Individuals attending the centre were asked to complete a pre-test questionnaire to establish a baseline of functioning relative to the outcomes identified in the agreed upon evaluation plan. All individuals were then asked to complete a post-test questionnaire at the time of exit from the centre. All data from the pre and post questionnaires was collected by Choose Again staff and entered in to survey administration software. At the time of exit from the program, individuals were asked to consent to participation in the follow-up survey to be conducted at a minimum of four months post-exit from the centre. All individuals exiting from the program were asked to participate in pre, post and follow-up measurement beginning in February 2012. A sample of 60 individuals was sought and was achieved at the end of November 2013.

All 60 individuals that had completed pre and post test instruments and had agreed to participate in the follow-up survey were contacted by the evaluator for follow-up. The evaluator is aware of only one case of an individual that had declined to participate in the follow-up survey at the time they exited the Centre in Costa Rica. This individual's pre-post data was deleted from the evaluation data set. Follow-up began at four months post exit. Contact was attempted both by repeated emails and follow-up phone calls to all individuals. Individuals were given the option to complete the survey by telephone or on their own through an on-line web portal. All individuals were assured that the information they provided would remain entirely confidential and that nothing that would specifically identify them would be included in the final evaluation report.

As a result of repeated and persistent efforts to engage individuals, including offering multiple opportunities and means to complete the survey, the evaluator was able to obtain responses from 36 of the 60 individuals that had exited the Centre. The final overall response rate to the survey was 60%, which is similar to the response rate for the cross-sectional survey conducted for the first phase of the evaluation (58%). Two individuals declined to participate in the follow-up survey when they were contacted even though they had consented to participate at the time they exited. Neither individual provided specifics regarding the reasons for declining to participate. The remainder of individuals contacted either did not respond or responded but did not follow through despite being given multiple opportunities.

Although attempts to complete follow-up began at four months post exit, the actual follow-up survey was often completed some time later due to delays in responses and in making arrangements for survey completion. The average time elapsed between the date of exit from the Centre until the follow-up was completed was 162 days (roughly five and a half months).

Note that all presentations of comparative results where the follow-up group is included only utilized data collected from those 36 individuals at the various points in time indicated. This was to prevent the inclusion of those individuals that did not participate in the follow-up skewing these specific results.

Program Logic Model (Theory of Change)

The following logic model was developed based on a review of online materials and discussions with Choose Again staff while on-site at the Centre. It is intended to demonstrate how the program's key activities connect to identified program outcomes. This logic model was utilized for both phases of the evaluation.

Key Activities

- Centre-Based Activities:
 - Circles (group processing sessions)
 - Individual Counselling Sessions
 - Meditation
 - Complimentary Therapies
 - Therapeutic Breathwork
 - Myofascial release and insight bodywork
 - Study of Universal Spiritual teachings
 - Yoga Nidra
 - Hatha Yoga
 - Pilates
 - Hotsprings therapy
 - Beach and ocean air
 - Art and writing therapy
 - Health, whole foods
 - Daily fresh air and exercise
- Follow-up Activities
 - Choose Again Circles
 - Actively utilizing 6 step process

Short Term Outcomes (during/at the end of residential program)

- 1) Clients will have increased awareness of the purpose and value of healthy relationships
- 2) Clients have an increased awareness of their true passion and the purpose of their life
- 3) Clients will have increased knowledge of how to utilize healthy spiritual practices, including meditation, reflection, and contemplation

Mid Term & Long Term Outcomes (4 months to 3 years post program attendance)

- 1) Clients will maintain healthy relationships
- 2) Clients will incorporate their identified life passion and purpose into their personal and professional lives
- 3) Clients will integrate spiritual practices into their daily lives (e.g., meditation, reflection, and contemplation)
- 4) Clients will experience improved overall quality of life
- 5) Clients will live free from addictions and other self-destructive behaviors

Client Characteristics & Services Utilization Data

Information on the characteristics of individuals that had attended the Centre in Costa Rica provides useful context to the outcomes evaluation data. Data on characteristics for the overall sample and for the pre-post sample is presented separately to allow for comparison and discussion of similarities and differences.

Characteristics of Individuals Participating in the Pre-Post Evaluation Survey

Gender








Male		35.0%	21
Female		65.0%	39
Total Responses			60

Females were overrepresented in the sample of individuals that participated in Centre services over the study period. They outnumbered males by a ratio of nearly 2:1. This is in contrast to the results of the first phase of the evaluation where there were roughly equal numbers of males and females. However, it is important to note that obtaining equal numbers of males and females was part of a purposive sampling strategy for the first phase of the evaluation and not necessarily a reflection of the actual population served.

Age

The average age of those participating in services was 41, slightly younger than the average age of those that participated in the first phase of the evaluation where the average age was 43. The ages ranged from 18 to 67.

Level of Education

Less than 12th grade		1.7%	1
12th grade		25.0%	15
Trade School		5.0%	3
College		16.7%	10
University		30.0%	18
Graduate Studies		18.3%	11
Other		3.3%	2
Total Responses			60

Nearly 3 out of 4 of those attending Choose Again's Centre at El Cielo had completed some post-secondary education. Roughly two thirds (65%) were College and University graduates (including those that had attended graduate studies) while the remaining 5% had attended Trade School. This level of post-secondary education is relatively high in comparison to the general population. For example, Canada's rate of post-secondary education completion is roughly 60% and is considered one of the highest in the world. Because of the relationship between post-secondary education and

income, this finding may simply reflect the fact that individuals who can afford to attend the Centre are also more likely to have some form of post-secondary education.

Length of stay

The average length of stay for those attending the Centre during the study period was 27 days, with a range of 4 to 192 days. The median length of stay was 18 days, indicating that most individuals stayed between two and three weeks in the program. In reviewing the data, there were five outliers (103, 77, 192, 120 and 85) that skewed the average upwards. Although the average length of stay for the first phase of the evaluation was higher (40 days), the median was 19 which suggests that the pattern regarding length of stay has been mostly stable over time.

Characteristics of Individuals Participating in the Follow-Up Evaluation Survey

Gender







Male		33.3%	12
Female		66.7%	24
Total Responses			36

The gender of those that participated in the follow-up survey roughly mirrored that of the larger sample (a 2% difference), with females again outnumbering males by a ratio of 2:1.

Age

The average age of those that participated in the follow-up survey was 44, which was three years older than the average for the overall sample of attendees.

Level of Education

Less than 12th grade		2.8%	1
12th grade		13.9%	5
Trade School		8.3%	3
College		19.4%	7
University		30.6%	11
Graduate Studies		25.0%	9
Other		0.0%	0
Total Responses			36

Those that participated in the follow-up survey had higher levels of participation in post-secondary education than the broader sample (83% vs. 70%). The relative proportions of those completing some form of post-secondary education was similar, with the notable exception that proportionately more individuals had completed graduate studies and less had completed undergraduate University education.

Length of stay

The average length of stay for those participating in the follow-up survey was 31 days, with a range of 4 to 192. This is an average of 4 days longer than for the overall sample. The median stay was 12.5 days, which was 6 days shorter than for the overall sample. This would suggest that most individuals participating in the follow-up survey stayed for a shorter duration and that those few individuals that had relatively long stays were overrepresented in the follow-up sample.

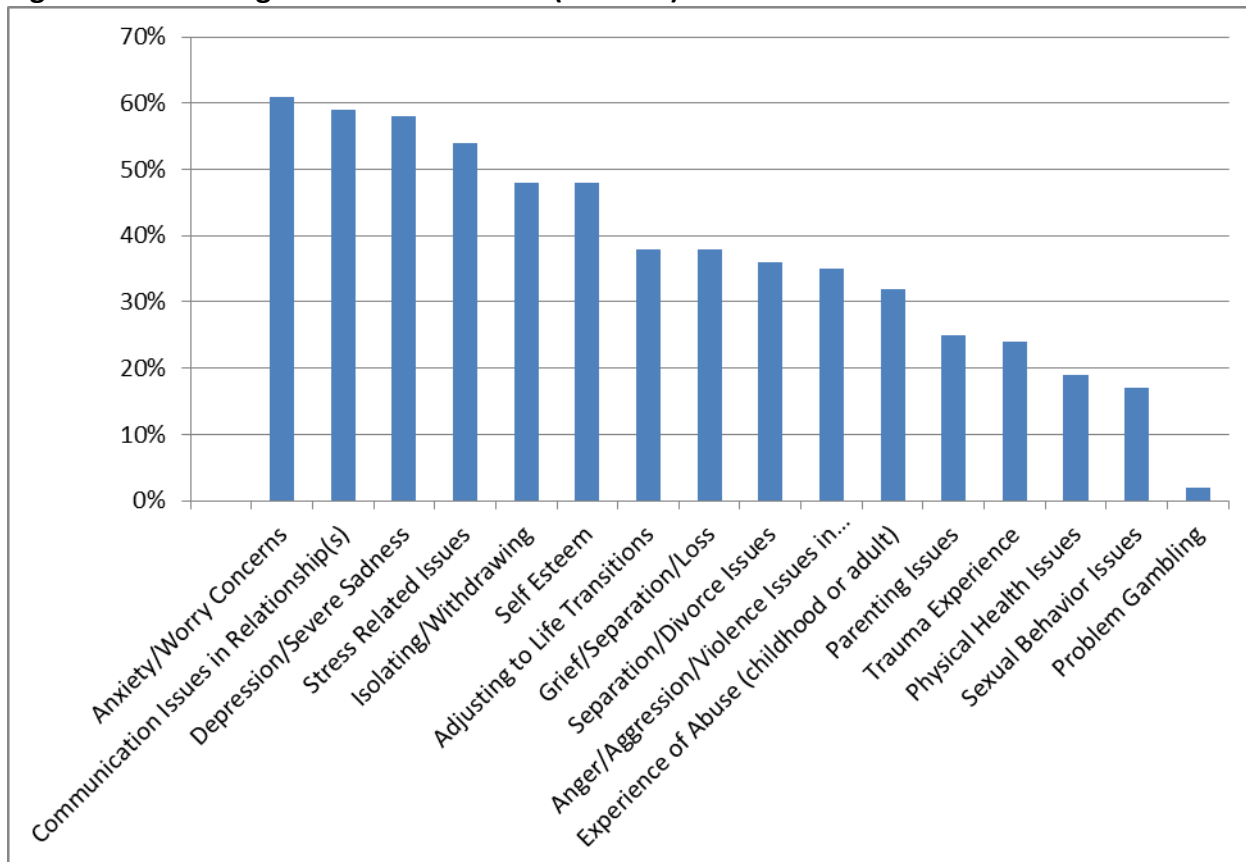
Discussion

The overall sample of individuals attending the Centre at El Cielo was predominantly University educated females in their early 40's. They typically stayed at the Centre for between two and three weeks. The follow-up sample was also mostly female, but had achieved slightly higher levels of education on average and was older by an average of three years. While their average length of stay was longer (by four days), their typical (median) length of stay was four to five days shorter.

Issues & Concerns Precipitating Attendance at the Centre

Respondents were queried about their level of concern in relation to a list of issues and concerns at entry into the program, at exit, and again at follow-up. If an issue was identified, they were asked to indicate their level of concern with that issue. Figure 1 below reports the results for those individuals indicating that, at the time of arrival at the Centre, they considered the issues to be serious, extreme, or life threatening.

Figure 1: Presenting Issues and Concerns (Pre Test)



Question - "Please indicate your level of concern with the following" (n=60)

The most commonly identified issues for individuals attending the Centre were anxiety/worry concerns (61% of individuals), communication issues in relationship(s), and depression/severe sadness (58% for both). Stress related issues, issues related to isolating/withdrawing and issues with self-esteem were identified by roughly half of those attending (54%, 48% and 48% respectively). Problem gambling was the least common issue (identified by one individual). Physical health issues and sexual behavior issues were also relatively uncommon, impacting less than one in five of those attending the Centre.

Substance abuse issues were relatively uncommon amongst those attending the Centre. At the time of intake, only two categories of substance abuse issue were identified as being of concern to more than 3% of the sample; alcohol use (9/60 or 15%) and overeating (4/60 or 7%).

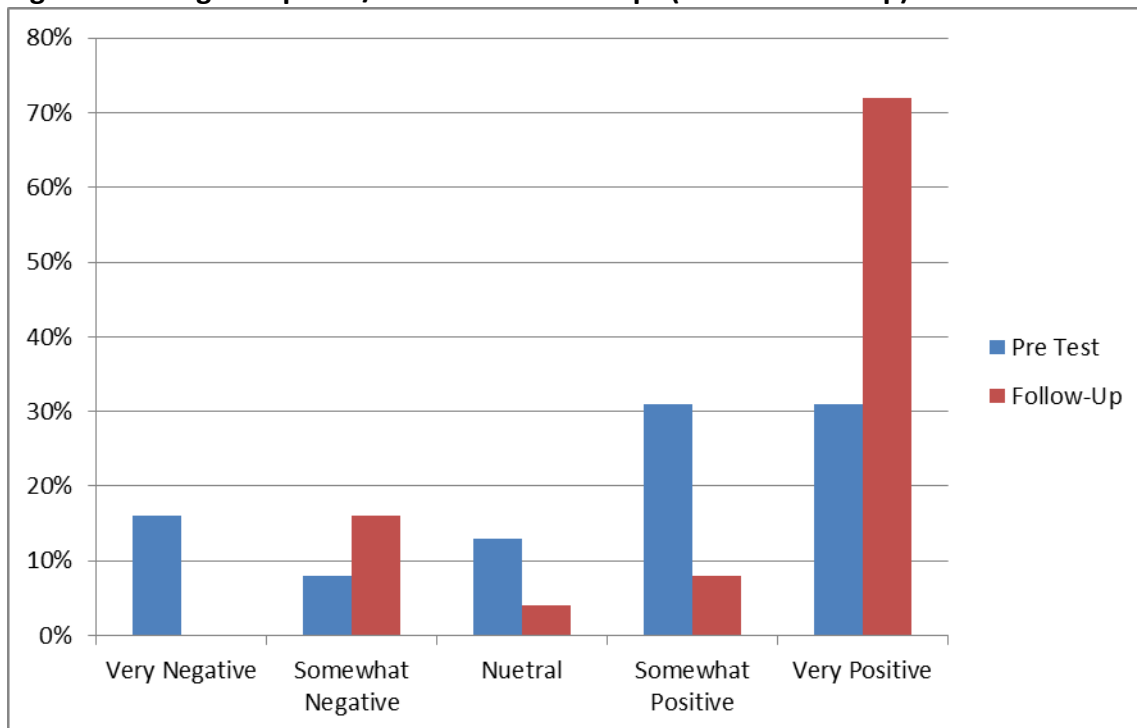
Evaluation Results

The results of this evaluation are reported in relation to the specific outcomes identified in the logic model. Each outcome described in the logic model is stated and followed by evidence of impact related to that outcome. In several instances, there were multiple questions on the survey that provided evidence of impact related to an outcome. Each source is described. In addition, the results on measures of service quality are discussed.

Outcome #1: Clients will maintain healthy relationships

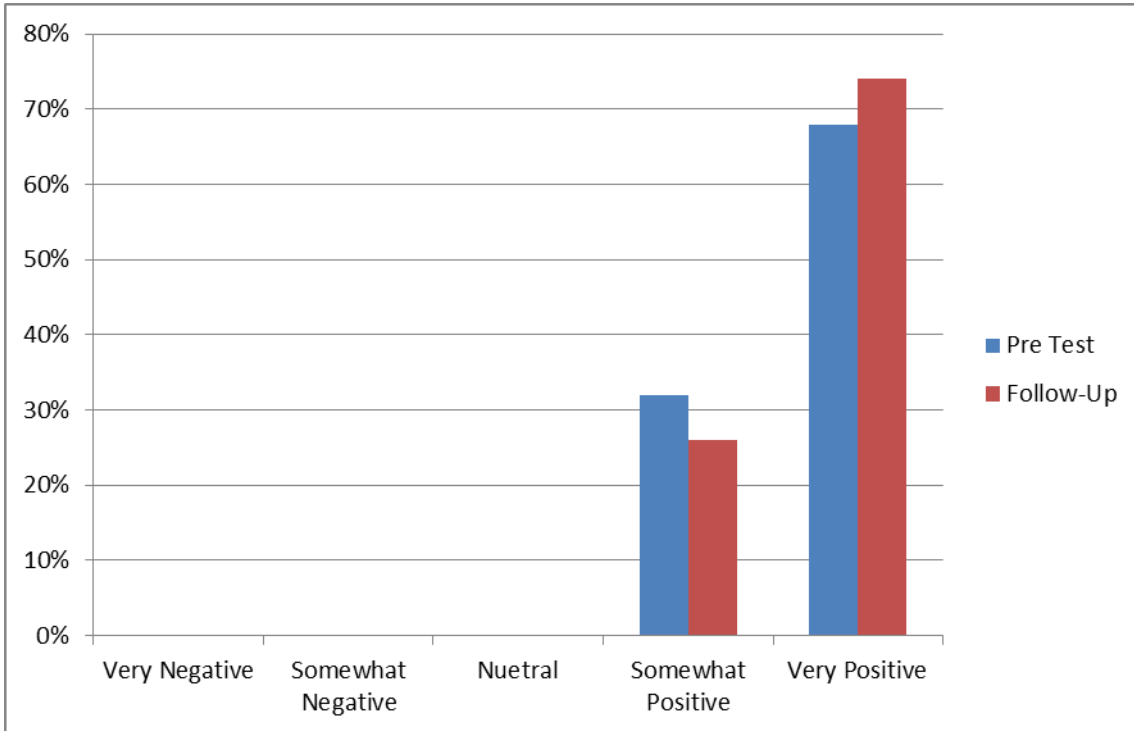
Perhaps the most central area of intended impact for Choose Again's services is relationships. Choose Again views the relationships individuals have with others as both reflective of their current functioning and an area where significant growth and learning can occur that can impact all other areas. The survey examined changes in individual's primary relationships that they attributed to their experiences at the Centre. A series of questions examined changes in spouse/partner relationships, relationships with children, and relationships with friends and colleagues. The survey also examined whether individuals felt that they had gained a stronger sense of the purpose and value of healthy relationships and whether they had an increased number of healthy relationships in their life. The results are presented as figures 2 through 6 below.

Figure 2: Change in Spouse/Partner Relationships (Pre to Follow-up)



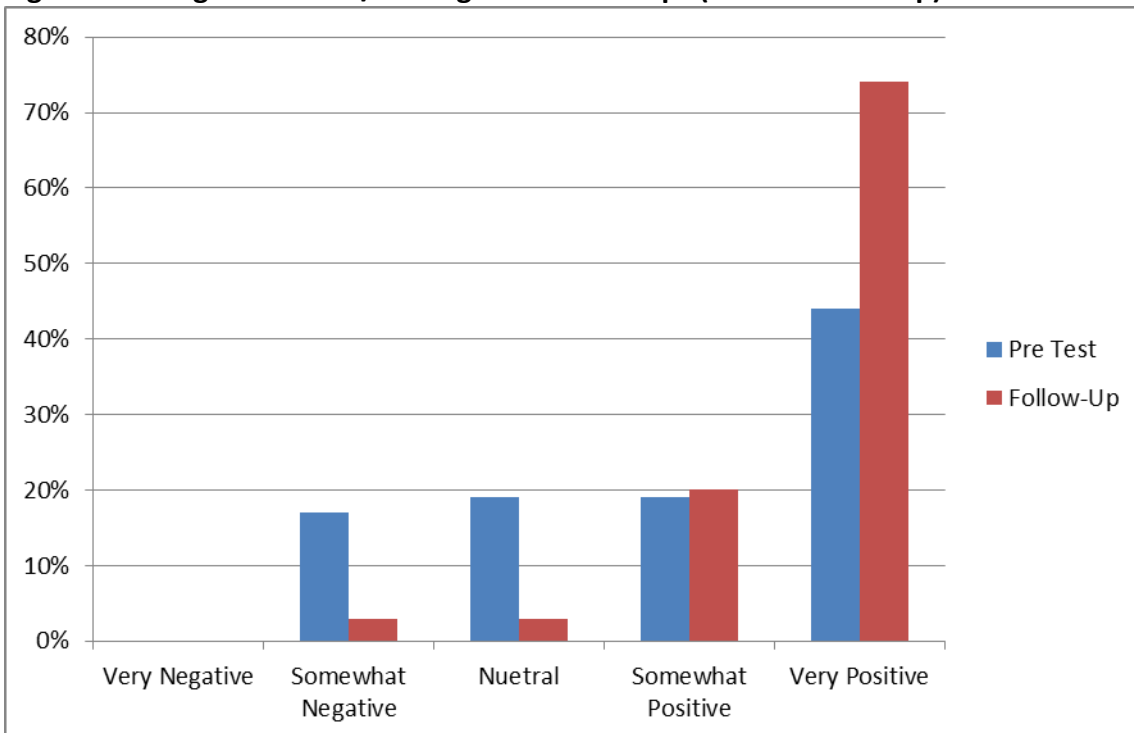
Question – “My current relationship with my spouse/partner is” (N=27 Responses)

Figure 3: Changes in Relationships with Children (Pre to Follow-Up)



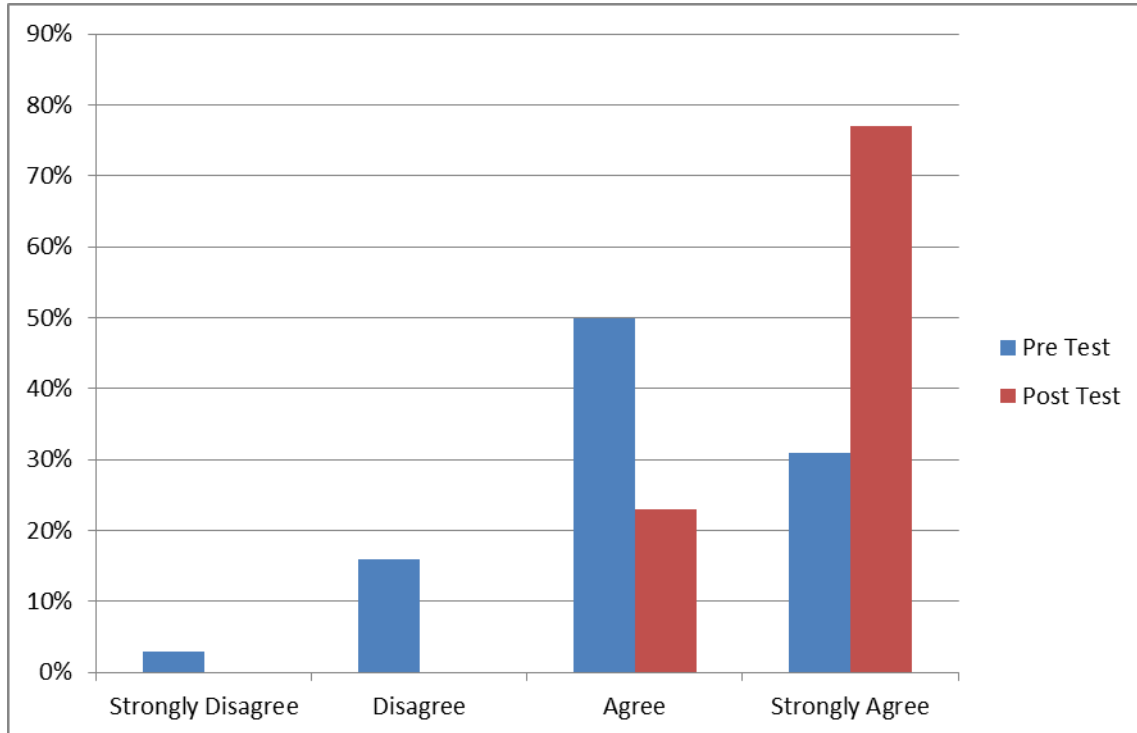
Question – “My current relationship with my children is” (n=19 responses)

Figure 4: Changes in Friend/Colleague Relationships (Pre to Follow-Up)



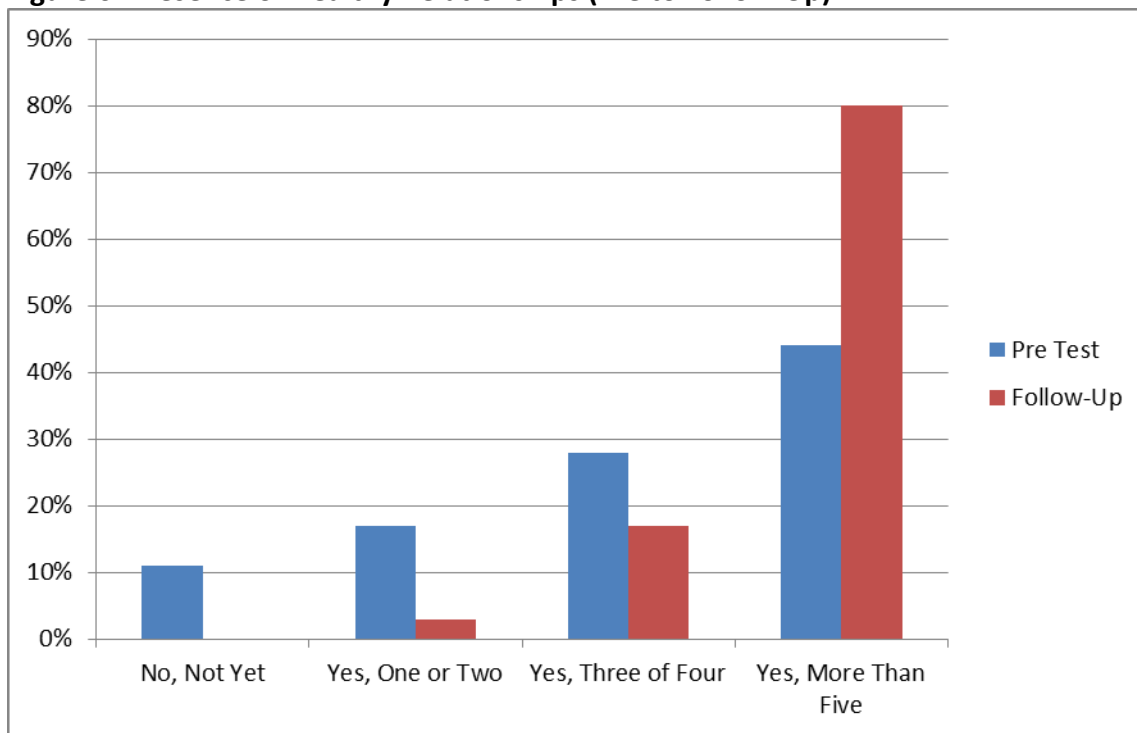
Question – “My relationships with my friends and colleagues is” (n=36 responses)

Figure 5: Sense of the Purpose and Value of Health Relationships (Pre to Post)



Question – “I feel that I have a sense of the purpose and value of healthy relationships” (N=60)

Figure 6: Presence of Healthy Relationships (Pre to Follow-Up)



Question – “I have relationships in my life that I consider to be healthy” (N=36)

Arguments/Fights in the Previous Month

Average # of times in the previous month that individuals had an argument(s) with someone close to them:

- **Pre-test:** Average of 3.03 Arguments
- **Follow-up:** Average of 0.77 Arguments

Discussion:

Individuals attending the Centre experienced substantial changes in the quality of their relationships from the time of entry through to follow-up. During their time at the Centre, individuals had substantial growth in terms of their sense of the purpose and value of healthy relationships, with 31% strongly agreeing at pre-test and 77% strongly agreeing at post-test (a 148% increase). These gains were then reflected in changes in the quality of their relationships noted from pre-test to follow-up. The total number of individuals indicating that they had a very positive relationship with their spouse/partner more than doubled from pre-test to follow-up (132% increase). There was also a large increase in individuals indicating that they had very positive relationships with the friends and colleagues, going from 44% to 74% (a 68% increase). There was little change in terms of relationships between individuals attending the Centre and their children, primary because nearly all individuals rated their relationships positively at pre-test. At the time of follow-up, individuals generally had more relationships in their lives that they considered to be healthy and were engaging in fewer arguments or fights with those around them (from more than three arguments/month on average to less than one argument/month on average).

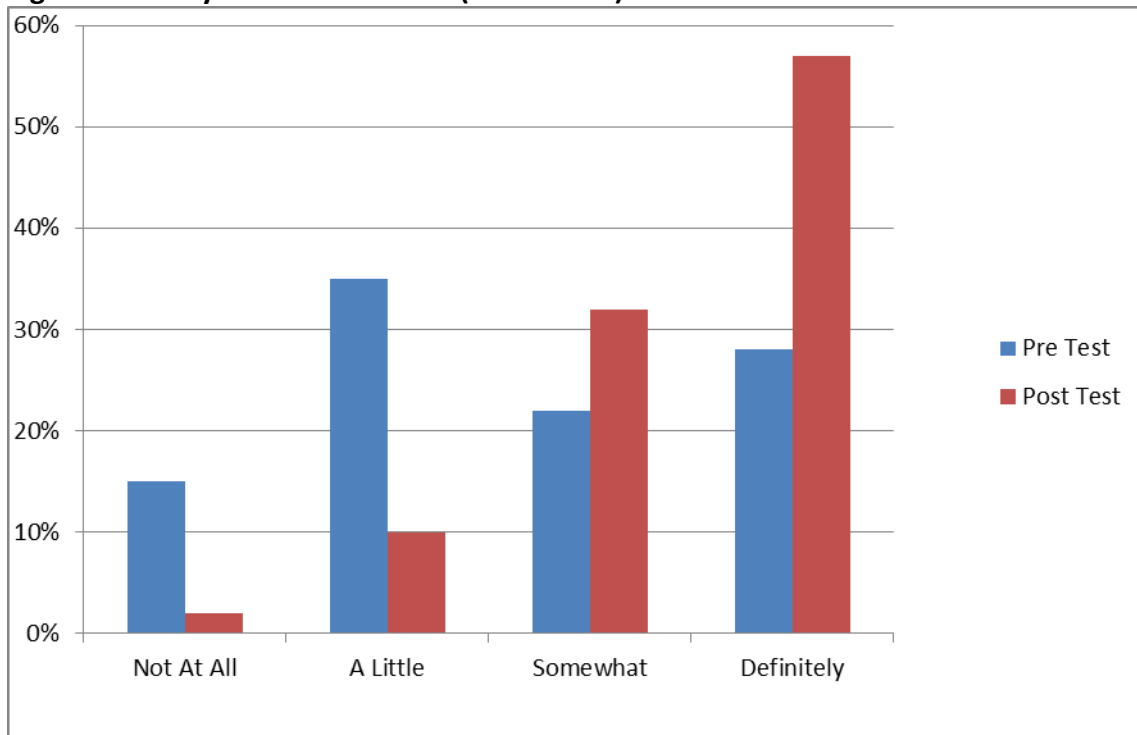
Individuals were given an opportunity to comment on their sense of the value of healthy relationships at both post-test and follow-up. The following is a sample of comments offered by individuals;

- *“To extend and receive love.”*
- *“To enable each other in a loving space to heal from limiting beliefs we hold about ourselves.”*
- *“We are responsible for our own health and happiness, and we have to do our own homework.”*
- *“Enjoying relationships for what they are and not projecting some expectation on others for your happiness.”*
- *“Relationships are a mirror for both sides to get a deeper connection. Reflecting in myself or the other. Expending love. Opposite of taking from someone.”*
- *“Basic personal honesty. Maintain personal integrity. Having an honest relationship with the people you care about. Honest and effective communication.”*
- *“Find love. Not be distracted into illusions. I look for God in every person that I meet.”*
- *“Honesty. Open communication. Being able to truly be one's own self.”*
- *“To look at relationships as a learning experience. I chose the relationship in order to learn and grow and remove barriers to love.”*
- *“Allow me to live a life of hope, surrounded by love and compassion providing contentment as I age.”*
- *“To enjoy life and share that experience of joy with somebody. To spread love.”*

Outcome #2: Clients will incorporate their identified life passion and purpose into their personal and professional lives

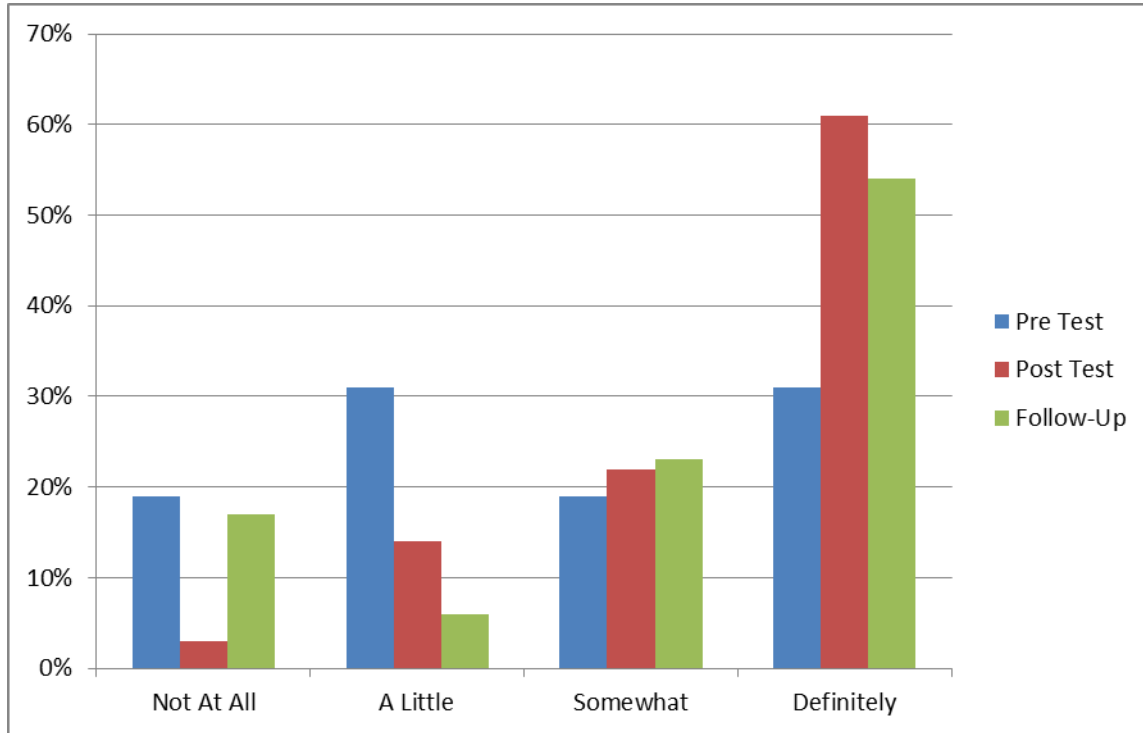
A key aspect of the work that Choose Again engages in is helping individuals to identify what they are passionate about and what their purpose as an individual is. They support individuals to identify ways to incorporate their identified passion and purpose into their daily personal and professional lives. Survey respondents were asked about their level of clarity regarding their passion and purpose in life, and the extent to which they had been able to incorporate these into their daily lives. The results are detailed in figures 7 through 12 below.

Figure 7: Clarity on Passion in Life (Pre to Post)



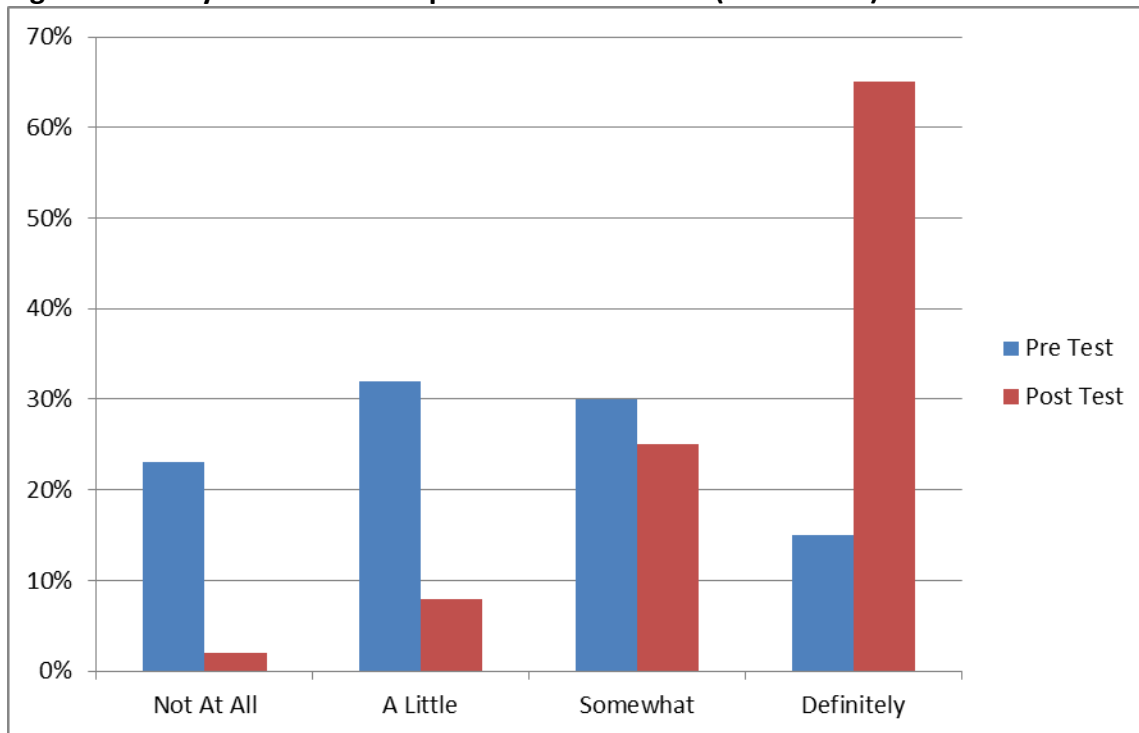
Question – “I am clear on what my passion in life is” (n=60 responses)

Figure 8: Clarity on Passion in Life (Pre, Post and Follow-up)



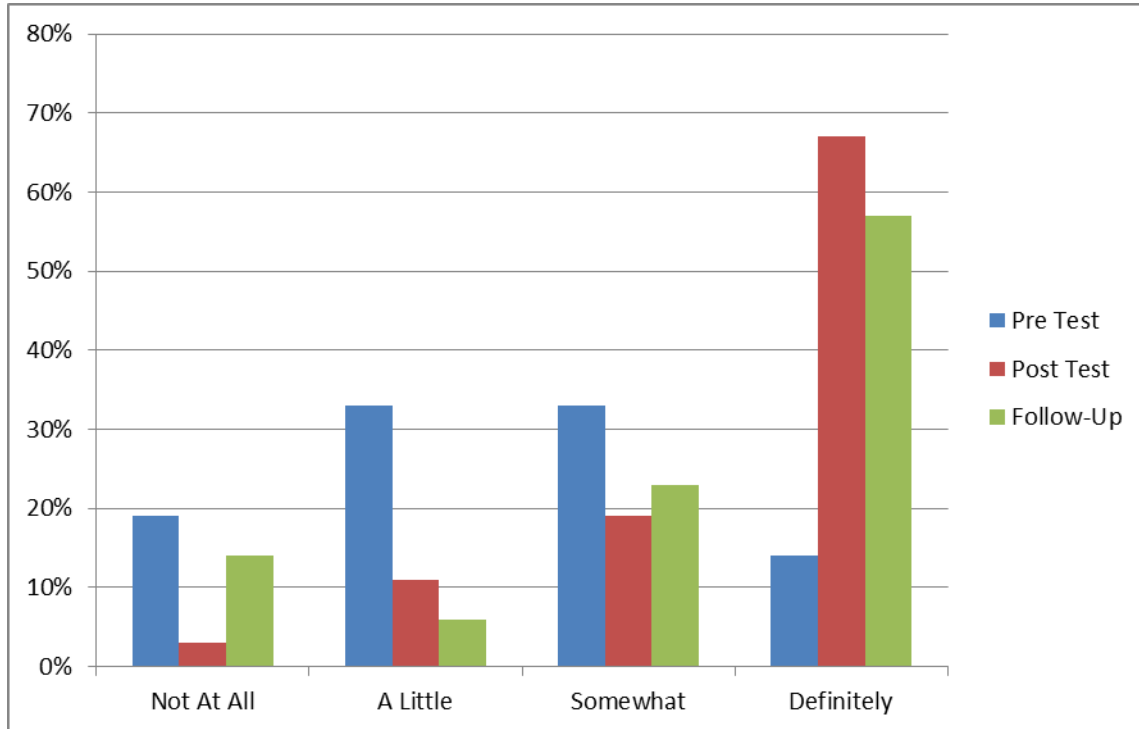
Question – “I am clear on what my passion in life is” (n=36 responses)

Figure 9: Clarity on Sense of Purpose as an Individual (Pre to Post)



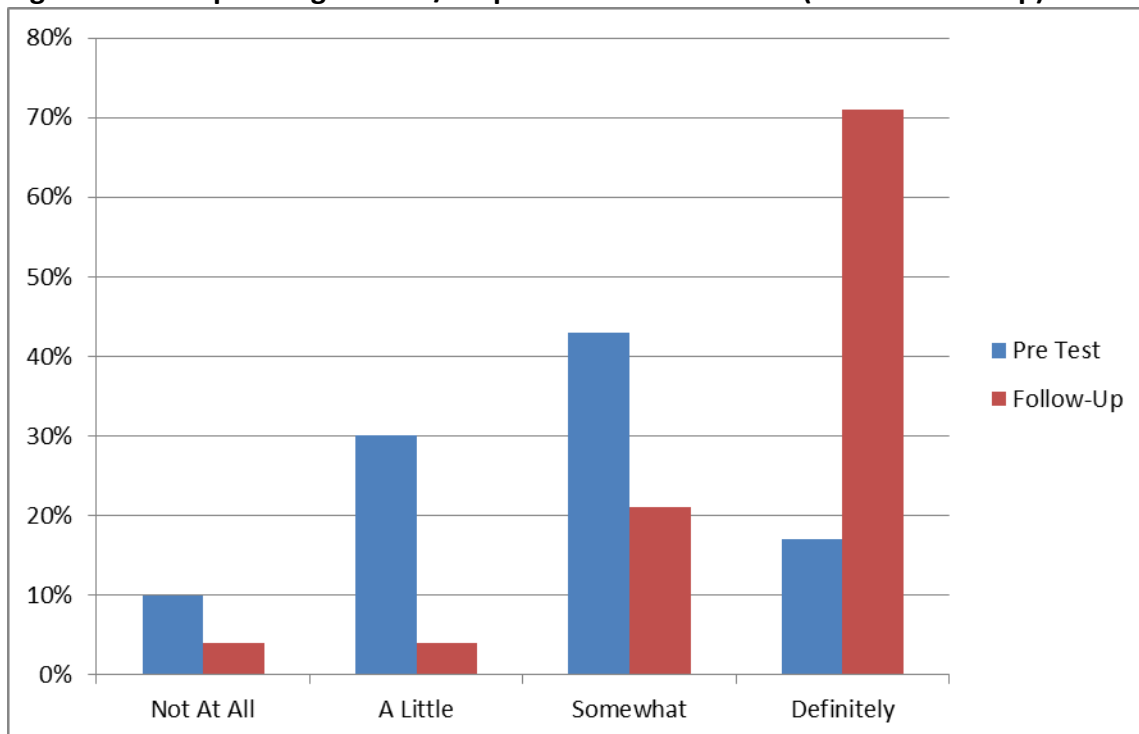
Question – “I have a clear sense of my purpose as an individual” (n=60 responses)

Figure 10: Clarity on Sense of Purpose as an Individual (Pre, Post and Follow-up)



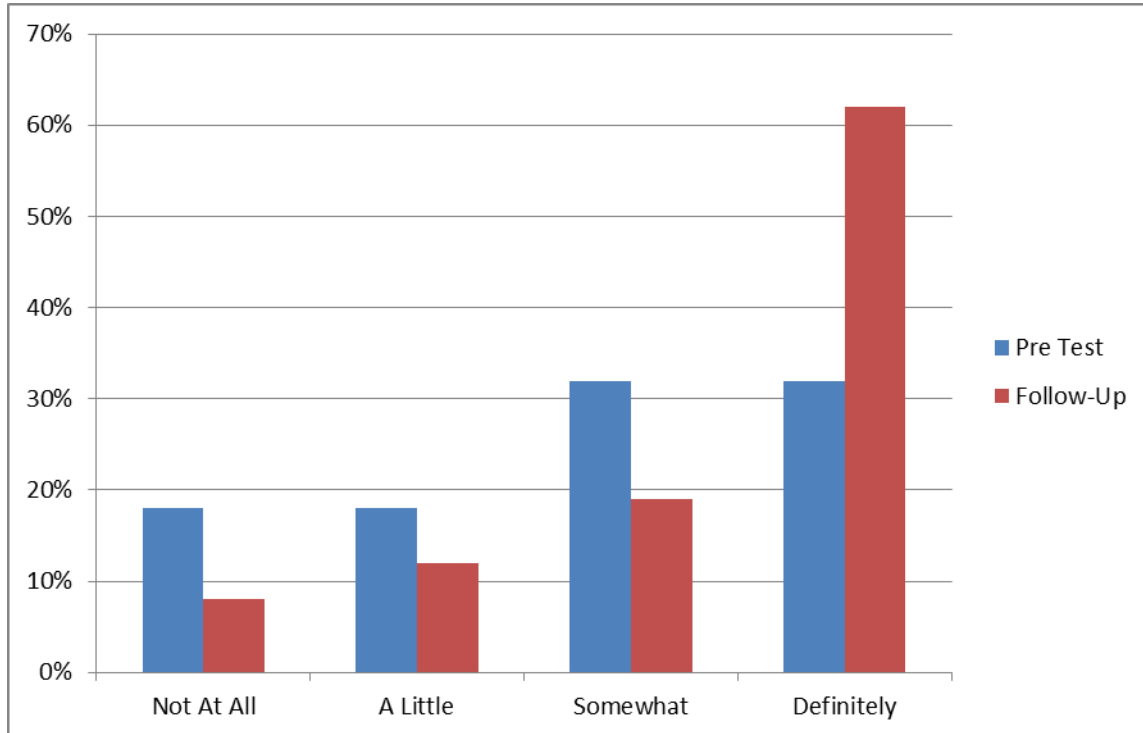
Question – “I have a clear sense of my purpose as an individual” (n=36 responses)

Figure 11: Incorporating Passion/Purpose into Personal Life (Pre to Follow-Up)



Question – “If you are clear or have some sense of your passion and/or purpose, have you been able to incorporate that into your personal life?” (n=28 responses)

Figure 12: Incorporating Passion/Purpose into Professional Life (Pre to Follow-Up)



Question – “If you are clear or have some sense of your passion and/or purpose, have you been able to incorporate that into your professional life?” (n=26 responses)

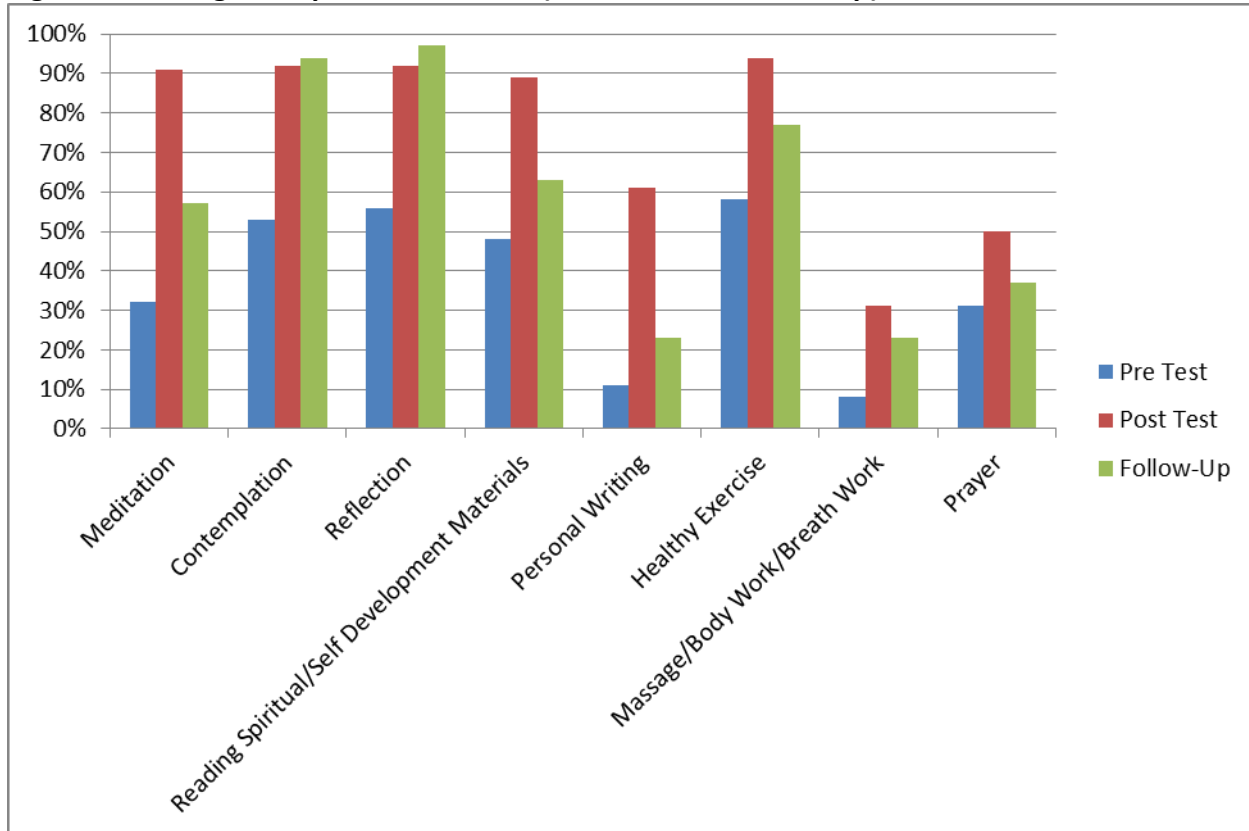
Discussion:

Only half of those surveyed at intake felt that they ‘somewhat’ or ‘definitely’ had a sense of their passion in life and less than half (45%) of those individuals felt that they had a clear sense of their purpose as an individual. At the time of exit, fully 89% of individuals felt that they ‘somewhat’ or ‘definitely’ had a sense of their passion in life (an increase of 98%) and 85% had a sense of their purpose as an individual (an 89% increase). That sense of purpose as an individual remained quite high at follow-up, with only a 6% decrease (from 86% to 80%) from the time of exit. These changes in the sense of passion and purpose as an individual were reflected in substantial changes in individual’s incorporation of their passion/purpose into their personal and professional lives. 32% more individuals (from 60% to 92%) indicated that they were able to ‘somewhat’ or ‘definitely’ incorporate their passion or purpose into their personal lives (a 53% increase). There was a change from 65% to 81% (a 26% increase) in individuals indicating that they were able to ‘somewhat’ or ‘definitely’ incorporate their passion or purpose into their professional lives.

Outcome #3: Clients will integrate spiritual practices into their daily lives (e.g., meditation, reflection, and contemplation).

Participants at the Centre are provided with opportunities to participate in a range of spiritual practices as well as activities that are generally focused on healthy living. Respondents to the survey were asked to provide baseline data on their use of spiritual practices at the time of entry to the Centre, at the time exit from the Centre, and at follow-up. The results with regards to changes in spiritual practices are presented as figure 13 below.

Figure 13: Changes in Spiritual Practices (Pre, Post and Follow-Up)



Question - "Indicate which of the following practices you engage in" (n=36 responses)

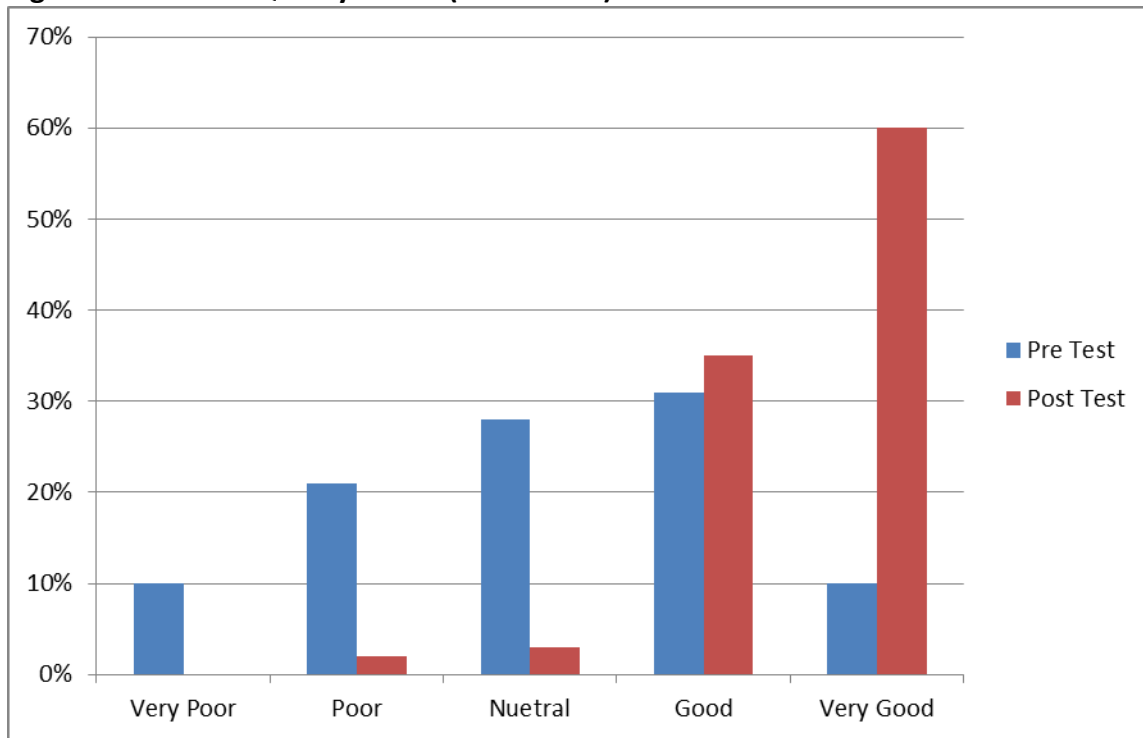
Discussion:

As expected, there is a substantial increase in engagement in spiritual practices from the time of entry into the program to the time of exit given that individuals are taught the practices or encouraged to participate in them while at the Centre. Perhaps more notable though is the finding that a substantial portion of individuals are able to maintain those practices at the time of follow-up. Engagement in spiritual practices at follow-up was above the levels identified at entry in all categories. Regular contemplation and reflection were practiced even more frequently at follow-up. While there were notable decrease from post-test to follow-up for practices such as meditation, reading and healthy exercise, they were still being regularly practiced by more than half of respondents at that time.

Outcome #4: Clients will experience improved overall quality of life

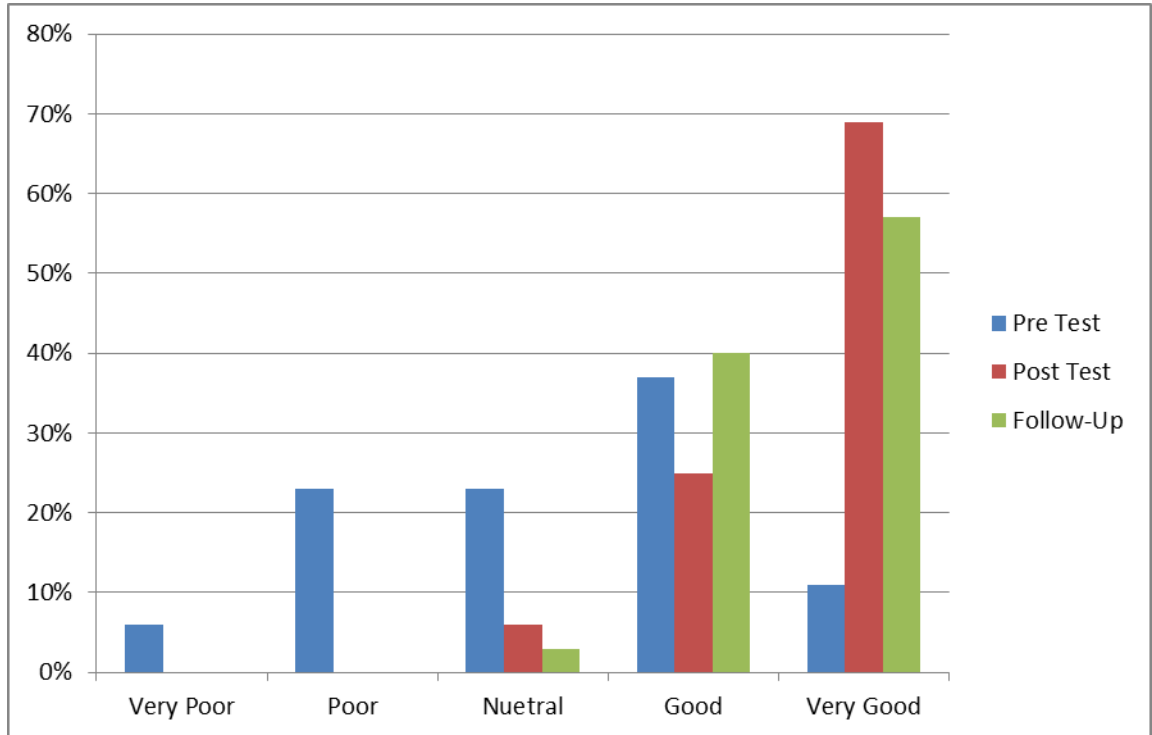
While the services offered by Choose Again are not specifically targeted to any one client issue or diagnosis, the intention is to support increases in overall quality of life irrespective of the issue or concern that precipitates engagement. Individuals were asked to rate their overall quality of life at the time of entry into the program, at exit, and at follow up. They were also asked to reflect on the quality of their happiness with themselves. The results are presented as figures 14, 15 and 16 below.

Figure 14: Current Quality of Life (Pre to Post)



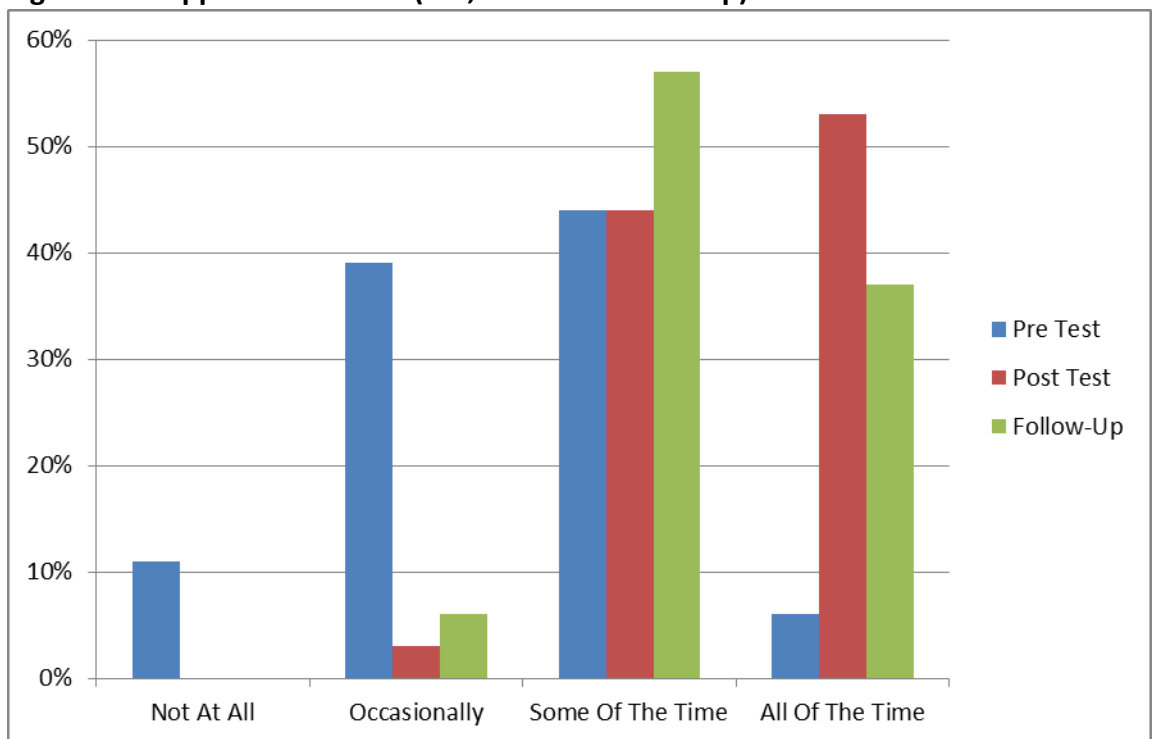
Question – “Please rate your current overall quality of life” (n=60 responses)

Figure 15: Current Quality of Life (Pre, Post and Follow-up)



Question – “Please rate your current overall quality of life” (n=36 responses)

Figure 16: Happiness with Self (Pre, Post and Follow-up)



Question – “I feel happy about my relationship with myself” (n=36 responses)

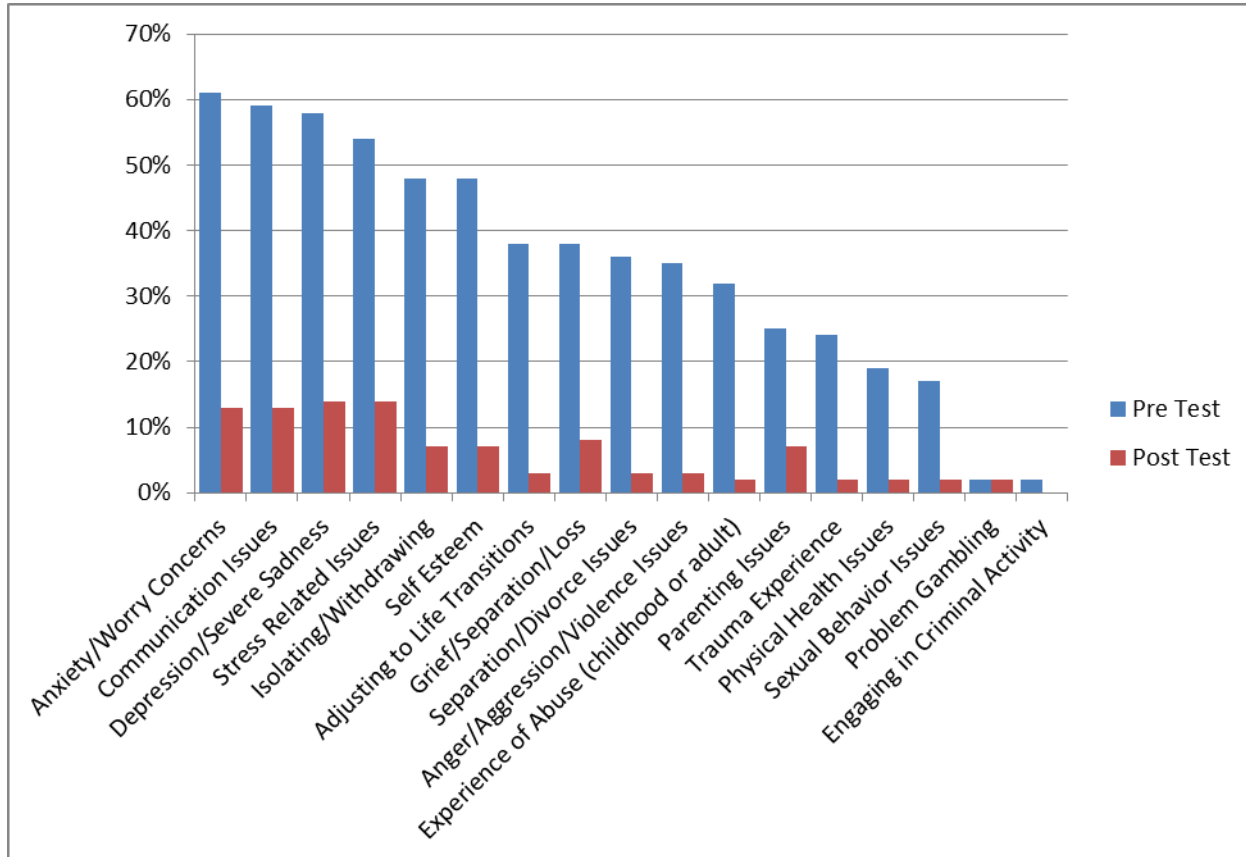
Discussion:

Individuals participating in Choose Again's Services at El Cielo experienced significant positive changes in terms of their ratings of overall quality of life from the time of entry to the program through to follow-up. 95% of individuals exiting the Centre rated their quality of life as 'good' or 'very good' at the time of entry, an 89% improvement over the pre-test result. Although there was some shift in relative proportions in these two categories, the overall proportion of individuals provided a 'good' or 'very good' rating actually increased from post-test to follow-up (from 94% to 97%). This strongly suggests that the gains made by individuals while attending the Centre are durable over time. Individuals were also much more likely to indicate that they were always happy in terms of their relationship with themselves from pre to post-test (from 6% to 53%, a several hundred percent increase), and most (37%) were able to maintain that gain through to the time of follow-up.

Outcome #5: Clients will live free from addictions and other self-destructive behaviors.

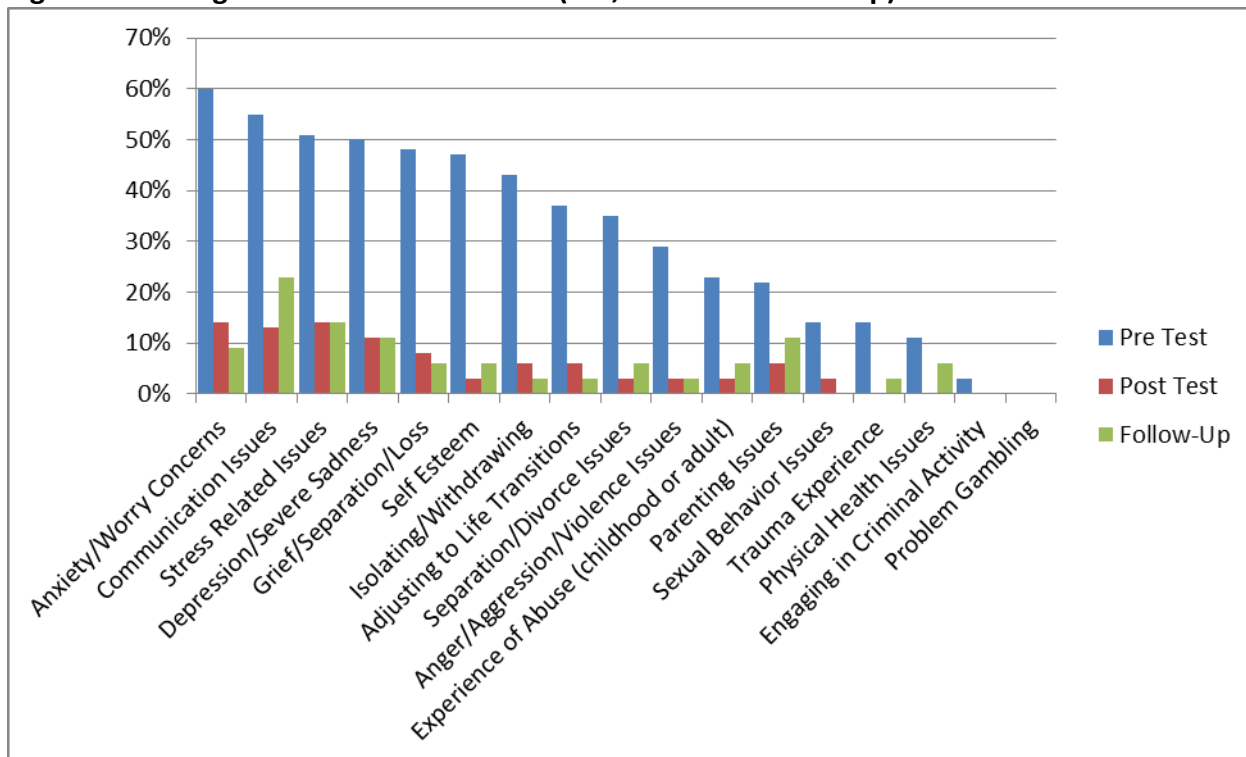
As noted above, Choose Again's services are not targeted towards any specific issue or diagnosis. Instead, the staff at the Centre view all issues as stemming from the same root causes and therefore the same types of services and supports are provided to all clients. However, it is the case that a change in either the severity of the issue or the relationship that an individual has with the issue is an expected outcome of Choose Again's services. Respondents to the survey were asked about their level of concern with a list of issues and concerns at the time of entry to the Centre, at exit from the Centre, and at follow-up. The profile of issues and concerns offered in the section on 'Client Characteristics' above presented the 'at time of entry' data. Respondents were also asked about hospitalizations and suicide attempts/ideation prior to attending the Centre and at follow-up. The results are provided in figures 17 and 18 below and in narratives regarding hospitalizations and suicide attempts/ideation.

Figure 17: Change in Issues and Concerns (Pre to Post)



Question – “Please indicate your level of concern with the following” (n=60)

Figure 18: Change in Issues and Concerns (Pre, Post and Follow-Up)



Question – “Please indicate your level of concern with the following” (n=36)

Discussion:

There were substantial positive changes in the level of concern that individuals had with each issue from pre to post-test. For the three most common issues of anxiety/worry concerns, communication issues, and depression/severe sadness, the decreases in the proportion of individuals rating these as serious, extreme or life threatening were 79%, 78% and 76% respectively. The changes in level of concern for issues such as stress, isolating/withdrawing and self-esteem were similar, with decreases of 75%, 85% and 85% respectively in the proportion of individuals identifying these issues as serious, extreme or life threatening. None of the issues were rated at serious, extreme or life threatening by more than 15% of individuals at the time of exit. Perhaps just as encouraging is the fact that the changes appear to be very durable given the results of the follow-up survey. The ratings from post-test to follow-up for issues and concerns stayed the same or decreased in 9 of 16 areas. In areas where there was some increase in the proportion of individuals rating the issue as serious, extreme or life threatening, it was general small and averaged less than 5%.

While changes in the level of concern with identified issues are important, staff at the Centre stress the importance of changing the relationship that individuals have with these issues. Consistent with this approach, individuals were asked about changes in their relationship to their issues and concerns as a follow-up to their descriptions of changes in level of concern. The majority of the individuals that responded reinforced the notion that they had been given tools to deal with their issues and that the tools were helpful regardless of whether they had achieved a desired level of success in addressing the issues. Below is a sample of some of the comments offered by individuals;

- *"I changed and I experienced the problems in a different way, knowing that my partner is not the guilty one but that it's about me. It triggers something about me."*
- *"Far less depending on happiness coming from without; No longer preoccupied with thoughts of being rejected or unlovable; feeling much more confident about myself; experiencing joy and happiness coming from within."*
- *"I have a much better relationship with my spouse since I came back. The anger is gone, there is much more communication about things we are different in our life. We get along better with our intimate problems."*
- *"I'm feeling more happy. More alert for the issues in my life. Because it was intense to be there continuously. Allowed me to work on things as they arose."*
- *"A very large reversal. We have good relationships and communication that took place after visiting. A normal family situation."*
- *"My relationships with my husband is much improved."*
- *"Felt like so much was lifted off my shoulders. I can look up straight. I don't need to be aggressive. It was amazing!"*
- *"Have a greater awareness rather than denying and pretending and masking."*
- *"I understand now that I need to check in with how I am feeling and to understand why I am feeling that way and to forgive myself first."*

Substance Use:

As noted in the summary of client characteristics, substance use issues were relatively rare amongst the sample of individuals analyzed. The two most common issues identified at the time of entry into the program were alcohol use (15% of individuals) and overeating (7% of individuals). These concerns were even less frequent amongst the follow-up sample (11% and 3% respectively). At follow-up, only one individual (3%) reported being concerned about their alcohol consumption and no individuals reported being concerned about overeating.

Hospitalizations

A total of 12 individuals (20%) in the overall sample had been hospitalized for the issues that brought them to the Centre, with two of those individuals being hospitalized in the three months prior to admission. In the follow-up sample, a total of 5 individuals (14%) had been hospitalized for the issues that brought them to the Centre, with none occurring in the three months prior to admission. At follow-up, 1 individual (3%) had been hospitalized in relation to the issues that brought them to Choose Again.

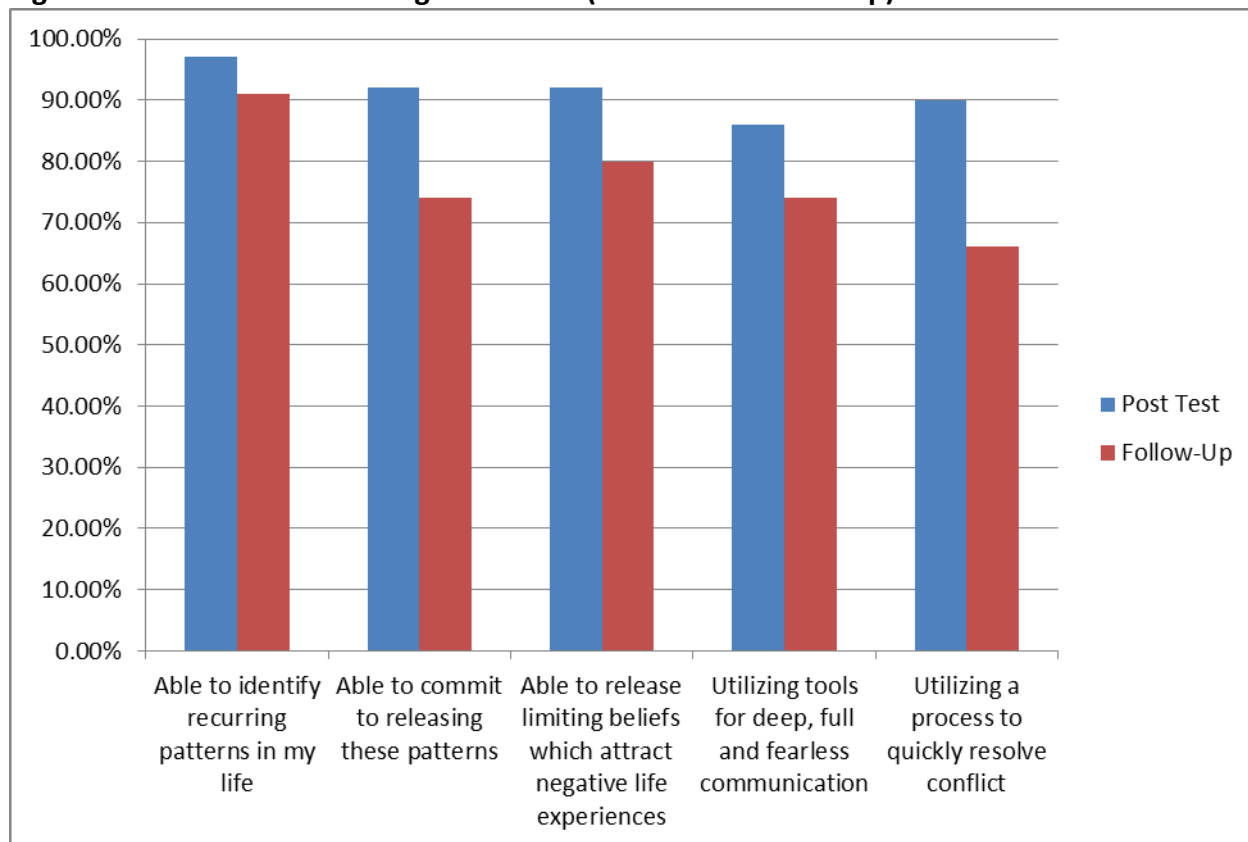
Suicide Attempts/Ideation

A total of 11 individuals (19%) in the overall sample had attempted suicide in relation to the issues that brought them to the Centre, with six of those attempts occurring in the year prior to admission. In the follow-up sample, 4 individuals (11%) had attempted suicide in relation to the issues that brought them to the Centre, with two of those attempts occurring in the year prior to admission. At follow-up, one individual (3%) indicated having attempted suicide in relation to the issue(s) that brought them to the Centre since exiting.

The Choose Again Process

The survey gathered information on the degree to which individuals were currently utilizing the process for dealing with issues and upsets in their daily lives. All of the individuals surveyed indicated being able to utilize at least certain aspects of that process. The results as presented are figure 19 below.

Figure 19: Use of the Choose Again Process (Pre-Test to Follow-Up)



Question – To what extent do you feel that you are able to do the following (n=27 responses)

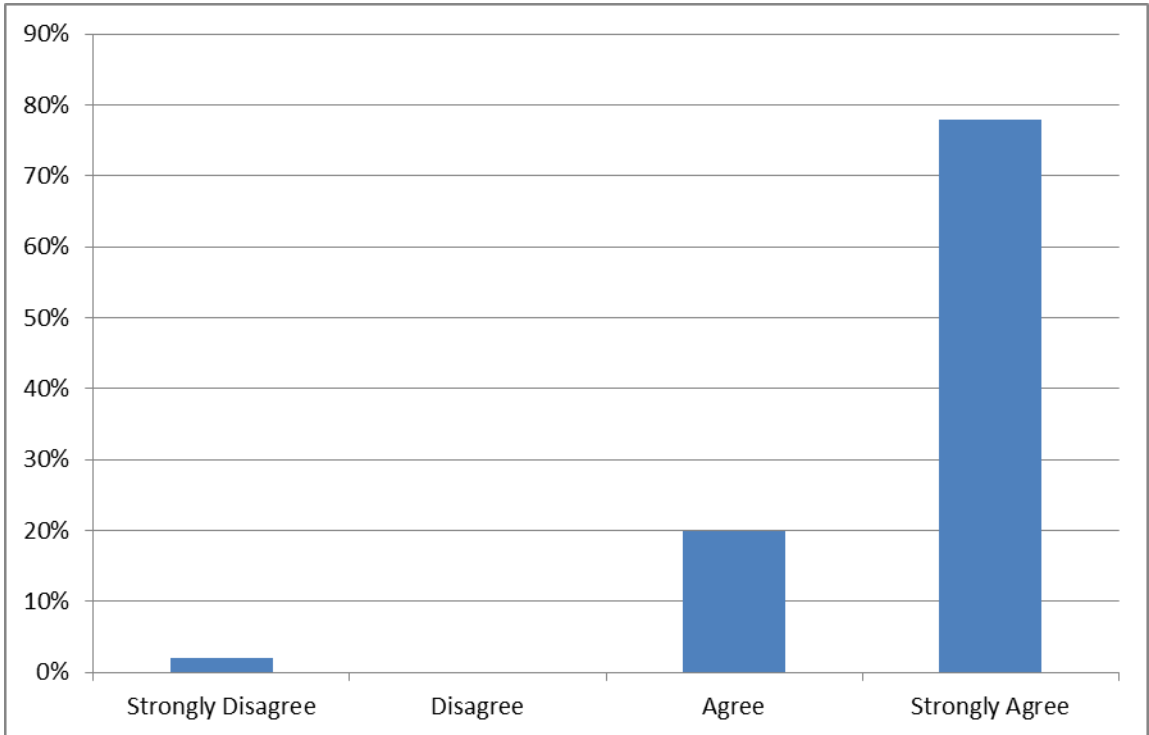
Discussion:

As was expected, there was a high level of adherence to the Choose Again process for individuals exiting the Centre. The immersion in an environment where the specific steps are taught is expected to lead to the acquisition of skills. In general, individuals were able to retain the skills after exiting the Centre, with at least 65% of individuals still actively engaging in using all of the steps.

Measures of Service Quality (Process Measures)

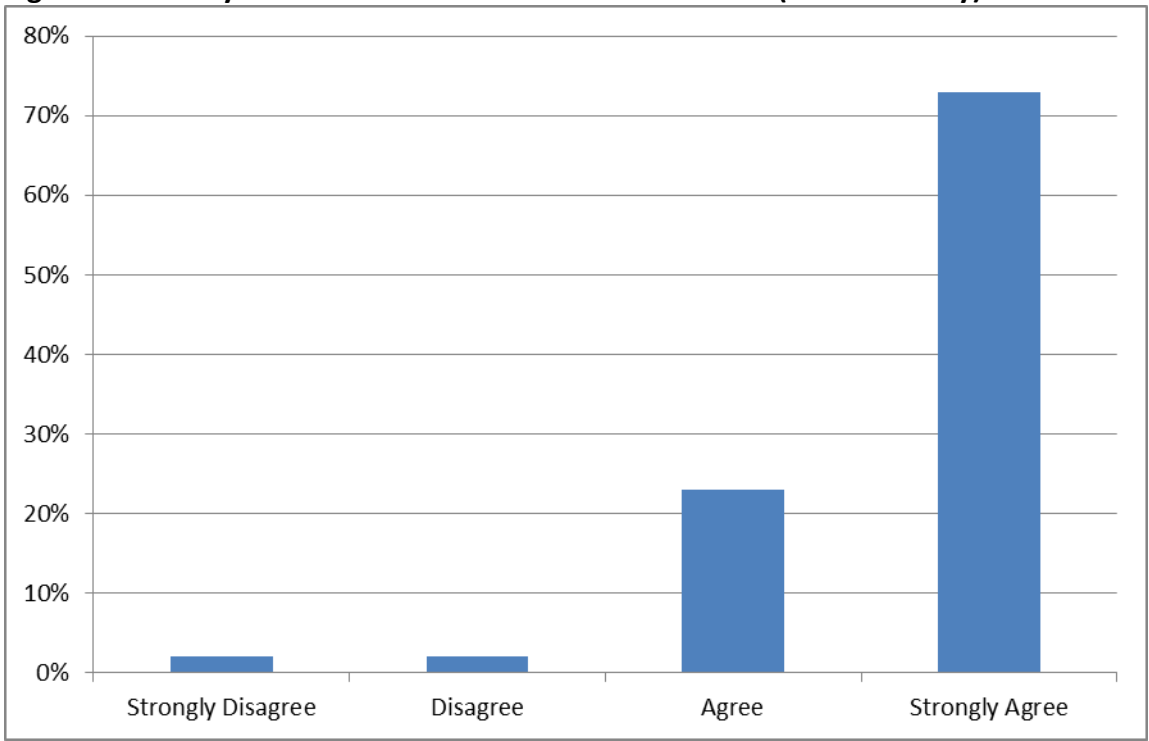
In addition to measures that were specifically directed to a series of identified outcomes, a number of questions were also asked that were intended to gather data on client's experience of the process of receiving services at the Centre. Specifically, respondents were asked about whether they felt that the supports and services offered to them met their needs at the time they attended. The results are presented as figures 20 and 21 below.

Figure 20: Supports & Services Met Client Needs (Post Test Only)



Question – The support and services offered here met my needs (n=60 responses)

Figure 21: Facility and Accommodations Met Client Needs (Post test Only)

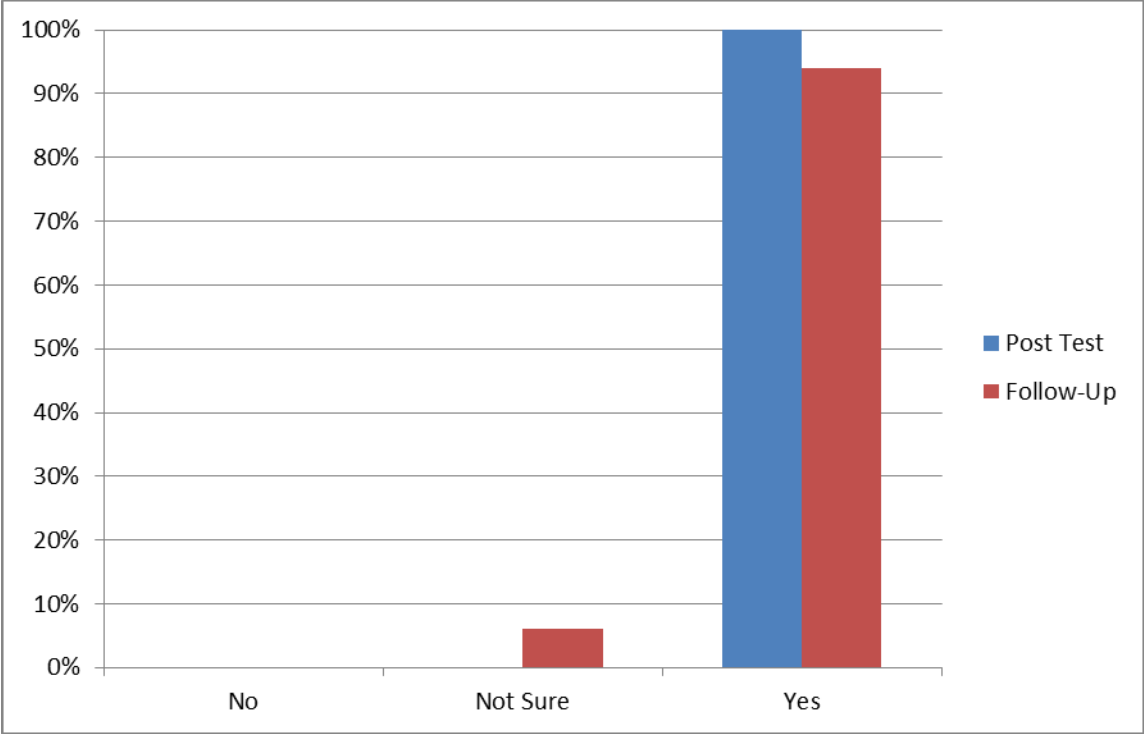


Question – “The facility and accommodations offered here met my needs” (n=60 responses)

All but one (59 of 60) of the individuals that attended the Centre during the study period agreed or strongly agreed that the services offered to them met their needs. Similarly, all but two (58 of 60) agreed that the facility and accommodations met their needs. Individuals were also asked what they viewed as the most and least beneficial aspects of the program. As was the case in the results for the first phase of the evaluation, the most commonly identified beneficial aspect was the circles (groups) that occurred daily. One-on-one sessions, yoga and the structure/routine of the Centre were also commonly identified as beneficial. There were no particular patterns in the negative responses beyond some dissatisfaction with certain activities (such as long periods of silence) or with the routine (e.g., short days, chores).

Respondents to the survey were asked if they would recommend the Centre to someone close to them. All individuals that attended the Centre during the study period indicated that they would recommend it at the time they exited, and all but two individuals (6%) indicated they would recommend it at the time of follow-up. These two individuals indicated that they were 'unsure'. Both the post-test and follow-up results are an improvement over the phase one cross sectional survey results where 81% of individuals responded positively. The results as presented as figure 22 below.

Figure 22: Would Recommend the Service to Someone Close (Post-Test and Follow-Up)



Question – “I would recommend this service to someone close to me” (n=36 responses)

Conclusion & Recommendations

The results of this evaluation provide additional evidence for the effectiveness of the services offered by Choose Again at its Centre at El Cielo, both confirming and extending the results of the cross-sectional survey conducted for the first evaluation. Individuals attending the Centre experienced positive benefits in terms of their relationships with significant others in their lives, their sense of passion and purpose in their life, their integration of spiritual practices, their overall quality of life, and freedom from self-destructive behaviors, including addictions. Although the magnitude of the changes varied from outcome to outcome, it appears that the overwhelming majority of those attending the program experience some positive benefits. In particular, there was a 75% to 85% reduction in the proportion of individuals experiencing their issues as 'serious, extreme or life threatening' for the most commonly identified issues. Fully 95% of individuals rated their quality of life as very good at the time of exit, an 89% improvement over the pre-test results. Positive changes were noted for all of the identified outcomes measured as part of this evaluation.

Of particular note were improvements in relationships that Choose Again participants had with significant others. As discussed above, the total number of individuals indicating that they had a very positive relationship with their spouse/partner more than doubled from pre-test to follow-up (132% increase). The number of individuals indicating that they had very positive relationships with friends and colleagues went from 44% to 74%, a 68% increase. At the time of follow-up, individuals generally had more relationships in their lives that they considered to be healthy and were engaging in fewer arguments with those around them. Similar results were achieved for the outcome relating to individual's sense of passion and purpose in their life. At the time of exit, 89% of individuals felt that they 'somewhat' or 'definitely' had a sense of their passion in life (an increase of 98%) and 85% had a sense of their purpose as an individual (an 89% increase). That sense of purpose as an individual remained quite high at follow-up, with only a 6% decrease (from 86% to 80%) from the rating provided at exit.

One of the key findings from this phase of the evaluation is in regards to the durability of the gains made by individuals during their stay at El Cielo. In general, individuals were able to maintain or improve upon those gains from the time of exit to follow-up. Individuals were also able to maintain their engagement in the spiritual practices encouraged and taught at El Cielo and their use of the steps to resolve conflict in their lives. While there were some differences in the characteristics of the overall sample in comparison to the follow-up sample, the ratings given in response to the pre/post questions were consistent across both groups, suggesting that they experienced the same types of issues with the same general level of frequency and acuity. While a larger follow-up sample would have increased confidence in the findings, there is little to suggest that the results would have been substantially different.

All but one of the individuals that attended the Centre at El Cielo indicated that the services and supports offered to them met their needs. All but two indicated that the facilities and accommodations met their needs. This represents a higher level of satisfaction than was found in the phase one cross-sectional survey. This high level of satisfaction was also reflected in the fact that all but two individuals indicated that they would recommend the service to someone close to them when asked at follow-up. The 'circle time' that forms the backbone of the therapeutic work at the Centre continues to be noted as the most beneficial aspect of services. Some aspects of the routine

at the Centre were not as valued by clients, but there were no specific patterns in terms of areas that weren't considered as beneficial.

The data set produced as a result of this evaluation is substantial. While this presentation of findings includes the responses to all but a handful of the questions asked, there is more detail available in many areas, including narrative comments offered by participants. The scope and timeline of this phase of the evaluation limit the extent to which these results could be mined for further insight. However, Choose Again is encouraged to further explore the data as part of its ongoing quality improvement and marketing efforts.

The following recommendations are offered based on the results of this phase of the evaluation;

- Continue to gather pre-post data on all participants at the Centre and produce annual reporting for use in ongoing quality improvement.
- Develop a system that allows individuals to voluntarily remain engaged in providing feedback on results after they leave the Centre. This could be achieved through online alumni groups or other web-based systems.
- Actively engage in exploring the evaluation data set gathered for this evaluation for further findings and insight.

Appendix A: Measurement Plan

Outcomes	Indicator of Success	Applied To	Measurement Tool	Methodology	Responsibility
Short Term Outcomes					
1) Clients will have increased awareness of the purpose and value of healthy relationships	% of clients indicating increase awareness of the purpose and value of healthy relationships Client narrative descriptions of new awareness	All clients entering the residential program	Questions on evaluation questionnaires –two to three questions regarding client views of healthy relationships, quantitative & qualitative	Pre and post testing during attendance in the residential program	Choose Again Centre Staff, Clients
2) Clients have an increased awareness of their true passion and the purpose of their life	% of clients indicating increased awareness of their true passion and the purpose of their life Client narrative descriptions of new awareness	All clients entering the residential program	Questions on evaluation questionnaire –two to three questions regarding client awareness of their true passion and the purpose of their life, quantitative & qualitative	Pre and post testing during attendance in the residential program	Choose Again Centre Staff, Clients
3) Clients will have increased knowledge of how to utilize healthy spiritual practices, including meditation, reflection, and contemplation	% of clients with increased knowledge of how to utilize healthy spiritual practices Client narrative descriptions of new awareness	All clients entering the residential program	Questions on evaluation questionnaire –two to three questions regarding client knowledge of healthy spiritual practices, quantitative & qualitative	Pre and post testing during attendance in the residential program	Choose Again Centre Staff, Clients

Outcomes	Indicator of Success	Applied To	Measurement Tool	Methodology	Responsibility
Mid & Long Term Outcomes					
1) Clients will maintain healthy relationships	% of clients that indicate having healthy relationships Client descriptions of maintaining health relationships	All clients that successfully complete the residential program	Questions on evaluation questionnaire – clients indicate overall rating of the health of their interpersonal relationships and the number of relationships that they consider to be healthy	<u>Retrospective Evaluation:</u> Cross sectional survey of former clients (rating and descriptions of their pre-residential and current relationships) <u>Prospective Evaluation:</u> Measured at pre, post and six month follow-up	Choose Again Centre Staff, Evaluator, Clients
2) Clients will incorporate their identified life passion and purpose into their personal and professional lives	% of clients that indicate having incorporated their identified life passion and purpose into their personal and professional lives Client descriptions of incorporating life passion and purpose into their lives	All clients that successfully complete the residential program	Questions on evaluation questionnaire – clients indicate they have incorporated their life passion and purpose into their personal and professional lives	<u>Retrospective Evaluation:</u> Cross sectional survey of former clients (rating and descriptions of their pre-residential and current relationships) <u>Prospective Evaluation:</u> Measured at pre, post and six month follow-up	Choose Again Centre Staff, Evaluator, Clients
3) Clients will integrate spiritual practices into their daily lives (e.g., meditation, reflection, and contemplation)	% of clients that indicate having integrated spiritual practices into their daily lives Client descriptions of integrating spiritual practices into their	All clients that successfully complete the residential program	Questions on evaluation questionnaire – clients indicate daily use of spiritual practices in their daily lives	<u>Retrospective Evaluation:</u> Cross sectional survey of former clients (rating and descriptions of their pre-residential and current integration of life purpose and passion)	Choose Again Centre Staff, Evaluator, Clients

	daily lives			<u>Prospective Evaluation:</u> Measured at pre, post and six month follow-up	
4) Clients will experience improved overall quality of life	% of clients that indicate having improved quality of life Client descriptions of improved quality of life	All clients that successfully complete the residential program	Questions on evaluation questionnaire – clients indicate overall rating of the quality of their lives (Consider 8 domains identified by R. Schalock)	<u>Retrospective Evaluation:</u> Cross sectional survey of former clients (rating and descriptions of their pre-residential and current quality of life) <u>Prospective Evaluation:</u> Measured at pre, post and six month follow-up	Choose Again Centre Staff, Evaluator, Clients
5) Clients will live free from addictions and other self-destructive behaviors	% of clients that indicate living free from addictions and other self-destructive behaviors Client descriptions of changes related to substance abuse and other self destructive behaviors	All clients that successfully complete the residential program	Questions on evaluation questionnaire – clients self-disclosure of addiction and other self-destructive behavior from their lives	<u>Retrospective Evaluation:</u> Cross sectional survey of former clients (rating of their pre-residential and current use of addictive and self-destructive behaviors) <u>Prospective Evaluation:</u> Measured at pre, post and six month follow-up	Choose Again Centre Staff, Evaluator, Clients