



innerBoy

Evaluation of innerBoy

Tama tū, tama ora.

“Thank you so much for giving us men
a safe space to be vulnerable, and to
learn how to navigate these spaces
with an open mind, and a kind heart.
Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou, ki a tātou.

Tama tū, tama ora!”

(Tāne)



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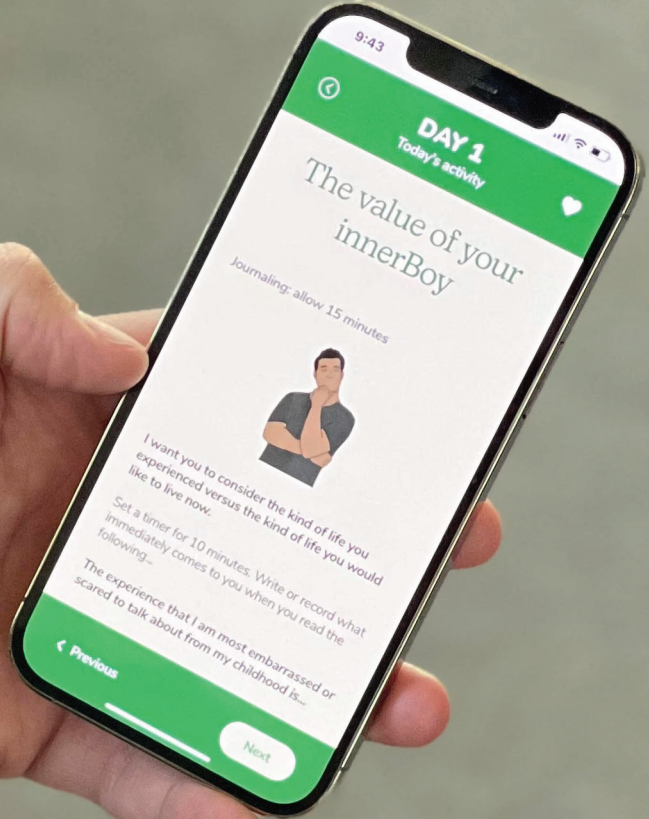


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Executive Summary

Ten years ago, Matt Brown and his wife Sarah opened "My Fathers Barbers" (MFB), focusing on excellent service and client connection. While listening to men share their stories from his barber chair, Matt realised the impact he could have, sharing his own story of healing from childhood trauma and family violence. Pursuing barbering fulltime, Matt honed his skills and creativity to build a clientele and expand his influence.

In 2019, My Fathers Barbers launched the global anti-violence movement "She Is Not Your Rehab" with a TEDx talk and a bestselling book in 2021. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, Matt received numerous requests from men asking for help, highlighting the need for accessible, culturally relevant support. This led to the development of the innerBoy app, a free programme created with support from the Ministry of Social Development, designed to help men reflect on their emotions and life experiences and learn new skills that would help them be positive fathers and partners.

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand how this innovative, culturally immersed online app supports men to heal from trauma and reduce violence/harm in their homes.

Ihi Research has undertaken an exploratory, mixed-method evaluation¹ to address three key research questions:

- 01** Who is using innerBoy?
- 02** In what ways (if any) does innerBoy impact on healing?
- 03** In what ways can the app be improved or developed further?

Evaluation findings

Since its inception, innerBoy has had over 20,000 site visits. In May 2024, there were approximately 1,100 active users. While the app does not collect demographic information, an analysis of survey, social media and interview participant data indicates the app is being accessed by men from a wide range of ethnicities.

Survey results indicate that innerBoy is the first point of support for many of the men who access it. Engaging with innerBoy represents a significant shift for these participants. Seeking help represents an interest in shifting from a cycle of fragmentation, trauma, shame, and harm to connection and healing. This readiness can be many years in the making and is an important step. Men described the societal and cultural shame associated with their actions, their trauma and help-seeking.

It is evident that Matt Brown connects with a range of tāne who might not otherwise engage with non-court mandated counselling and support services. This group includes survivors of State Care and their children, past and current gang members and their associates, and men who have been incarcerated. The release of

Whanaketia by The Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry (2024) highlighted the intergenerational impact of trauma suffered by survivors of State Care and the detrimental effects this has had on whānau, iwi, and communities.

Matt Brown's personal journey of healing and recovery serves as a powerful role model for users of innerBoy, demonstrating that overcoming trauma and leading a fulfilling life is possible. His lived experience narrative is a crucial component of the app's success, lending authenticity and credibility to his message. Survey participants agreed that Matt's personal story helped them. His ongoing efforts to heal and support others resonate deeply with the app's users, who see their own potential for growth reflected in Matt's journey.

The success of the app should not be judged solely by completion rates. Completing one day may be an important achievement for some men as this requires movement from a cycle of harm, trauma and shame, to connection and into a space of healing, compassion and acceptance. Survey data indicates that innerBoy is the first step in a healing journey for many of the men who participate. Fifty-six percent of survey participants reported this was their first foray into healing from their trauma.

The majority of tāne using innerBoy can relate to Matt's experiences, even if their own stories differ. They respect his message about breaking cycles of trauma and aspire to emulate his example as a partner and father. This connection creates a sense of community, even as users work through the app individually. Matt's integral role in innerBoy's success extends beyond his personal story; his voice, persona, and ability to connect with participants make the app more accessible and engaging. The combination of Matt's inviting presence, message of hope, and the app's thoughtful design (including voice pacing, colours, and overall feel) creates an environment conducive to healing and personal growth for the men who use it.

The anytime, anywhere nature of an online tool suits the majority of participants. Interviewees mentioned taking time on their own to use the app, whether on the couch while their family watched TV or during medical treatment sessions. This flexibility was beneficial for all interviewees and 81 percent of survey respondents. All the tāne interviewed could discuss the strategies they learned through the app and how they applied them in their daily lives. Different strategies resonated with different men, depending on their needs, the trauma they had experienced, and how it affected their current relationships. The legitimacy of the strategies is enhanced because Matt shares how he uses them in his

own life. Since they view Matt as a person with mana, they feel empowered by adopting the strategies he recommends. Survey findings indicate that men using innerBoy are making positive changes and gaining self-awareness. They report being less likely to respond aggressively, better understanding what triggers such behaviour, and embarking on a healing journey.

This evaluation has found that innerBoy is effective for men who engage with it, even after just a few sessions. This is especially true for men with limited economic resources, those unable to access face-to-face or group counselling, or those who cannot participate in culturally congruent interventions. The online platform appears to have filled a gap for many men who want to embark on a healing journey but lack access, resources, or time. The app was developed to fill a gap in service and has achieved this in some way. It should not be seen as the 'only' healing tool or an inoculation to heal trauma but rather considered a part of a range of tools that are available for tāne who want to heal.

The literature highlights some disadvantages of using online and mobile therapeutic platforms like innerBoy, including concerns about data sovereignty, the mental health impacts of mobile phone overuse, data and technology inequities for certain populations, and the lack of one-on-one connection. Conversely, the literature also acknowledges the potential benefits of mobile mental health apps, such as their ability to meet whānau where they are (at any time of day), the high uptake of smartphones and app usage, and the comfort and familiarity of the platform.

Enablers and barriers to completion were identified and tend to fall under three headings:

01 Personal factors such as time, the level of trauma, and the participants' readiness and commitment to change all influence the likelihood of tāne completing innerBoy. The ability to start, pause, and restart the app is viewed positively, as is the option to redo sessions already completed. Participants' personal circumstances and their coping abilities at any given time affect their commitment. When relationships are going well, they may pause the app and revisit or restart it when they feel the need to get back on track. Whānau responsibilities, work, and health issues also demand time, and participants expressed a desire to continue - but found it challenging due to these competing demands. Several participants believed they would re-engage more quickly if they received reminder notifications. Managing trauma that

resurfaces during the sessions was commonly identified as a challenge. The need for support as they progress through the app was the most commonly identified barrier to completion.

02 Environmental factors, largely outside the control of the app design team, include having a safe, private space to access the app and the financial resources to own a device and maintain a connection. Involvement in innerBoy and connection to the broader "She is Not Your Rehab" movement appears to provide a support network of like-minded men striving for change. The creation of an online peer group is a crucial factor that attracts, engages, and retains men, especially those who lack such support in their immediate surroundings.

03 App-based factors are areas within the control of the design and funding team. Relatability is viewed positively and is a primary driver that attracts tāne to the app and engages them with the content. Accessibility is also seen favourably, though the option to access sound-only features was suggested to reduce data load and improve access for those without a Wi-Fi connection. Several respondents suggested explicitly acknowledging the variable pace at which tāne might progress through the app, as no respondents worked through 30 sessions in 30 days. Men would benefit from knowing that this is expected and acceptable. Additionally, the ability to delve deeper into certain topics, with sessions branching from the current design, was recommended. For example, some men may require more than one session to work through forgiveness, and having access to further modules on specific topics could be beneficial. The most commonly mentioned barrier was the lack of immediately available support from a tāne with lived experience, trained to connect with them and offer support during difficult times. Modules often resurface trauma that men have been avoiding or masking for extended periods. It is important to remember many of the men who access innerBoy have inflicted violence of various forms on those close to them, and are at risk of harming themselves or others. Providing immediate, accessible, and appropriate support to them as they work through traumatic memories and experiences recognises and takes steps to mitigate that risk.

As part of this evaluation, economists Professor Paul Dalziel and Distinguished Professor Caroline Saunders used NZ Treasury measures to calculate the economic impact of innerBoy. The total net present value for the 30 men who completed the survey is \$5.3 million. If this is extrapolated out to the 1,100 men actively using innerBoy, the value is \$193.2 million. These numbers use Treasury's lowest valuation for increases in life satisfaction and do not include avoided costs due to lower family violence.

innerBoy is producing high social and economic value which ripples through the families and communities of the men who are being supported to heal.

Recommendations

Several recommendations are made to enhance the efficacy and reach of innerBoy. They are:

Recommendation 1: Fund a public awareness campaign

Fund a concerted public awareness campaign to increase the public awareness of innerBoy. Lack of public awareness was the most often mentioned barrier to participation. Ideally this campaign should be targeted at men of all ages, in particular Māori and Pacific men who have suffered trauma (and their sons). The campaign could focus on the opportunity to move from pre-contemplation to contemplation to action (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984).

Recommendation 2: Invest in app developments and improvements

The following enhancements are recommended:

01 Tuakana training: Identify and train a tuakana group to provide assistance to men as they progress through the app.

02 Support line: Men interviewed and surveyed indicated a support line/and or chat capability staffed by the tuakana group is the most preferred support option.

03 Sub-modules: Create sub-modules that enable men to spend longer and go deeper on a particular topic if they need increased opportunities to work through a challenging subject.

04 Reminders and notifications: Build in a customisable reminder notification to encourage men to re-engage with the app.

05 Online services directory: Include a link to a services directory so men can connect to available services during and after their engagement with the app.

06 Sound-only options: Enable sound-only options to reduce the data demand associated with streaming video.

Recommendation 3: Ensure robust data sovereignty procedures

Ensure adequate and transparent efforts are made to ensure data sovereignty and security requirements are met in regard to online journaling.

The innerBoy app is a valuable tool that can contribute to eliminating family violence in New Zealand. By addressing the underlying trauma that often leads to violent behaviour, promoting emotional regulation, and providing culturally sensitive support, the app helps men heal and reduces the likelihood of future violence. Its success demonstrates the importance of innovative, accessible, and community-focused approaches to tackling this pervasive issue.

01

Whakapapa of innerBoy

Matt Brown hails from a large Samoan family. His father was frequently in and out of prison even before Matt was born. His earliest memory of his father is visiting him in Auckland prison at the age of three. Upon his father's release, the family relocated to Ōtautahi Christchurch, leaving behind his mother's support network. Matt witnessed his mother tirelessly try to rehabilitate his father, who remained trapped in a cycle of incarceration and systemic failure.

Despite his father's state of resentment, sadness and grief, Matt believes that his father lacked the necessary tools, insights, and support to break free from his circumstances. He posits that with the right education, support, and role models, his father could have avoided becoming the "childhood monster" Matt remembers. This belief underscores Matt's conviction that everyone has the potential for love, light and life, but societal and economic pressures often hinder this potential.

Matt's high school years were marked by tragedy, losing two close friends to suicide. Music and writing served as his outlets for expressing the pain he carried. His friend's suicide, coupled with learning about her abuse, gave Matt the courage to share his own story of domestic violence and rape during his senior speech. The overwhelming response from his peers, many of whom shared similar experiences, reinforced his resolve to be a voice for those who had none.

The kākano of the "She's Not Your Rehab" movement were sown in Matt's barber chair, initially set up in an Aranui garden shed. As he listened to men from diverse backgrounds share their stories of trauma and relationship issues, Matt realised the profound impact he could have. Inspired by the influence of hip-hop culture and the lack of barbers in Christchurch who could execute those styles, Matt decided to pursue barbering full-time in 2012. Encouraged by his wife Sarah, Matt moved to Auckland to hone his skills under the mentorship of a third-generation Turkish barber. This experience taught him the art and craft of barbering and the importance of client service. Determined to bring this level of service back to Christchurch, Matt combined his newfound skills with his creativity, building a clientele through unique hair art.

As his clientele grew, Matt and Sarah recognised the need for expansion. They travelled to the United States, learning from various barbershop cultures, and used this knowledge to shape their own vision. Their first teaching events in Christchurch sold out rapidly, leading to a successful tour across New Zealand and Australia. Matt's sessions, which included technical components and personal storytelling, resonated deeply with attendees, highlighting the therapeutic potential of barbering.

In August 2014, Matt and Sarah opened "My Fathers Barbers" in Riccarton, focusing on delivering excellent cuts and fostering connections with clients. Their work extended beyond the barbershop, with Matt hosting free men's anti-violence support groups in various settings, including prisons and Indigenous spaces. His efforts were recognised in 2020 when he was named a Corrections NZ patron.

The global anti-violence movement "She Is Not Your Rehab" was officially launched in August 2019 with a TEDx talk in Christchurch. This movement, driven by a social media campaign, aims to change the culture around abusive relationships and unhealthy masculinity. In 2021, Matt and Sarah published their book "She is not your rehab", which became a New Zealand #1 Bestseller, sharing Matt's journey and providing tools for healing.

His work addressing domestic violence and promoting mental health and wellbeing resulted in many people reaching out to him during COVID-19 and led to the development of innerBoy.

The Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 lockdowns in New Zealand led to a notable increase in family violence incidents, driven by factors such as isolation, economic stress, and heightened tensions within households. A 2020 Ministry of Social Development report highlighted that financial hardship and associated stresses due to job losses and business closures were significant contributors to increased family harm. Households experiencing financial strain were more likely to face material hardship and increased family conflict, abuse, or violence. The exacerbation of financial hardship led to social and psychological impacts, including poor mental health and increased family violence (Ministry of Social Development, 2020).

The psychosocial impacts of the lockdown were particularly severe for population groups already experiencing disadvantage. This includes those in lower socio-economic brackets who faced compounded risks due to existing socio-economic divides (ibid). The New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse noted that conditions of lockdown, such as economic stress and isolation, likely intensified pre-existing problems, which are often more acute in lower socio-economic groups (NZFVC, 2020).

Māori were disproportionately affected by family harm during the COVID-19 lockdowns. A qualitative study by Koziol-McLain et al., (2023) found systemic inequities in the health response to family violence were more pronounced for Māori. The lack of engagement with Māori to overcome these inequities and the insufficient resourcing for Māori health services exacerbated the impact on Māori whānau (ibid). An Independent Māori Statutory Board also reported that Māori faced heightened challenges due to pre-existing socio-economic disadvantages, which were exacerbated by the pandemic. Issues such as food insecurity, housing

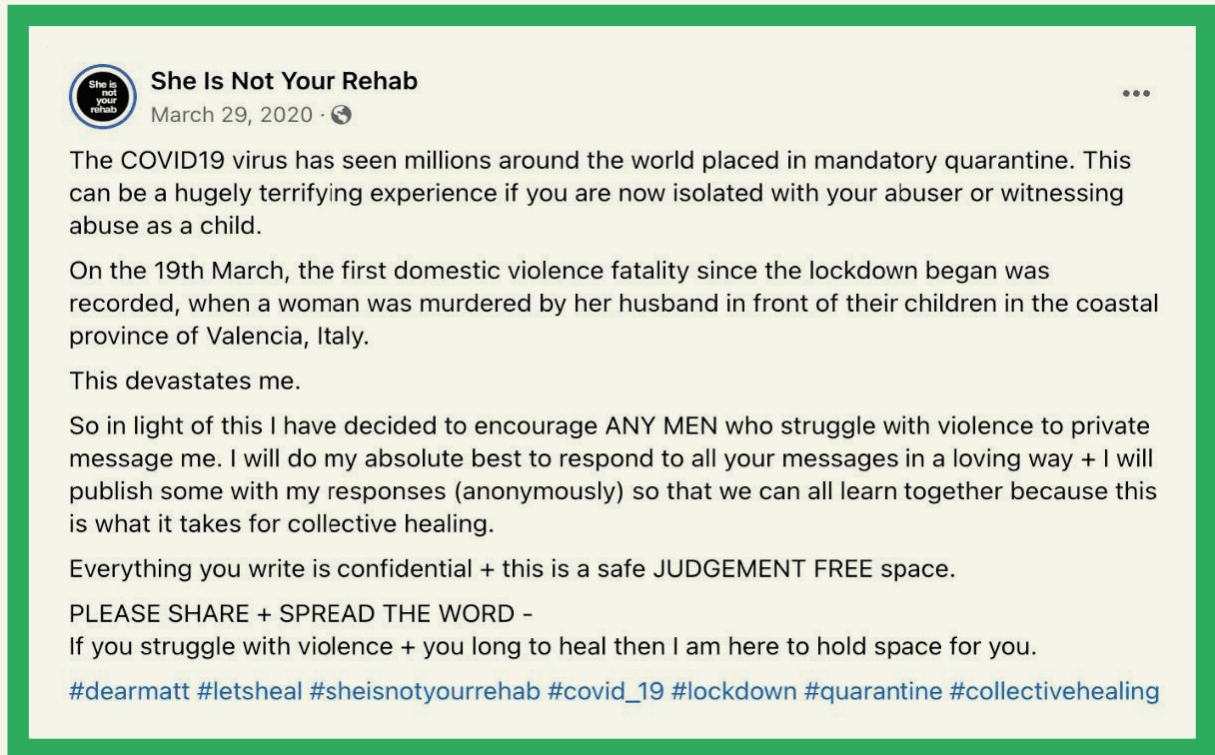


Figure 1: Social media post during COVID-19 lockdown

instability, and financial stress were more acute among Māori, contributing to increased family harm (Independent Māori Statutory Board, 2021).

Māori and Pacific peoples experience significant rates of family violence in Aotearoa, New Zealand. According to the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey, 6.17% of adults who experience family violence identify as Pasifika, compared to 4.29% of NZ European and 7.3% of Māori (Ministry of Justice, 2019, p. 45). The average annual mortality rates for Pasifika from family violence were 1.5 per 100,000 between 2002 and 2006, compared with a rate of 0.7 per 100,000 for the whole New Zealand population (p. 46). While these statistics are concerning enough, there is significant underreporting of family violence, particularly among Pacific communities. Studies have found that Pasifika victims of sexual violence are the most reticent to report to police compared with Māori and New Zealand Europeans (Ministry of Social Development, 2020, p. 30).

In addition to being at greater risk of family harm, Koziol-McLain et al., (2023) found that the health response to family violence during the pandemic was challenged by pre-existing structural inequities.

Mainstream family violence initiatives and programmes are often not effective for Māori or Pacific peoples. Western tools and ideologies for interventions do not

align well with Pasifika cultural norms and perceptions of violence, leading to less effective outcomes (Fa'alau & Wilson, 2020, p. 12). Consequently, there is a need to accommodate Pasifika worldviews in policies, funding allocation, and strategies developed by the government (p. 14). Access to culturally safe therapy is limited, and many therapists appointed as part of funded initiatives are not trained to work with Pasifika communities, further hindering effective intervention (Ministry of Social Development, 2020, p. 32).

The conditions described in this section led to a considerable burden being placed upon the shoulders of Matt Brown, as men from all over Aotearoa contacted him for support.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Matt was constantly contacted by men, as well as their partners and their children. All were seeking help and support. Those men who had been attending counselling or men's groups were unable to access the support they had been receiving due to the COVID-19 restrictions, while others were living in compromised situations and faced with multiple stressors.

Matt's story, his manner, voice and legitimacy clearly resonated with the men and their loved ones who sought Matt out. However, being up all night personally

responding to messages was unsustainable. One contact in particular encouraged Matt to look online to see what support was available that he would be comfortable recommending.

“I was up till 3:00 in the morning every night during lockdown, just writing, Face Timing, video calling people from all around the country. I was receiving messages from young children, from kids who wanted help for their dads. And a 12-year-old kid, I'll never forget, who wrote in and said, 'I saw you on television last night, Matt. You said that you helped men who struggle with anger. Can you please help me help my dad who's abusing my little brother?' That's when we went on that whole search of trying to find online help for him and his dad, and there was nothing.” (Matt Brown)

Despite an extensive search it was apparent very few online anger management/counselling courses were available, and those that were, were outdated and culturally inappropriate. Matt decided he needed to act. There was clearly a need for anytime, anywhere access to online support pitched to an Aotearoa audience. Together, Matt and his wife Sarah decided to develop innerBoy.

innerBoy

The development of innerBoy was a true whānau undertaking. It leveraged off Matt's experience as a barber, his story of experiencing harm, and the journey he has made and continues to make to a place of healing.

The app is based on a relational conversation from Matt to the participant – digitising what might otherwise be the content of a face-to-face engagement. Sarah Brown wrote the content based on Matt's relational approach and incorporated learnings from her counselling experience. Their daughter, Oceana, developed all the artwork associated with the app. Matt edited all the video and audio content. Phil Siataga, a leader in Pacific Counselling, provided therapeutic advice and guidance.

The Ministry of Social Development supported the development of the app; funding the back-end development and front-end design.

The proposition offered by the innerBoy app is a free, structured programme. It involves 30, 30-minute sessions. The programme is web-based due to its large video content, but a shortcut can be added to a phone or tablet to facilitate easy access. Tāne can undertake the sessions at a time and place of their choosing and can decide how quickly they work through the programme. Each session includes prompts, questions, and activities designed to help men reflect on their emotions, life experiences, and survival strategies.

It is important to note innerBoy is designed to fill a gap for men who are otherwise unable to access culturally congruent counselling because of a range of factors. It is not designed as a 'one stop shop' or an inoculation to trauma. Rather it should be viewed as one tool in a suite of options that are available for tāne who want to engage in a healing journey.



02

Literature Review

The following section reviews existing evidence to understand the body of literature that informs online therapeutic approaches. A review of literature between 2013 and 2023 published in Aotearoa, Australia, the United States and Canada identified a set of key themes relevant to the context of innerBoy and the use of online and innovative healing approaches for Indigenous men.

Key themes included:

- Definitions of healing and mental wellbeing
- Pros and cons of mobile phone apps
- Innovative healing methods
- Colonisation and decolonising/Indigenous models
- Time and healing

While we could not locate any literature discussing the impacts of a programme or a health app identical to innerBoy, the literature review provided some research and data regarding the effectiveness of Indigenous men's programmes in addressing trauma and healing, and the utilisation of online platforms such as mobile apps. The literature considered some of the disadvantages in utilising online and mobile phone platforms in terms of data sovereignty; mental health impacts of mobile phone overuse; data and technology inequities for some populations; and a lack of one-on-one connection. Alternatively, the literature also acknowledged the potential benefits of mobile mental health apps in meeting whānau where they are (at any time of the day); the high uptake of smartphones and app usage; and utilising a platform that is comfortable for people (particularly younger people) to use.

Notably, this literature review highlighted a lack of research into the benefits of a mental health app to support the healing journey of Indigenous and Pasifika men within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. This offers two key opportunities. Firstly, to recognise innerBoy as a world-leading innovative approach to provide anytime, anywhere support to aid men's healing journeys. Secondly, gaps in the literature indicate the opportunity for this evaluation to explore the challenges and benefits inherent in the approach and make recommendations for innerBoy and other mental health apps and programmes that may follow.

There are various definitions of healing and mental wellbeing

An ongoing consideration in undertaking this literature review was understanding definitions of healing in the context of trauma, and how differences in this definition change the way in which the effectiveness of healing programmes might be measured. Is healing (and improved mental health) acknowledged as a journey or a destination? This review suggests healing is an ongoing journey and that innerBoy and other online resources and programmes are catalysts in this healing (rather

than the overall solution). For example, several articles reviewed highlight the importance of connections to culture, spirituality, whānau and community for Indigenous men in promoting greater mental and emotional wellbeing, recognising an ecosystem of interconnected determinants of wellness.

Therefore, inconsistent definitions of healing and improved mental health may have impacted on the way literature and data in this review was analysed and interpreted by authors. Similar to the way in which alternative approaches to mental health and healing are often not recognised or endorsed by clinicians and government agencies, recognition of (Indigenous) men's groups and innovative programmes for men's healing and health may also be dismissed as ineffective depending on how this success is measured. Initial engagement with a programme such as innerBoy is a successful step towards healing, and apps like innerBoy may inspire men to begin their journey alongside a counsellor or engage in men's groups.

There are pros and cons of mobile phone apps in the context of healing

The reviewed literature discussed a range of benefits and disadvantages to utilising online and mobile phone apps in the context of mental health. The articles reviewed were mostly balanced in their opinions about the use of mobile mental health apps and online programmes for healing and saw opportunities for both praise and improvement in each of the studies conducted. In terms of the benefits, researchers asserted:

- That due to the increasingly high uptake in smartphones and app use, this platform is an ideal place to meet many users where they are (online). (Reilly et al., 2020; Te Morenga et al., 2018; Zielasek et al., 2022).
- Mobile apps are a low-cost alternative to accessing face-to-face healthcare and services, and that diverse and rural populations who are less likely to engage with mainstream healthcare may be more likely to access support in this way (Reilly et al., 2020; Te Morenga et al., 2018; Zielasek et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2019).
- The research asserts that potential benefits of mobile mental health apps include reduced wait times, empowerment for those suffering poor mental health, and flexibility around when and where support is accessed (Zielasek et al., 2022).

- Many studies on mobile health apps included in this review report positive outcomes for the majority of users. This may also be impacted by resourcing.

While the benefits, or potential benefits, provide a promising future for the development and uptake of mobile mental health apps in particular, concerns were raised throughout the literature around possible barriers and risks. They included:

- Lack of privacy for app users and concerns around data sharing with third parties. (Zielasek et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2019).
- A lack of privacy policies available for mobile health apps. Many mobile health apps currently don't meet national (Australian) standards (Parker et al., 2019).
- One article discussed the potential for decreased downloads and engagement due to privacy breaches, and that some consumers may be less willing to engage with online platforms such as apps if they are already cautious around data sharing and privacy concerns (Parker et al., 2019).
- Not all clinicians and healthcare providers endorse online health apps, therefore a large population of potential users may be lost (Parker et al., 2019).
- This connects to recommendations by Zielasek et al., (2022) who argue that mobile mental health apps should be integrated alongside clinical practice. This may present a barrier as some clinicians do not endorse these mobile interventions, and some consumers do not engage with clinicians.
- Integrating mobile apps with clinical care may also create a barrier for the use of Indigenous models of health as clinicians may continue to provide care through Western health models (leading to the possible inability for both the app and the clinician to create a complementary or compatible support programme for the consumer).
- The potentially harmful impacts of mobile phone overuse by already mentally distressed consumers as mobile health apps encourage more time online (Zielasek et al., 2022).

The literature highlights the potential benefits of mobile mental health apps and programmes. The current concerns highlight opportunities to consider how innerBoy might address these (anticipated) risks in a way that seeks to keep the consumer (and their information/privacy) safe, supported, and on a pathway towards improved mental wellbeing and healing.

Innovative and Indigenous-led methods enhance opportunities for healing

Throughout the review of Indigenous men's healing and counselling programmes and approaches, innovative and Indigenous-led kaupapa offered new ways to think about healing beyond Western psychology models and methods. This included the development and delivery of programmes that are not necessarily created as a counselling or healing kaupapa, but similar to Whānau Ora invested initiatives in the arts, sports, cultural activities, and language revival. Indicating they have far-reaching social, emotional, and economic benefits for the participants and their whānau.

Wirihana & Smith (2014) discussed the use of a television programme called Songs from the Inside which supported Māori in prison through music to reintegrate back into society after release, and that this kaupapa allowed men to connect to traditional expressions of emotion through waiata. The authors also discussed cultural connection kaupapa, Paiheretia, which supported connections to identity and heritage and the strengthening of relationships for whānau. Wirihana & Smith (2014) assert that traditional healing methods often focus on the individual's healing and argue for approaches that acknowledge and engage with the whole whānau.

In George et al., (2021), the use of Photovoice by researchers provided male participants with an innovative method to share their stories, thoughts, and experiences as a way to address disproportionately poor mental health and high suicide rates. This method also supported the development of a culturally appropriate and gender-specific programme. While Photovoice was used in the development of the programme, it highlighted the importance for Indigenous men's healing supports to be tailored for each consumer, to offer different methods for delivery and engagement, and to allow participants to contribute to the creation of projects and initiatives.

Indigenous models of healing are underfunded

Seven of the articles in the review had a particular focus on Indigenous/Māori men within the context of trauma healing and mental health in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the U.S. Common themes throughout the literature include the shared importance of connections to the land, culture, spirituality, and community when Indigenous men undertake their healing and mental wellness journeys. An important theme included an introduction to the colonial context in which Indigenous men find themselves in, and that trauma and healing supports must be delivered in a way that acknowledges the ongoing impacts of colonisation for these men. The literature also argues that experiencing historical/collective trauma, as well as interpersonal trauma such as sexual abuse, creates the social environment for which addiction, violence, anti-social behaviours, and re-traumatisation are able to flourish within communities. Ongoing, contemporary colonisation is acknowledged as an enduring barrier to improved mental wellbeing for Indigenous men.

Indigenous models of healing reiterate the importance of offering Indigenous men the opportunity to co-create, deliver, and engage with supports that can be customised to their unique needs and pace. A key insight is that healing programmes and counselling must be culturally adapted for the consumers and that there is an opportunity for collectivism, reciprocity, and community. Another key theme centred around acknowledging gendered dimensions within the context of colonial trauma experienced by Indigenous men, and that colonisation disrupted traditional male roles and replaced them with masculine roles that are detrimental to the mental wellbeing and healing of these men. Several articles discuss the importance of addressing the adaptation of Western gender roles and ideologies that ultimately work against the interests of Indigenous men, women, and communities and looking at ways to resist these long-standing colonial influences through the revival of traditional roles, culture, and language.

The use of Indigenous models and programmes for healing continues to be underfunded and unrecognised in terms of their efficacy, with lack of funding creating a barrier towards long-term and sustainable opportunities for trauma healing in Indigenous communities (McDonald & Haswell, 2013; Te Morenga et al., 2018).

The importance of time and ability to engage at your own pace

Further to discussions about Indigenous models and the context of colonisation, another common insight shared

by Indigenous men was the importance of time and pace in terms of their healing journey. In the article by Keddie et al., (2023, p. 371), several authors stated that:

“Healing from trauma, loss and grief is a complex, relational, non-linear and layered process, which is experienced and felt in different ways.” (Adams et al., 2017; Atkinson, 2002; Bulman & Hayes, 2011).

Keddie et al., (2023, p. 379) reviewed Indigenous research describing the bumpy nature of healing, the ups and downs along the way, and that for Aboriginal communities healing was both “relational and collective”. This article articulates the non-linear nature of healing for Indigenous communities, suggesting that the outcomes and efficacy of these programmes should be measured in a non-linear, Indigenous way. This is also supportive of the notion that the collective and personal trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples is complex, multi-layered, and requires time for (intergenerational) grieving.

The long suppression of emotions and trauma due to imposed notions of masculinity is acknowledged by Waddell et al., (2021, p. 4), with researchers stating:

“In reflecting on the challenges of digging up trauma, other men identified the importance of time and pacing in healing. Men reflected on the time required to grieve within the healing journey.”

This is demonstrated in George (2021, p. 34) who includes the following quote from an Indigenous male participating in the Photovoice healing programme speaking to the meaning behind his photo:

“This reminds me of my healing journey. The stem of the feather is my life and each little hair represents all the paths I need to go down to heal.”

Te Morenga et al., (2018, p. 95) described participants in another healing study sharing sentiments around the importance of time:

“Not surprisingly, participants identified a number of barriers to achieving hauora. Lack of time was frequently mentioned ‘time is the cause of a lot of things, never enough time in the day’. Juggling the multiple demands on time throughout the day could be difficult: ‘finding the time to balance all of those things that’s always a challenge.’”

This notion of healing is recognised throughout the literature by Indigenous men as a journey that requires time the utilisation of indigenous models, and the ability for the healing journey to adjust to their own pace. There

is no mention of healing as a destination, with several articles acknowledging healing as a journey, and that it should be treated as such.

Relevance of the research

In the context of innerBoy, the notion of a 'healing journey' recognises innerBoy as a potential catalyst towards improved mental wellbeing, resilience, and individual and community healing rather than expecting it to be a panacea. As part of a larger, long-term healing journey, the literature suggests innerBoy offers an opportunity for men to access trauma support at any time of the day that is complementary to other tools, programmes, or counselling, that they may engage with through this trauma work.

Recurring themes in the literature assert the critical nature of programmes being embedded with ways to connect to culture, identity, and land for Indigenous participants, and that healing for the individual requires healing for the whole whānau. The pros and cons of mobile health apps outlined in this analysis offers innerBoy an opportunity to take advantage of the current benefits, and to work with developers to ensure

risks around data sharing and privacy are mitigated. This might include new ways of collecting data and ensuring the user has the ability to control how and where their data is shared.

A key insight from this literature review is that healing for these men requires time, and that support programmes need to be customisable to the unique needs and pace of participants. For Indigenous participants, it is important that healing and trauma are acknowledged within the context of colonisation, with the recognition that colonisation is ongoing and continues to create barriers towards mental wellness and trauma healing. System-level change is also required to support the healing journeys of Indigenous men and presents an opportunity for innerBoy consumers to provide insights that contribute towards policy submissions and more.

In the current social and online environment, innerBoy has the potential to create meaningful change for Indigenous men and their whānau by supporting and/or catalysing the healing journeys of historical, intergenerational, community, and individual trauma.

The following section explores the findings from this evaluation.



03

Evaluation methods and findings

The evaluation of this highly innovative approach to healing men's trauma and reducing family violence has been driven by three overarching research questions, each with several sub-questions.

The research questions are:

- 01** Who is using innerBoy?
- 02** In what ways (if any) does innerBoy impact on healing?
- 03** In what ways can the app be improved or developed further?

The evaluation was designed as an exploratory mixed-method evaluation. Exploratory research is primarily used when researchers are seeking to have a greater understanding of a new or existing phenomenon to gain new insights into it. A mixed-methods approach was undertaken that utilised qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis through a two-phased approach involving semi-structured interviews, analysis of data analytics and surveys.

The research process involved different participants over time. Ten current or potential users of innerBoy and Matt Brown were interviewed. The main themes from qualitative data were identified inductively (Silverman, 1998). This meant categories were not imposed on the data but arrived out of data analysis to inform the overall evaluation. Results from the interview analysis were then used to design a short survey.

The purpose of the survey was to understand if the major themes arising from interview analysis were shared by other innerBoy users. The survey was accompanied by an invitation from Matt Brown and distributed to the innerBoy mailing list and the innerBoy closed Facebook group.

Data analytics from the innerBoy website were analysed for trends, drop-off points and other areas of interest.

Data was collected via:

- Interviews with 10 tāne.
- Interviews with Matt Brown and the webhost/manager.
- A survey completed by 31 users of innerBoy.
- Analysis of non-identifiable Google Analytics.
- Analysis of innerBoy social media messaging/feedback from men who have given permission for their feedback to be shared.

A full description of the evaluation methodology is available in Appendix A.

Evaluation of economic impact

Two highly respected wellbeing economists Professor Paul Dalziel and Distinguished Professor Caroline Saunders prepared an economic evaluation of innerBoy's impact on wellbeing.

Their methodology draws on responses to the innerBoy survey conducted by Ihi Research.

The method for estimating impact on wellbeing comes from the Stats New Zealand General Social Survey, which includes two key questions:

Question 1

Where zero is completely dissatisfied, and ten is completely satisfied, how do you feel about your life as a whole?

Question 2

Where zero is 'not at all satisfied', and ten is 'completely satisfied', how satisfied with your life do you expect to feel in five years' time?

The innerBoy survey began with a further question:

Before you started innerBoy, how satisfied were you with your life as a whole; where zero is 'not at all satisfied', and ten is 'completely satisfied'?

The Treasury has guidelines on how to put an economic value on items such as higher life satisfaction. Taking their lowest value, Treasury indicates that the economic value of a one-step increase in life satisfaction is \$6,714 per annum (CBAx model, December 2023). The approved Treasury methodology has been utilised to calculate the economic impact of innerBoy summarised later in this report.

The following section presents the findings from the qualitative (interviews/messages) and quantitative (survey/analytics) aspects of this evaluation. This is followed by a brief description of the economic impact evaluation findings. Professor Dalziel and Distinguished Professor Saunders have provided a full separate report describing their findings.

3.1 Who is using innerBoy?

The following section draws on data from the innerBoy app, interviews, survey engagement, and social media engagement. The data indicates that tāne are engaging

through the app and also through the closed group Facebook page (that consists of only men) and through innerBoy content shared on Instagram.



36,000

Requests in the first hour



20,000

Site visits since launch



6.43

Average views per user



1,100

Active users (May 2024)

How users found innerBoy

10,242

Direct to the website

3,894

Organic searches

3,850

Through organic social

980

Through paid social

875

Referrals

57

Through paid search

56%

Of users are first time engagers in trauma healing

37%

Have accessed other forms of support

innerBoy socials

f 257

innerBoy closed group Facebook followers

@ 8,976

innerBoy Instagram followers

She is not your rehab socials

f 127,443

SINYR Facebook followers

@ 131,000

SINYR Instagram followers

🎵 94,000

SINYR Tiktok followers

Survey results indicate innerBoy is the first foray into support for many of the men who access it. Fifty-six percent of survey respondents agree that engaging with the app was the first time they had attempted to address the trauma that they held. Data from social media engagement and interviews suggests that Matt Brown connects with a range of tāne who may not otherwise engage with non-court mandated counselling and support services. This group includes survivors of State Care and their children, past and current gang members, and their associates, and men who have been incarcerated. Often tāne fall into more than one of the aforementioned groups.

"I've done a lot of... I've probably spent about three years altogether in residential rehabs. So, I've done a lot of mahi but a lot of it was for the wrong reasons. A lot of it was to get out of the situations that I was in. Not because I wanted to make changes and be a better person, if that makes sense." (Interview participant)

The innerBoy app does not collect demographic information, therefore we cannot make definitive statements about the ages or ethnicities of the men who engage with the app. Online feedback, testimonials, interview participants and survey respondent ethnicities included Māori, Samoan, Rarotongan, Indian, Nigerian, Pākehā New Zealanders, Tongan and Niuean. While innerBoy is suitable for tāne from a range of ethnicities, Pacific Island and Māori respondents find Matt particularly relatable.

"I think what appeals to me is that Matt's on it. It's a brown brother who's been through it, and I don't even know what number it was, but he still talks about him going through the healing process. It's a nonstop thing. Even to now, that's still ongoing. And his trauma, bro, is his trauma. He says it's not a trauma Olympics, but trauma is massive for some of us, and knowing that it's common, and he's changing lives, it's massive, man." (Interview participant)



"In a world that often dismisses mental health issues, InnerBoy has been a vital resource for me. It's helped me navigate my struggles with anxiety and depression, offering practical exercises and support. The community aspect is uplifting knowing you're not alone is half the battle."

Paul, 42



"Navigating mental health as a Middle Eastern man comes with its unique set of challenges, but InnerBoy has been a pillar of support. It acknowledges the cultural nuances and offers a space where I can work on my mental health discreetly and effectively. I've seen significant progress in how I manage stress and communicate my needs."

Mohammed, 35



"InnerBoy has been a revelation for me. It's like having a mental health gym in my pocket. As a black man, opening up about my emotions hasn't always been easy due to cultural stigmas. This app has given me a private space to work on myself, understand my feelings, and strengthen my mental resilience. It's empowering to see progress in my journey towards better mental health."

Loui, 36



3.2 In what ways (if any) does innerBoy impact on healing?

A number of key themes recurred across the data including the importance of lived experience, flexibility of access, participation in journaling, acquiring new strategies and the impact of early engagement.

Lived experience and Matt's commitment to his own healing journey

As Matt is a person who has successfully navigated his own healing journey his story serves as a powerful role model. He demonstrates that recovery is possible and provides a roadmap for others to follow, showing that it's possible to overcome trauma and lead a fulfilling life enriched by healthy relationships. The lived experience narrative is an important component of innerBoy. It is integral to Matt's message and the trust and legitimacy he has with tāne who follow him and those who use the app.

Matt's life experiences and his efforts to heal himself and to support other men to heal permeated participant interviews. Survey participants were unanimous in their view that they were helped by Matt's lived experience narrative. It is clear that Matt is viewed as a person with mana. Because he is doing the work to heal from trauma and live a fully realised life, this increases his mana; therefore, the men believe they are increasing their own mana by doing the work. The following figure illustrates that the majority of the survey respondents found the videos were helpful.

The narratives in Matt Brown's videos have helped me

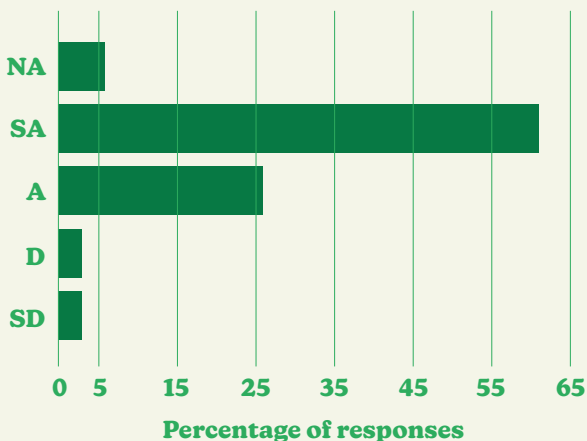


Figure 2: Percentage of users helped by video narratives¹

Matt's story and message align to participants' own beliefs and experiences and the majority of tāne are able to relate to Matt's experience even if it is not identical to their own. The men respect Matt's kōrero around 'breaking the cycle'. They want to follow Matt's example as a partner and father in their own families. This means that although they are working through the app alone, they don't feel totally alone.

"It was very confronting at times, but helpful too. Though I didn't go through exactly the same traumas as Matt, the presentation and content are broad enough to be helpful all over." (Survey response)

Matt Brown is integral to the success of innerBoy. His persona and voice make the app accessible from a human (as opposed to technical) perspective. His invitation brings men to innerBoy, his message of hope holds them, and his ability to connect to participants helps them to heal. This, along with the sound and pacing of Matt's voice and the look, colours and feel of the app design makes the app accessible.

While innerBoy does not provide men with a therapeutic relationship in the traditional sense, it is evident men see themselves as having a relationship with Matt Brown through the app, and together they form a healing-focused alliance. The video content may support the feeling of a personal relationship through the online app. Matt's vulnerability provides a model and an invitation for men to be vulnerable themselves. This invitation appears to be profound. Rice et al., (2021) propose that the first step to creating an environment conducive to improving men's mental health is awareness of the tensions experienced by many men around emotional expressions of vulnerability, and the need to remain open to the diverse patterns of emotional expression, to affirm other ways of being rather than reinforcing stereotypical interactions.

"When I see vulnerable, I respect vulnerable. And then it allows me to be vulnerable. When I see a man crying and showing emotion, it unlocks my emotion and gives me the ability to cry and be vulnerable and feel my feelings. So, from that point, I knew that I respected him because I respect that level of vulnerability." (Interview participant)

The app is designed with the awareness that men face societal pressures to exhibit hegemonic masculinity by appearing strong and unemotional. Witnessing Matt being courageous and sharing his vulnerabilities encourages them to confront and express their own emotions and experiences. This is a critical step in the healing process.

“Before I started, I thought I was a man - big, strong in all aspects. Oh, how I was so wrong. This opened my eyes to what really was going on and who I was and turned me around. Thank you so much.” (Survey response)

Trust is a crucial element in engaging tāne in healing, and tāne trust Matt Brown. As Matt has lived through trauma, he can more easily build trust with others who are struggling; their shared experiences create a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect. This trusting relationship impacts outcomes and engagement. A strong therapeutic alliance, characterised by trust, empathy, and collaboration, has been identified as being essential for effective trauma therapy (Berry et al., 2021). Men recovering from trauma commonly face barriers such as fear, mistrust, and avoidance, which can be mitigated through a trusting relationship (Böhmer & Krüger, 2019). Male survivors of childhood sexual abuse have reported that developing a strong connection based on trust is vital for their healing process (Rapsey et al., 2017). The relationship provides a safe space for men to explore their trauma, fostering emotional regulation and reducing symptoms of distress (Kornhaber et al., 2016).

The men respect the work Matt has done and feel they are following in his footsteps, learning the tools Matt himself uses. In other words they trust his competence.

“Oh, definitely, because it's not somebody who's just making stuff up. It's someone who's lived through it, someone who's ... you can tell that these are the tools that he's used for himself.” (Interview participant)

Flexibility in access is valued

The ability to re-engage without judgement if they disengage was appreciated, as was the ability to save and revisit sessions. It is apparent that some men dip in and out of the app, depending on what is happening in their lives.

“This app is so compassionate, well structured and welcoming. I feel really loved when I engage with it. I haven't been working through it in a straight

30-day period. I had a good stint working through regularly when I was in a really dark time, then fell off the routine of it - but I re-engage any time I have space or need support, re-read through my journal or saved sessions, and keep working through the series.” (Survey response)

The anytime, anywhere nature of an online tool works for the majority of participants. Interviewees discussed taking time out on their own to work on the app, doing sessions on the couch while their family watched TV, or completing the sessions while undergoing medical treatment. The flexibility of the online approach worked well for all interviewees and 81 percent of survey respondents.

While online support was challenging for some survey respondents, most were committed to completing the programme.

I am committed to working through the programme

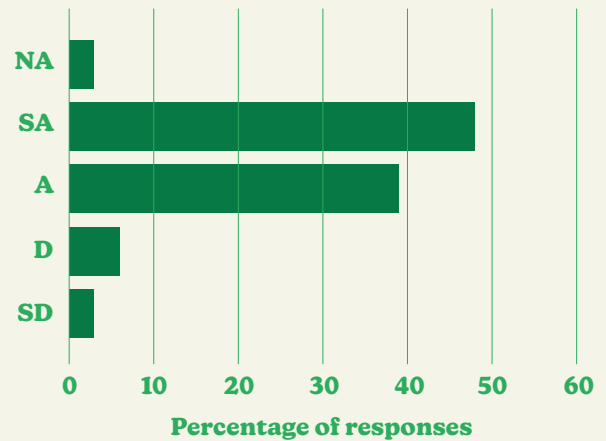


Figure 3: Percentage response - committed to completion



“As someone who was always told to 'brush it off' and not show weakness, InnerBoy has been a revelation. It's shown me the importance of mental health and taught me that I can share and learn without fear. This app respects where I'm coming from and helps chart a path forward.”

Jamie, 40

Active participation through journaling

As part of the design, innerBoy provides opportunities to pause and reflect using a journaling process. Speaking their vulnerability aloud, and journaling their reflections was challenging but appeared to work well for the interviewees. Several interviewees did not use the app-based journaling but instead had a notebook in which they wrote their own journals. Survey data indicates journaling works well for some but not for all.

The journaling has been helpful

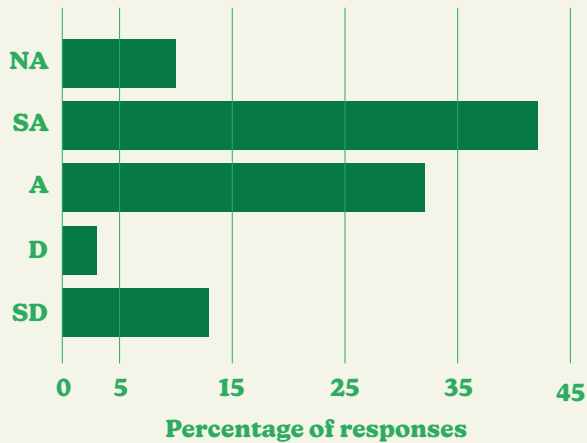


Figure 4: Percentage response indicating journaling is helpful

It is apparent that working through the app can be challenging as men re-engage with memories and experiences of trauma. One survey respondent found journaling problematic because of this.

"Journaling is not helpful when it creates focusing on negative thoughts and memory." (Survey response)

Internationally there are data sovereignty issues and Indigenous data sovereignty issues that may arise from online journaling including legal requirements, particularly if these are stored off-shore; data privacy; access to and transferability of personal data; and staff training. The steps innerBoy takes to ensure data is secure should be clearly described including:

- innerBoy uses 3rd party trusted authentication providers Auth0 to enable access to the application, and store any authentication tokens.
- All administration requires authenticated access.
- All data is transferred and stored with encryption.
- No demographic data is collected.

While there is a Privacy Policy on the innerBoy site, no specific mention is made of the online journaling. The innBoy journaling is accessible to two authenticated users. While the entries are anonymous and only visible to two authenticated administrators, email addresses are attached to the entries and this appears to be a privacy risk worthy of consideration.

Acquiring new strategies to support healing

All the tāne who were interviewed were able to speak about strategies they had learned through the app, and how they used them in their everyday lives. Different strategies appealed to different men, depending on what they were seeking from the app, the trauma they had encountered in their own lives and how this played out in their current relationships. The legitimacy of the strategies is increased because Matt refers to how he uses them in his own life. Because they view Matt as a person with mana, they gain mana themselves by utilising the strategies he advocates.

87%

of survey participants agreed they have learnt new strategies to deal with their feelings

The innerBoy activities are designed to increase self-understanding and self-awareness. Survey responses indicate they are meeting tāne expectations. The tāne who participated in the survey believe they have an increased knowledge of themselves and are better able to manage their emotions and triggers. Importantly 97 percent of survey respondents believe they are working towards healing from the trauma they have experienced.



"As someone who struggled with the cultural stigma attached to discussing mental health, InnerBoy has been a breath of fresh air. It's provided me with tools and strategies that are culturally sensitive and relevant, making me feel seen and understood. This app has truly been a beacon of hope."

Tavita, 33

The following survey responses demonstrate how the content is meeting the needs of tāne, and the impact this has had on their understanding of themselves and their healing journey.

87%

Agreed that the content meets their needs

93%

Agreed that they understand what triggers their negative responses

86%

Have a better understanding of themselves

87%

Agreed they are working towards healing some of the trauma they have experienced

90%

Are less likely to respond aggressively to stressful situations

Survey findings indicate that men who use innerBoy are making changes and learning about themselves. They report they are less likely to respond aggressively to situations, are more likely to understand what triggers aggressive behaviour – and are on a healing journey.



"InnerBoy has been a game-changer for me. Growing up in a culture where men are expected to hide their feelings, this app has given me a safe space to explore and express my emotions without fear of judgment. It's like having a personal guide that understands the complexities of my heritage and the pressures it brings."

Alex, 34

Exposure brings about change

To gain an indication of early change achieved after a low number of sessions we isolated the survey responses from respondents who had completed five sessions or less (n=5). One response was removed because it was from a counsellor primarily looking at the app from a counselling perspective, rather than as a user.

Appendix B demonstrates that participants report outcomes very early in the innerBoy programme. Importantly, after five sessions or less, all respondents:

- had learnt new strategies;
- felt they were working towards healing from their trauma;
- had a greater understanding of their triggers, and;
- were less likely to respond aggressively to stressful situations.

Interestingly, all four respondents strongly agreed they were sharing what they had learnt with other men. This suggests that even with limited exposure to the innerBoy content, participants believed it had a positive impact on their healing journey.

Creating a support network

innerBoy leverages off the wider social media presence of Matt Brown and She is Not Your Rehab. The book 'She is not your rehab', was provided free to all tāne imprisoned in New Zealand to raise the visibility of the anti-violence movement Matt and his wife Sarah Brown have inspired and led. The wider social movement opens a healing conversation with men. The MFB process model (Fig. 17) illustrates how men require a 'connection' in order to move to a place of healing. The anti-violence social movement enables men who have never met Matt Brown to feel a trusting connection to him. Consequently, the wider social movement plays a vital role in the success of innerBoy.

This was apparent in interview data that all interviewees were inspired by Matt Brown's willingness to openly share his experiences and be an example for other men, and in turn, want to help others. Analysis of the survey data indicates that supporting others through sharing what they have learnt is important to users of the app (77%).

I share what I have learnt with other men

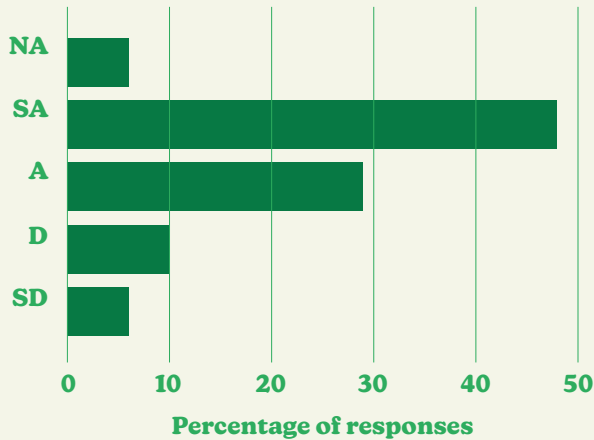


Figure 5: Percentage response - sharing learning

A closed Facebook group has been set up to provide online support for tāne to have direct contact with Matt Brown. This can be intensive at times, and men do reach out to Matt for individual support. Survey data indicated 81 percent of respondents felt overwhelmed at times, and 20 percent did not feel well supported. As numbers of men using the app increases it is unsustainable to rely on Matt Brown to continue to provide support to men in crisis.

The following section provides two case studies of impact. Tāne are inspired by how Matt Brown owns his story, and uses it to help other men. Consequently, the tāne who were interviewed for these case studies asked to be identified. They hope their stories might resonate with other men and motivate change, as Matt has for them. These case studies illustrate the transformative intergenerational impact of innerBoy.

Comments in the survey described how app users were sharing their knowledge and learning with others.

*"The reassurance that you've given while navigating these spaces is awesome. And I've introduced this mahi to most men in my whānau."
(Survey response)*



"I've always struggled to express my emotions due to cultural expectations. With InnerBoy, I've learned that being vulnerable is not a weakness but a step towards strength. This app has taught me practical ways to deal with anxiety and stress, making me a better husband, father, and friend."

Liam, 34



"In my culture, discussing mental health is often taboo. But InnerBoy has been like a breath of fresh air, offering me tools and strategies to deal with anxiety and stress without fear of judgment. The mindfulness exercises and daily reflections have been particularly transformative. It feels like I'm finally able to confront and mend parts of me I've long ignored."

Raj, 27

3.3 Case study 1: Blain

Blain's life has been marked by significant challenges, including substance abuse and criminal behaviour, which he attributes to unresolved childhood trauma and attachment issues. Growing up, Blain had a strained relationship with his father, who was physically present but emotionally absent. This lack of connection led Blain to seek solace in drugs and alcohol from an early age, ultimately resulting in a cycle of addiction and incarceration.

Blain first learned about the innerBoy app when he saw Matt speak. Intrigued by the concept and the potential for personal growth, Blain decided to give the app a try. He was particularly drawn to the idea of having Matt Brown, a figure he respected for his vulnerability and honesty, guide him through the healing process.

"I loved it. I loved having Matt Brown in my pocket. I loved each day. And what I really liked is how it built up to...what innerBoy is trying to heal is my inner man, my inner boy. And I believe that we all have wounds. And for myself, I used drugs and alcohol to soothe those wounds. I'm still healing a lot through therapy, through using innerBoy."

Blain found the innerBoy app to be a unique and valuable tool in his recovery journey. He appreciated the structured 30-day programme, which required a daily commitment of 30 minutes. The app's gradual approach, starting with comfortable tasks and progressively delving into deeper, more confronting issues, resonated with Blain. He valued the daily prompts and questions, which encouraged him to confront his emotions and past traumas rather than numbing or running from them. Blain noted that the app's format was different from traditional therapy or rehab programmes, which he had previously experienced. He found the app's approach to be more accessible and relatable, particularly because it allowed him to engage with the material at his own pace and in his own space. The app's focus on inner child work and re-parenting oneself was particularly impactful for Blain, helping him understand and address the root causes of his addiction and emotional struggles.

The innerBoy app proved to be highly effective for Blain. He reported significant personal growth and healing as a result of using the app. One of the most

profound aspects of the app for Blain was its ability to make him confront and process his emotions. He found that the app's daily tasks and questions helped him break through his emotional armour and allowed him to be vulnerable and honest with himself. Blain also appreciated the app's emphasis on forgiveness, both of oneself and others. He recognised the importance of forgiving those who had hurt him as a means of freeing himself from the past and moving forward. This aspect of the app reinforced his belief in the power of forgiveness as a tool for personal liberation and healing.

Blain's commitment to change was inspired by his desire to be a positive role model for his daughter. He recognised that breaking the cycle of trauma and addiction was not just about his own recovery but also about setting a healthy example for her. Blain believed that by healing himself and demonstrating respect, kindness, and emotional presence, he could influence his daughter to seek healthy relationships and avoid the pitfalls of addiction and abuse. This motivation to create a better future for his daughter was a driving force behind his dedication to using the innerBoy app and embracing its teachings.

"My biggest part of why I'm healing myself is so my daughter seeks respect when she gets to that age. That is breaking the cycle. My daughter doesn't need to go on and become a scientist or a prime minister or whatever it is. All she needs is a kind loving man in her life to then bring her kids up in the kind, loving way."

Blain found the app to be a valuable resource for maintaining his recovery. He often revisited the app's content and found it to be a helpful reminder of the principles and practices he needed to stay on track. The app's accessibility and the ability to engage with it independently were significant advantages for Blain, who valued the flexibility it offered. The app's structured yet flexible approach, combined with its focus on inner child work and forgiveness, provided Blain with the support he needed to confront and process his past traumas. As a result, Blain has made significant strides in his recovery and continues to use the app as a resource for maintaining his progress. He also supports other men to heal from the trauma they have experienced.

Case Study 2: Zahn and Tamati

The following case study delves into the transformative journey of Zahn and his son Tamati, who have embarked on a path of healing and self-discovery through the innerBoy app. Zahn, recounting a tumultuous upbringing marred by trauma, violence, and a cycle of dysfunction, reflects on his struggles with anger, abandonment, and the pervasive impact of his past experiences on his relationships and sense of self.

Seeking a way to break free from destructive patterns, Zahn turned to innerBoy. Through the app's guided modules and introspective exercises, Zahn and Tamati talk to their inner boys, navigate complex emotions, and strive towards forgiveness and self-acceptance. As they unravel the layers of their past, confront deep-seated wounds, and nurture a newfound sense of understanding and compassion, Zahn and Tamati's intertwined journey exemplifies the power of vulnerability, resilience, and the unwavering bond between a father and his son on a quest for personal growth and emotional liberation. Zahn's tumultuous journey from a childhood marked by abuse, violence, and displacement sheds light on the profound impact of his upbringing on his later struggles.

"My Dad came from Kaeo, there were still dirt floors, no power. He had to go fetch wood every day, getting whooped. He went to borstal, jail, joined the Black Power. (There was) domestic violence with my mother, and that's when we ended up at Centrepoint. I think I ended up in Women's Refuge at the age of four. I left Centrepoint when I was nine years old, after it was raided by the Police. I was the only Māori person at Centrepoint, so I didn't really know about culture.

When I came out, I went straight to my dad's family. My dad was with Black Power. I went from Centrepoint to the gang pad and had that aspect of the gang life. I went from sexual abuse into domestic violence. I went from one trauma to another. (That experience) formed that real gang basis for me. I found myself looking up to patches and thought that was cool. I went down that path, which was obviously a road of destruction."

As Zahn navigates the lasting repercussions of his tumultuous past and grapples with the deep-seated anger and coping mechanisms forged in his youth, his daily battle to suppress the impact of his early experiences remains a persistent challenge.

"Every single day I do stuff to keep all that at bay. Now I understand a lot of my anger, where it came from, and how I used it to survive. One time they said to me..., 'Write yourself a letter'. It was a journal, but talk to your younger self. ... I told myself to hold onto that anger. I remember doing it, yeah, it was to hold onto the anger. You need the anger to get you through where you are.

There's going to be a point where you need to let that go though, ... I think the gangs, the sexual abuse, there's that anger I needed to survive through jail, through the gang stuff, through everything. It served me well, up to a point where I needed to fill that with love somewhere, which is very hard to do. It's not bad now, I talk about at the time a lot of the stuff that I deal with now, is anger."

Eventually Zahn reached a critical turning point where he knew he had to change his life.

"I got to the point where I just had enough. I needed to heal. I had enough of doing jail. I watched a documentary in jail on my trauma, Yeah, I watched that Centrepoint documentary and just had enough. I also got my boy in the house. I had a grandkid at the same time. My father passed away. I had come to a crossroad where something needed to happen.

At the time, I was in Invercargill ... but I didn't have much family down there. I'd been out of jail for just over a year, and I had time in the house, went through a break-up, at the same time as I was going through the break-up, I saw the app had just started. Because I was so far away from home, so far away from my family, that's the reason why I started there (the app). This app, it's something that when you are isolated, you can use it anywhere. It's user friendly. You can tap into it wherever you want."

Zahn talks about how he used the app alongside other supports as a way of keeping himself on track. He found some of the sessions confronting and had to work hard to stay engaged, especially when he felt challenged.

"I went to counselling, which was cool, but I just used innerBoy as another layer to get through that

time ... I think whenever I stopped doing it, I got some confronting things, and I kind of went, 'Ooh'. Yeah. I remember, I put stuff in the back burner. It was the one where I got asked to ... Affirmations, where I said positive things about yourself, that bit of dialogue. For me, man, if you told me today, say some positive things about myself ... Oh, because I rattle off a thousand things at the moment. But at the time, I had to move in with the cousins, I was going through some stuff, I wasn't really meeting my duties of being a father at home. I was actually dysfunctional. I got into a space... I had nothing good to say about myself. It was actually quite confronting.

Talking to my inner boy was cool. That was one thing that was cool. It was three days in. You actually learn, talk to the inner boy, give yourself forgiveness. That was cool and I did, I remember actually sitting there, going, 'Hey, look,' talking to myself. 'Look, you know it's not your fault.'

For Zahn, one of the biggest challenges has been working through his trust issues, especially when he was being asked to be vulnerable. Zahn trusts Matt Brown. Matt's experiences and the sharing of his story enabled Zahn to connect with Matt.

"It was hard to trust anyone ... There's a trust issue with me ... That was one real big thing, was trusting that there's something bigger, trusting that there's something else.

Just the way he (Matt) can change. I know that him and, well, leaders of my gang, before he passed away, had a big influence on each other... just the background. I know that he's from the same kind of area, and the story, 'She Is Not Your Rehab', I read that in jail, and then ... I read that again. Just the work he tends to do, and the story he shares. Very similar. Not very similar, but kind of just wearing it on his sleeve and speaking off the chest has made me kind of do the same thing, and really realise how healing our traumas, how (important) actually breaking the cycle is... Ever since I've been doing it, I've become a new person ... it's kind of given me a new lease of life."

Zahn is proud his son Tamati is now doing innerBoy. He acknowledges that his son has had to deal with abandonment issues, especially when Zahn went to jail. Tamati admits he had a lot to deal with but that he doesn't want to repeat the patterns that he has experienced.

"Matt's voice is real calming. I would hear his voice, it just sounds trustworthy, like I can trust him. It's

like a real soft voice. You could tell him anything and he wouldn't say nothing to nobody."

Tamati found the module on forgiving invaluable.

"It was writing, I had to say to my inner boy, to like just forgive your father for what he did in the past and stuff. The innerBoy app also helped because it made me realise that I wouldn't want my kids to be having to... Like, to be having to tell themselves that they forgive themselves."

Zahn recognises that the trauma his son carries came from the trauma he had in his life. He wants to support his son to heal, and by working through the app they have been able to talk about the patterns in their lives.

"Yeah, I really wanted him to do it, something that I struggle with was abandonment through my life. I understand that it has translated into relationships. I've stayed in real toxic relationships before because I just hadn't wanted to be left. I'll stay in that relationship even though I know it's probably not the best relationship, but just being abandoned and being left is like something I don't want to deal with. That's something that I don't want him to carry through his adult life. I think the best way to do it is really addressing things. I know it's kind of hard and uncomfortable but addressing it early on.

My boy is 14. I went to jail maybe when he was about eight years old. I came out when he was 13. There was a lot of resentment. When I got him back in my life, we'd be standing at the ... That'd be the Foot Locker and I'd get him a few things. 'Well, can I get that, Dad?' And it was like, 'Oh, no, you can get this, but you can't get that.' (he'd say) 'But what about all those birthdays you missed, you better come up with a bit more?' What are you going to say? I kind of understood. Yeah. As much as I'd get angry, I kind of knew that, 'Of course, you're going to resent me. Of course, you're going to have those feelings. Of course, I've been away. Of course, I had missed birthdays'. And it was confronting in the start, honestly.

I'd just be doing the work in front of him, doing the work. And talking to him about Centrepoint, talking about what happened there. Talking to him about why I fell short in these spaces. Not just my relationship with him, but relationships with partners, why I always fell short with his mother, why I always fell short with friends, with family. It was because of past trauma, until I actually realised it myself, the relationships would always break down somewhere along the line.

My Dad suffered trauma, and I suppose that's why I make it apparent to my kids about how I grew up because I know I resented him for a bit. Then got to about 18, 19, 20, where I learnt his story. I really got to know why he was going through similar things, what happened to him, and I kind of understood, 'Oh, well, I understand now why he fell short also'."

Zahn was able to reconnect with his father and establish a relationship that helped them both heal. His dad passed away two years ago, and Zahn acknowledges that while his father tried hard to change for his whānau he could not do it on his own.

"The last thing, he did try and change for us, but he couldn't do it on his own really."

Zahn is determined to continue working toward healing the trauma he has suffered and be a better father. He attends a variety of local men's groups and, determined to help others, hands out the innerBoy cards whenever he can.

"... A lot of the men's groups I go to, you just sit there, you have a vent, and then leave. You don't leave with many tools, even though it was cool having a cool chat. It was cool connecting with men, but the tools that you leave with ... you've had a good talk. I thought that maybe sitting down and getting the men to download the innerBoy

app, if they want to use it and go away with it, it's totally up to them, but they've got those tools there. Even the cards too, I just hand them out to people, because when they look, 'I need to do this,' ... Just QR code the app down. Gee, it's a good app."

Zahn continues to work hard to stay on a healing pathway, motivated to be a better father to his children. He talks about breaking the intergenerational trauma that was handed down to him, and being the person who was the force of change for their whānau.

"My kids are kind of proud of me. I get it from my son all the time, 'I'm proud of you, Dad.' 'I love you, boy.' I think all the dad stuff that I thought used to be cool, all that stuff that I glorified, and thought was cool, I look back now, and I get a different respect from my kids, and from my family, and the community now. It is a real cool thing. My grandfather was in jail, my father was in jail, I was in jail.

I hope that's what's remembered of me, really, is I was that force of change. I was for myself. Hopefully, I will inspire people with hope and inspire my kids to be that person to change it, to get out of the cycle ...I don't want my kids in the gangs, I don't want other kids in gangs ... I am trying to break the cycle for me and my family."



3.4 In what ways can the app be improved or developed further?

Although challenging, the app content appears to be appropriate and rewarding for those who participate. Technical accessibility issues were primarily related to the app being web-based rather than a stand-alone downloadable app. Discussions with the developer/host indicate this issue may be insurmountable due to the large amount of video content. A small number of survey participants suggested having an audio-only option available.

The following section explores barriers and opportunities in three key phases:

- 01** Gaining engagement.
- 02** Sustaining engagement.
- 03** Post-engagement.

Gaining engagement

Gaining engagement is primarily concerned with efforts to attract men to innerBoy, and then encourage them to engage with the innovation.

The need for increased promotion

A lack of promotion was the most commonly identified barrier to participation. Tāne were incredulous that more effort had not been put into promoting the app. They viewed the app as a valuable resource and believed it should be more widely known.

“In regard to the app? Honestly, I just wish it was promoted more somehow. They’ve done an amazing job promoting it as it is, and obviously through social media, as well. But yeah, I just wish this could be something so important that they teach it at school because if we can get it early, or if the people at school can get it early, I’m sure the people who come forward from the generations after will be great men because they have the tools in the arsenal.” (Interview participant)

Consideration should be given about how the app may be better advertised and socialised, so it is more widely known as an option for men in Aotearoa. This responsibility largely sits with Matt and Sarah Brown at present. Making innerBoy a household name increases the likelihood men will engage and therefore the opportunity for impact.

Broadening the invitation

Once engaged, tāne have conveyed their ability to relate to the content and its applicability to various forms and degrees of trauma. Ensuring the invitation is explicitly inclusive of all levels of trauma has emerged as an opportunity. It appears the level of personal trauma Matt discusses may be a barrier because some tāne initially think the invitation does not apply to them as their trauma is not as severe as Matt’s. Currently, there appears to be a misconception from some men that innerBoy is solely designed for men who have been subjected to physical or sexual abuse. There is a strong connection for men who have suffered this type of trauma. However, men who have trauma from less violent means may not think the app is for them unless this is explicitly stated.

“I looked about it, I looked at it and thought it was designed for people who went through a lot of trauma as a kid and all that. So, it kind of put me off a little bit because I knew I didn’t go through any sort of full-on abuse.” (Interview participant)

“It could be quite confronting for people who maybe hadn’t experienced the same level of domestic violence. I listened for what I had in common as opposed to how I was different to overcome this. Some people might need to be explicitly told to do this.” (Survey response)

Maintaining engagement

Evidence indicates that additional support could more fully realise the potential of innerBoy to bring about sustained change in men’s behaviour.

The need to provide sustainable support

Research suggests that men engaging in trauma counselling may face an increased risk of self-harm, particularly in the early stages of treatment. While trauma-focused therapies are generally effective, they can initially exacerbate symptoms and emotional distress, potentially leading to self-injurious behaviours (Green et al., 2020). A study by Tanner et al., (2015) found that individuals with a history of trauma were more likely to engage in non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) as a means of coping with overwhelming emotions or intrusive thoughts. Moreover, men may be particularly vulnerable due to societal expectations and stigma surrounding mental health, which can hinder help-seeking behaviours and emotional expression (Green & Jakupcak, 2016).

Implementing appropriate safety planning to mitigate potential adverse outcomes is advisable. Interview participants believed there was a need for 24-hour support, ideally consistent with the app (i.e. provided by a culturally congruent male, with lived experience, trained by Matt for consistency) that can assist men to deal with relived trauma as they work through the app.

“But I do feel, with my honest opinion, that if there was a bit more support around the app, for instance, with my situation, if there was a 0800 number that someone could ring straight away. Because if you think about it, if, say, someone else comes along, and they've got some really deep stuff that they don't want to talk about, they're drowning, they really want to change their life, this is their only hope, their last hope is this app. They've tried all the counselling, they've tried jail courses, everything, and this is their last hope, and they really want to go deep, so they're giving it their all, and then they go deep, and then they get hit by a bus. Emotions. Overwhelming anxiety, panic attacks, everything. If there was that 0800 number that a brother could be on the other side who has been through those emotions, who has dealt with similar things to what that person is going through, that could make so much difference. You know what I mean?” (Interview participant)

This view was reinforced by survey data, where 81 percent of respondents indicated they had felt overwhelmed at times, and 20 percent did not feel well supported.

I have felt overwhelmed at times

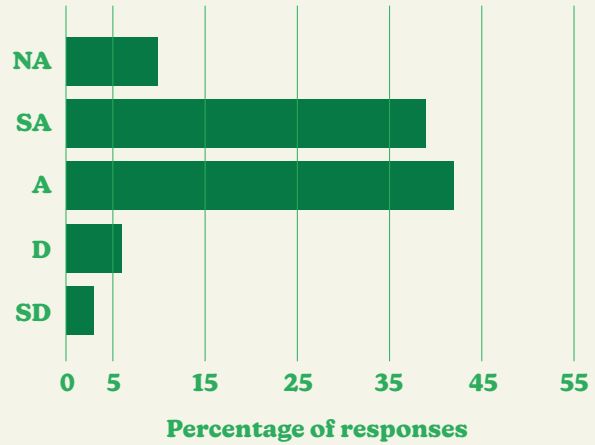


Figure 6: Percentage who felt overwhelmed

I have felt emotionally drained at times

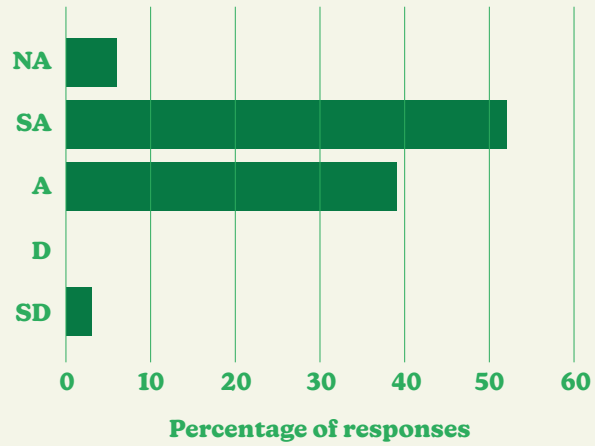


Figure 7: Percentage who felt emotionally drained

Interestingly, although participants found the work challenging at times, analysis of survey responses indicated they also felt well-supported.

I feel well supported

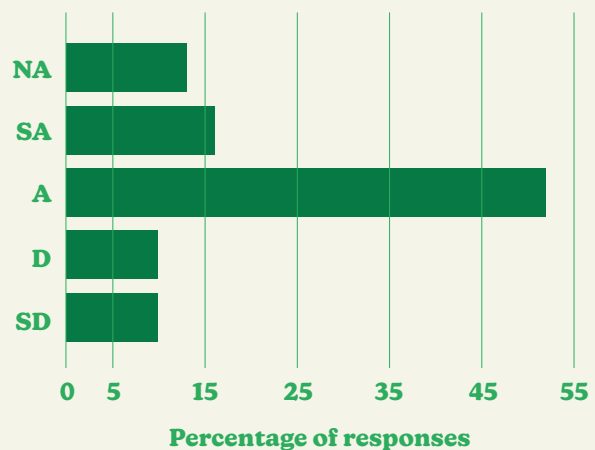


Figure 8: Percentage who felt well-supported

Some participants expressed concerns about the toll of providing personal support on Matt Brown, and the unsustainable nature of this expectation.

“When you are the product, how do you look after that? And does that mean you are going to think about your availability, and you are going to have to think about how you procure who you are and how often someone takes from that, how often you're giving from that.” (Interview participant)

Interview participants spoke about reaching out to Matt. He still fields numerous phone calls, sometimes later at night, and supports men through a variety of situations.

“I'd had an argument with people in the house and I needed to get out. It was 9.45pm and I didn't want to be at the house. But I had a bail check at 10pm. I didn't know what to do. So, I rang Matt.” (Interview participant)

The need for reminder notifications

The most common barrier identified by the tāne was a lack of time, and that they often forgot to get online. They believed a reminder notification would be a useful prompt to remind them to re-engage with the app.

“For me personally, I stopped at day 11, but I am determined to finish and it's very timely for me that this email should arrive. I feel personally accountable, I committed on day one, had busy days that I missed, where I doubled up the next day...maybe a text reminder or app alert. Perhaps that little bit of extra piece of connectivity. Maybe if I commit to say 8pm on my first day and every day after at say 7.50pm a buzz will come from my phone...” (Survey response)

I am committed to working through the programme

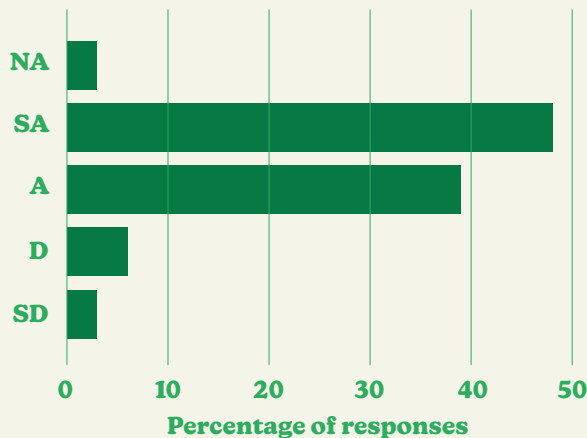


Figure 9: Percentage responses committed to the programme

While the majority were committed to completing the programme, it appears no one worked through 30 sessions in 30 days. While this is the promotional proposition to gain attention and encourage men to engage in innerBoy, the reality is much different. Tāne engage with and complete sessions at different rates, and this should be acknowledged so men don't feel they are failing if they take longer.

“I have learned that doing 30 days innerBoy could take up to three months, even longer.” (Survey response)

The reasons why men start and stop their engagement are varied. Responses indicated that some men need to pause as they work through difficult issues in order to take time, reflect and recover. The app tackles some difficult topics, and some men may need more time and further learning in order to work through a particularly challenging session. Having the ability to dive deeper and spend longer, having sessions that branch from the original module was suggested.

Working through trauma that has been resurfaced was discussed by both interviewees and survey participants. This process may take longer as they are currently unable to connect to on-demand support. Others engage when they are going through a bad time, then stop when they feel they are back on track. At times, men revisit sessions completed earlier.

“I did have to repeat some days to get the full benefit from them, especially the forgiveness one, as I have multiple people to forgive.” (Survey response)

Post-engagement

Fifty-six percent of survey respondents had not engaged in any previous work to address their trauma. There is an opportunity to ensure these tāne are supported to continue their healing journey whether or not they complete the 30 sessions.

“It would be great to have some guidance on what to do after the app - even if it's just a checklist of things from the app to continue doing.” (Survey response)

“Local service directory of services that specialise working with tāne Māori/Pasifika.” (Survey response)

Relapse is a common and expected part of the process of personal change, as described by Prochaska and DiClemente's transtheoretical model (TTM). This

model outlines how individuals move through stages of change—precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and sometimes termination—in a cyclical rather than linear fashion, often experiencing setbacks along the way (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984; Boston University, n.d.). Relapse should be viewed not as a failure but as an opportunity to learn and adjust strategies for future attempts at change (DiClemente & Crisafulli, 2023).

For men healing from trauma, particularly those dealing with drug and alcohol use or domestic violence, several supports can help reduce the frequency and severity of relapse. These include trauma-informed interventions, peer support groups, individual counselling, and comprehensive addiction services that address both

the psychological and behavioural aspects of addiction (Men and Trauma New Zealand, n.d.; Healthify, n.d.). Such supports can provide the necessary tools, whanaungatanga and community to foster resilience and sustained recovery. There is an opportunity and responsibility to link men to these supports as they either drop off or complete the app.

While ideally, men would progress through all 30 sessions, building on their learning in a deliberate fashion as the app is designed, an important change is experienced by men very early on in their journey through the app. Analysis of survey and interview data indicates there are three main factors affecting men's ability to complete all 30 sessions.

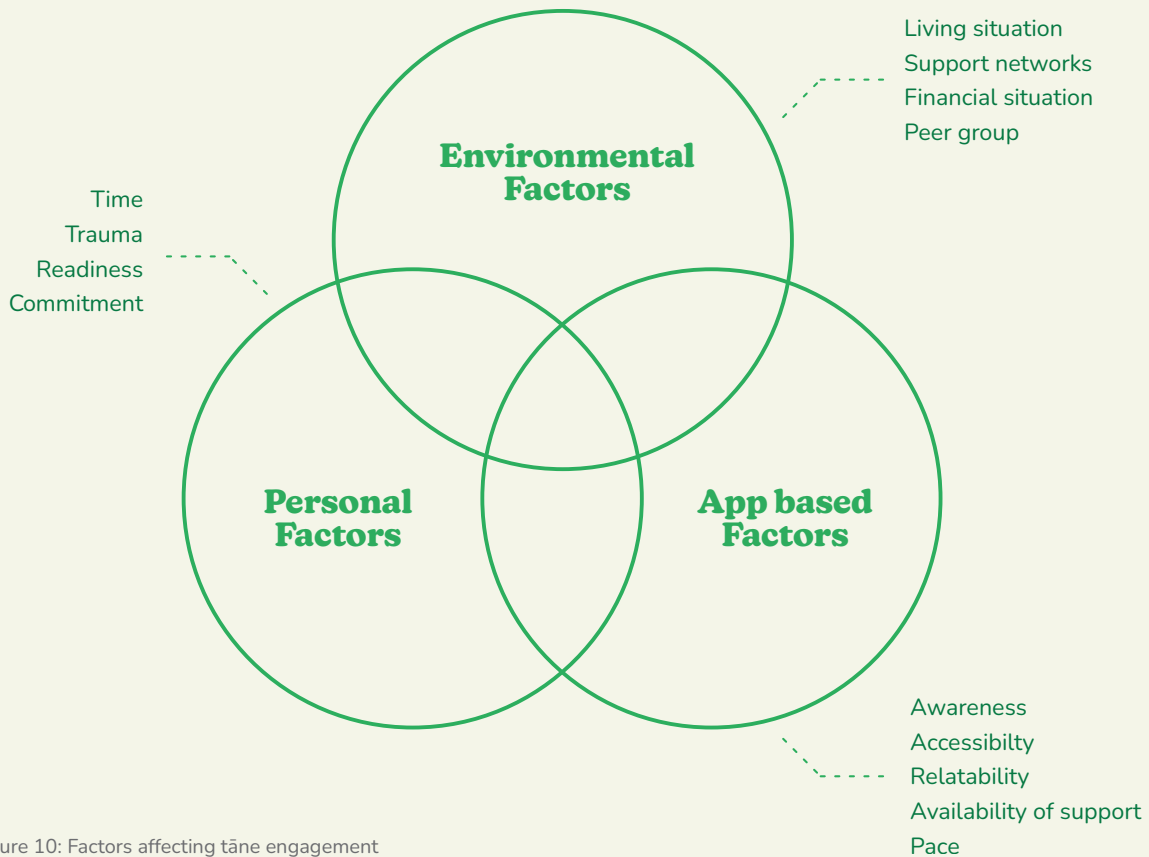


Figure 10: Factors affecting tāne engagement

Personal Factors such as time, the participants' level of trauma and their personal readiness and commitment to change all play a part in the likelihood of the tāne completing innerBoy. The ability to start, pause and restart is viewed positively, as is the ability to redo sessions already completed. The participants' personal circumstances, and how well they are coping at any one time influence their commitment. When relationships are going well, they may pause; and then revisit or restart when they feel they need to get back on track. Whānau

responsibilities, work, and health issues all take time, and participants spoke about their desire to continue but acknowledged the difficulty posed by these competing demands. Several participants believed they would re-engage more quickly if they were sent a reminder notification. Managing trauma resurfaced by engaging with the sessions was commonly identified as a tension and is a risk for the men themselves and those around them. The need for support as they progress through the app is discussed further in the following section.

App Based Factors are areas within the control of the design/funding team. Relatability is viewed positively. It is a primary driver that attracts tāne to the app and engages them with the content. Accessibility is also viewed positively, although the option to access sound-only options was suggested as this would decrease the data load and improve access for those without a Wi-Fi connection. Explicitly acknowledging the variable pace with which tāne might move through the app was suggested by several respondents. It appears no one works through 30 sessions in 30 days, and men would benefit by knowing this is acknowledged and is okay. Being able to go deeper, with sessions that branch from the current design was suggested. For example, some men may require more than one session to work through forgiveness, and being able to access further modules on a particular topic could be beneficial.

The most commonly mentioned barrier was a lack of immediately available support provided by a tāne

with lived experience who has been trained to connect with them and offer support in difficult times. Modules do resurface trauma that men have been avoiding or masking, often for extended periods of time.

Environmental Factors are largely outside the control of the app design team. These factors include having a safe, private space to access the app, and having the financial resources to have a device and a connection. It appears involvement in innerBoy and connection to the wider 'She is not your rehab' movement provides a support network of likeminded men who are working towards change. The creation of an online peer group is an important factor that attracts, engages and keeps men involved; particularly if they don't have this in their immediate vicinity.

The following section provides a brief overview of the evaluation of economic impact.



3.5 Evaluation of economic impact

Professor Paul Dalziel and Distinguished Professor Caroline Saunders prepared an economic evaluation of innerBoy's impact on wellbeing.

They reviewed 30 responses to the innerBoy survey conducted by Ihi Research. The method for estimating impact on wellbeing comes from the Stats New Zealand General Social Survey, which includes two key questions:

Question 1: Where zero is completely dissatisfied, and ten is completely satisfied, how do you feel about your life as a whole?

Question 2: Where zero is 'not at all satisfied', and ten is 'completely satisfied', how satisfied with your life do you expect to feel in five years' time?

The innerBoy survey began with a further question:

Before you started innerBoy, how satisfied were you with your life as a whole; where zero is 'not at all satisfied', and ten is 'completely satisfied'?

Average Score for Life Satisfaction

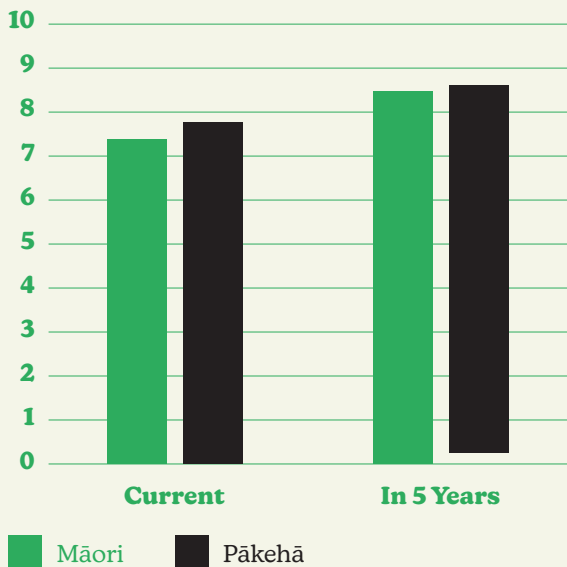


Figure 11: Average New Zealand scores for life satisfaction

Figure 11 presents results from the 2021 General Social Survey. The pattern of lower current life satisfaction reported by Māori is common, as is the pattern of satisfaction expected to be higher in five years.

Average Score for Life Satisfaction

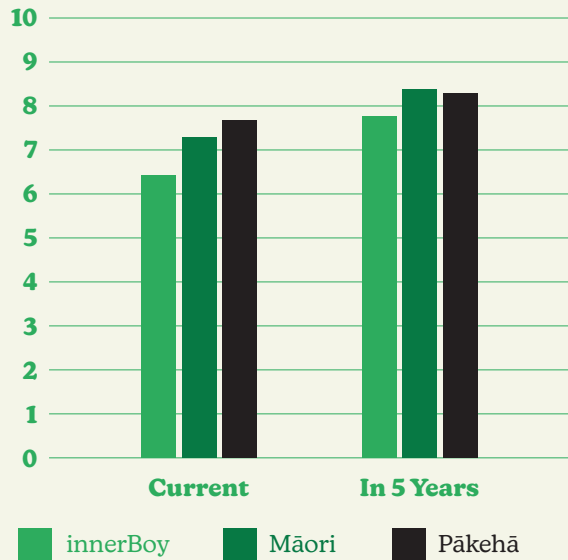


Figure 12: Life satisfaction results from the Stats NZ General Social Survey compared to innerBoy.

For the innerBoy survey, the pattern of higher expected satisfaction in five years is repeated.

Current and expected levels of satisfaction are lower than for the general population.

Average Score for Life Satisfaction

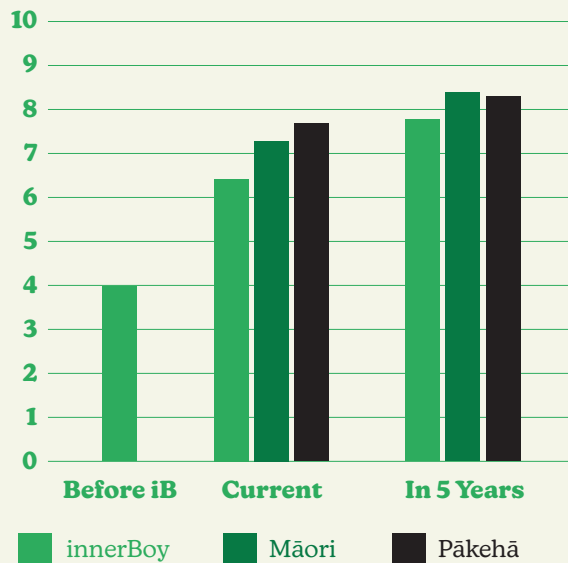


Figure 13: Life satisfaction plus level before innerBoy.

The average level of life satisfaction before they started innerBoy given by the participants in the survey was 4.0. This is very low compared to current average life satisfaction, recorded as 6.4.

Average Score for Life Satisfaction Before innerBoy

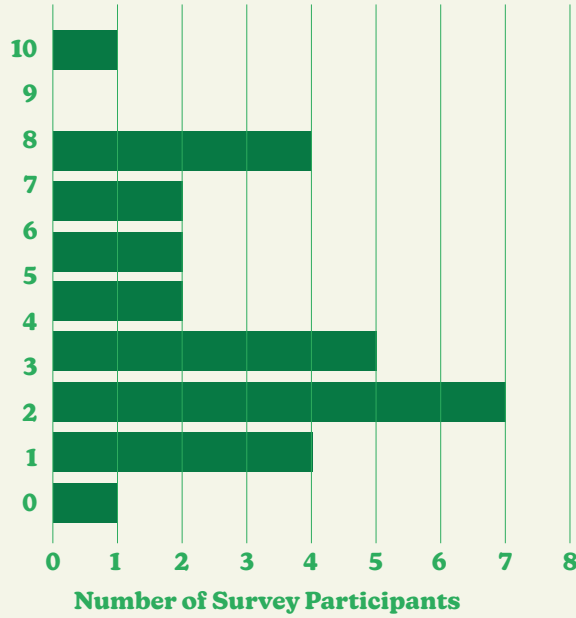


Figure 14: Life satisfaction before innerBoy

More than half of the men remembered their life satisfaction before innerBoy as being 0, 1, 2 or 3 (out of a maximum of 10). The low values are reinforced by quotes from the interviews:

“I got to the point where I just had enough. I needed to heal. I had enough of doing jail.

I watched a documentary in jail on my trauma, Yeah, I watched that Centrepont documentary and just had enough. I also got my boy in the house. I had a grandkid at the same time. My father passed away. I had come to a crossroad where something needed to happen.” (Zahn, case study interview)

Differences in Life Satisfaction Before and After innerBoy

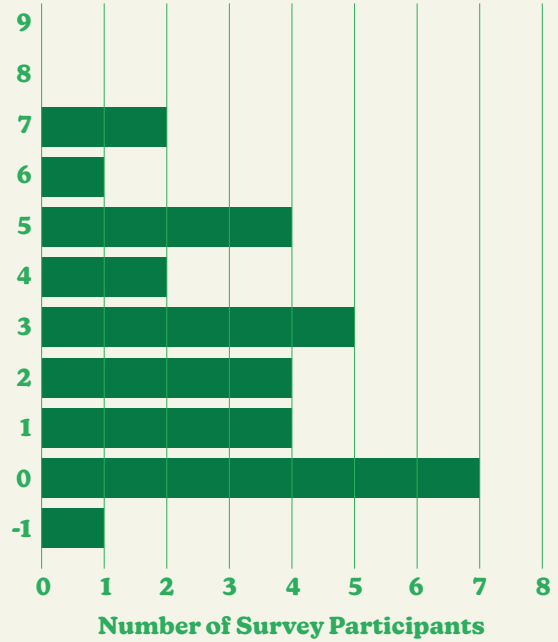


Figure 15: Differences in life satisfaction after innerBoy.

Eight men out of 30 felt no improvement in life satisfaction after starting inner Boy. Another eight reported an increase of one or two steps on the scale. The other 14 felt their current wellbeing was three or more steps higher, which is a lot.

Nearly three-quarters of the men who answered the survey thought their life satisfaction improved after they started innerBoy. The Treasury has guidelines on how to put an economic value on items such as higher life satisfaction (<https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/guide/cbax-tool-user-guidance>). Taking their lowest value, Treasury indicates that the economic value of a one-step increase in life satisfaction is \$6,714 per annum (CBAX model, December 2023).

Increase in Life Satisfaction Based on Survey Averages

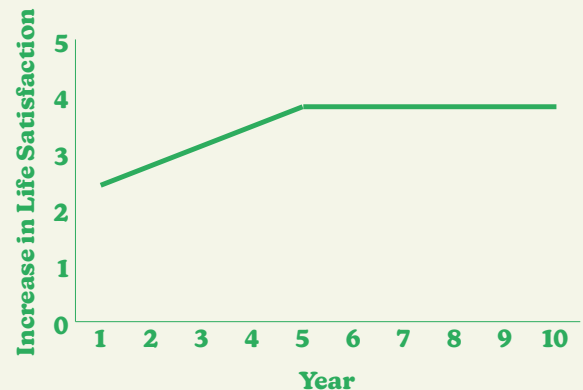


Figure 16: Increased life satisfaction over ten years.

Figure 16 shows how survey data was used to construct a model of changed life satisfaction over 10 years. It begins in year 1 with the average increase in the survey of 2.4. This grows to reach the expected increase after 5 years of 3.8.

Economic impact

In summary, the survey reported that average life satisfaction increased, which has economic value.

This economic value can be calculated for each year by multiplying the increase by \$6,714 (the most conservative of the estimates of economic value suggested by the Treasury). The final step is to add up the economic values using a discount rate of 5 per cent per annum (again based on Treasury recommendations) to calculate what is called the net present value of the impact.

The net present value of the average impact on life satisfaction for each person who participated in the survey is \$175,667. If we multiply this value per person by the number of persons who participated in the survey, the total economic value to these 30 men is \$5.3 million.

If we multiply the value of \$175,667 per person by the number of men who are members of the Facebook innerBoy closed group, the total economic value to these 257 men is \$45.1 million.

If we multiply the value of \$175,667 per person by the number of men who were actively using the innerBoy app in May 2024, the total economic value to these 1,100 men is \$193.2 million.

This is probably overstated, since it is plausible that the men who benefited the most from innerBoy were more likely to answer the survey. Balancing that, however, the analysis uses Treasury's lowest estimate for the economic value on increased life satisfaction.

Professor Dalziel and Distinguished Professor Saunders note the numbers in this analysis are consistent with life-saving work. The New Zealand Treasury's midpoint estimate of the economic value of a life saved is \$12.5 million.

The analysis focuses on the life satisfactions impact of the men who participate in innerBoy. As the programme continues to develop, it may be possible to evaluate the impact on statistics such as family violence offences.



04

Discussion

Family violence is a pervasive issue in New Zealand, with significant social and economic impacts on individuals and communities. Despite its prevalence, there has historically been a reluctance to discuss or acknowledge family violence, which has exacerbated its effects and hindered efforts to address it effectively.

Increasing discussions about family violence is crucial for raising awareness, reducing stigma, and promoting effective interventions. Nearly half of all homicides and reported violent crimes in the country are family violence-related, with police responding to a family violence incident every four minutes (New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2021).

The historical reluctance to talk about family violence in New Zealand has had several negative consequences. Firstly, it has allowed the issue to remain hidden, enabling perpetrators to continue their abusive behaviours unchecked. This culture of silence has been particularly pronounced in Pacific communities, where there is a strong emphasis on family honour and avoiding shame (Malatest International, 2021). Consequently, victims often do not seek help, and the cycle of abuse continues. The lack of open discussion has perpetuated misconceptions about family violence, such as the belief that it only involves physical abuse. Many families are unaware that emotional, psychological, and financial abuses are also forms of family violence (Carswell, 2021). This limited understanding hampers efforts to identify and address all forms of abuse.

The pervasive impact of family violence

Family violence has a significant social and economic impact on New Zealand. According to a report commissioned by the Glenn Inquiry, the economic cost of child abuse and intimate partner violence in New Zealand is estimated to be between \$4.1 to \$7 billion per year (Kahui & Snively, 2014). This figure includes direct costs such as healthcare, social services, and justice system expenses, as well as indirect costs like lost productivity and long-term effects on victims.

The social impacts are equally severe. A study by the Ministry of Social Development found that family violence affects people's psychological, emotional, and physical wellbeing, often resulting in injury or death (Snively, 1994). Between 1988 and 1993, 40% of all homicides in New Zealand resulted from domestic disputes (Snively, 1994). More recent data shows that nearly half of all homicides and reported violent crimes are related to family violence (Good Shepherd NZ, n.d.).

Family violence also has long-lasting effects on children. Research indicates that children who witness family violence are at higher risk of developing behavioural problems and experiencing mental health issues later in life (Paterson et al., 2008). This can lead to intergenerational cycles of violence and associated social and economic costs.

The impact extends to the workplace. Family violence costs New Zealand employers at least \$368 million annually due to decreased productivity, absenteeism, and other related issues (Good Shepherd NZ, n.d.). Furthermore, 19% of women who experienced family violence over a one-year period reported that the abuse continued at work (ibid). In terms of prevalence, it is estimated that one in three New Zealand women experience physical or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime, increasing to one in two when psychological abuse is included (Good Shepherd NZ, n.d.). This high prevalence rate contributes to the significant social and economic costs borne by individuals, families, and society as a whole.

Evidence from this evaluation indicates the innerBoy app has the potential to reduce the impact of violence and cost to society in several ways. The app is free and accessible for those who may not be able to afford to access costly therapeutic services, the app has significant reach into communities that may not be able to access support (e.g. rural and socio-economically deprived areas). The app currently has over 1,100 active users and has had 20,000 site visits. Even with the additional support mechanisms recommended in this evaluation, the app is a very cost-effective way of providing a healing service to men. With marketing the app could achieve further reach. The potential value is significant for Māori and Pacific men who face challenges in accessing culturally congruent trauma counselling and support, which are crucial for reducing rates of family violence.

The potential contribution to impacting trauma by the State

The release of Whanaketia: Ka Mōhaka Kahore (Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2024) highlights the intergenerational impact of trauma suffered by survivors of State Care and the detrimental impact this has had for whānau, iwi and communities. It is apparent from the data that innerBoy and the work of Matt Brown resonates with many of the tāne who experienced abuse in care. As Matt explains, innerBoy was designed for those who carry the trauma of State Care abuse.

"In my personal experience of accompanying many men who grew up in State Care and experienced horrific abuse, innerBoy speaks volumes to men who have journeyed through the challenges of being institutionalised and abused, simply by acknowledging the deep scars and trauma that often accompany such experiences. This platform is designed to offer insight of how to accept the unique struggles these individuals face and offers

a compassionate space for healing and growth. By providing support and a sense of community, the innerBoy app helps these men reclaim their narratives, fostering resilience and empowering them to transform their past adversities into a force for positive change in their personal lives, and for those around them, like their partners and children.” (Matt Brown)

Whanaketia includes 137 recommendations, in particular recommendation 115 states that, “The government should prioritise and invest in work to support contemporary approaches to the delivery of care and support, including devolution, social investment and whānau-centered and community-led approaches, such as Enabling Good Lives and Whānau Ora, and avoid the State-led models that contributed to historical abuse and neglect in care.” (Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2024).

Findings from this evaluation indicate that innerBoy is one such social investment, that has the potential to engage with survivors of State Care abuse and their whānau, in a way that is culturally located, safe and accessible.

Positioning innerBoy

innerBoy provides a culturally congruent, free, innovative intervention available anytime, anywhere. It provides a narrative-based, storied relationship between the user and Matt Brown. This approach aligns with Māori and Pasifika preferences for pūrākau and talanoa-based engagement.

Pūrākau (storying) can be used to explore clients' narratives and experiences in ways that align with Māori cultural values and ways of knowing. The use of pūrākau allows for the incorporation of Māori cultural practices and concepts. For instance, it enables the integration of whakawhanaungatanga and mātauranga Māori into the healing alliance formed between the participant and Matt Brown. This approach helps create a culturally safe environment for Māori clients, potentially increasing engagement and enhancing the likelihood healing will occur.

In addition, pūrākau methodology offers a decolonising approach to counselling. It challenges the dominance of Western therapeutic models and provides a way to centre Māori perspectives and experiences (Lee, 2009). This is particularly important given the historical marginalisation of Māori knowledge and practices in mental health services, and the reframing of Māori masculinity that occurred through colonisation (Leonard et al., 2022; Leonard et al., 2020).

Similarly, talanoa holds significant importance in Pasifika contexts. Talanoa is a culturally appropriate research and counselling methodology that emphasises the importance of conversation and relationship-building in Pacific cultures (Vaioloti, 2006). It is described as a "personal encounter where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations" (ibid, p. 21).

In counselling settings, talanoa allows for a more holistic and culturally congruent approach to understanding clients' experiences. It recognises the importance of relationships, cultural context, and storytelling in Pacific cultures (Leonard et al., 2022). Ioane and Lambie (2016) highlight that talanoa is crucial for effective engagement with Pasifika youth and families, going beyond Western clinical assessment and engagement skills.

The use of talanoa aligns with Pacific worldviews and values, and allows the user to create time and space, the vā, which is crucial for successful outcomes in Pacific contexts (Ioane & Lambie, 2016; Leonard et al., 2022). By employing talanoa, innerBoy creates a space that respects and incorporates Pacific cultural values, potentially leading to more effective therapeutic relationships and outcomes.

Table 1 illustrates how innerBoy addresses barriers commonly understood to hinder Māori and Pacific men from accessing a range of health services, including counselling.



Barriers	Research demonstrates	Evaluation findings
Systemic Barriers	<p>Systemic barriers include the lack of culturally appropriate care models and the underrepresentation of Māori and Pasifika professionals in mental health services. Research indicates that mainstream mental health services often fail to incorporate Māori and Pasifika worldviews, which can lead to a lack of trust and engagement from these communities (Pihama et al., 2017). The dominance of Western therapeutic models, which emphasise individualism, contrasts sharply with the collective and relational worldviews of Māori and Pasifika cultures (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2015; Leonard et al., 2022).</p>	<p>It is evident through interviews and social media engagement that Matt Brown and innerBoy connect with tāne who might be considered 'hard to reach' by health, social and counselling services. Many are survivors of State Care or their sons, are current or former gang members and/or have been incarcerated. Findings from Whanaketia (2024)² would suggest the State has a responsibility to invest in more Indigenous healing approaches; particularly those that resonate with these tāne. The online, anytime, anywhere nature of innerBoy means it has the potential to be widespread, providing support in remote, rural areas where support is currently limited. Its effectiveness could be further enhanced with more support (e.g. the provision of phone-based support and connection to locally available support services).</p>
Cultural Barriers	<p>Cultural misunderstandings and a lack of cultural competence among healthcare providers further exacerbate these barriers. Māori and Pasifika men may experience discrimination and racism within the healthcare system, which can deter them from seeking help (Nōku te Ao, 2024). Additionally, the stigma associated with mental health issues and the fear of being misunderstood or judged can prevent these men from accessing necessary services (Ataera-Minster & Trowland, 2018).</p>	<p>innerBoy is grounded in te ao Māori and Pasifika worldviews. Matt Brown's vulnerability provides a safe space for men to be vulnerable themselves. They are able to be vulnerable alone in the first instance. This is an important first step towards healing.</p>
Socio-Economic Barriers	<p>Socio-economic factors also play a significant role. Māori and Pasifika populations are disproportionately affected by poverty, which limits their access to healthcare services, including mental health support (Te Puna Aonui, n.d.). Financial constraints, coupled with the high cost of private counselling services, make it difficult for many to afford the help they need (Kapeli, 2020).</p>	<p>The free, online nature of innerBoy removes barriers posed by costs associated with counselling fees, location, transportation, and the requirements of employers.</p>

Table 1: Addressing common barriers

² i) Māori survivors, including tangata turi Māori, tangata kāpō Māori, whānau hauā Māori, tāngata whaikaha Māori and tangata whaiaora Māori often experienced disconnection and isolation from their whānau, hapū, iwi and whenua, and their ability to access and participate in te ao Māori. This disconnected them from their tūrangawaewae, causing many to feel a deep sense of whakamā and isolation. This disconnection and the ongoing impacts of colonisation and urbanisation compounded the impacts of the abuse and neglect they suffered. These impacts were felt intergenerationally, particularly by survivors' children and grandchildren, and collectively by hapū and iwi. p) Pacific survivors often experienced a loss of connection to their kainga, culture, language and cultural identity. This breached the vā, resulting in trauma that has been carried from generation to generation. (<https://www.abuseincare.org.nz/reports/whanaketia/part-5/chapter-7-impacts/>)

When considering the success of innerBoy it is important to keep in mind it was designed and developed as a support men could access when they could not or would not access other supports. It is not a replacement for culturally appropriate, face-to-face services, nor is it intended as a 30-step pathway to complete healing.

or he's more gentle. He's learned to walk away from a heated argument, and he's learned how to respond better.” (Matt Brown)

Defining success

“There are so many facets to success. For me, a guy, just logging into innerBoy is successful. Because I see that as a guy booking an appointment for a therapist, like, hey, you've done one step. Success looks like a guy who knows something... He knows a bit more, just a bit more,

Ki te ao mārama

In a 2020 evaluation of a series of barber wānanga, Figure 17, The MFB Process Model (Leonard et al., 2020) illustrated the process tāne described as they worked through their change journey. It was evident in that 2020 evaluation and in a 2022 evaluation of the ‘She is not your rehab’ Indigenous healing approach, that for many men, the initial step to ‘connection’ is fraught, frightening and can take many years.

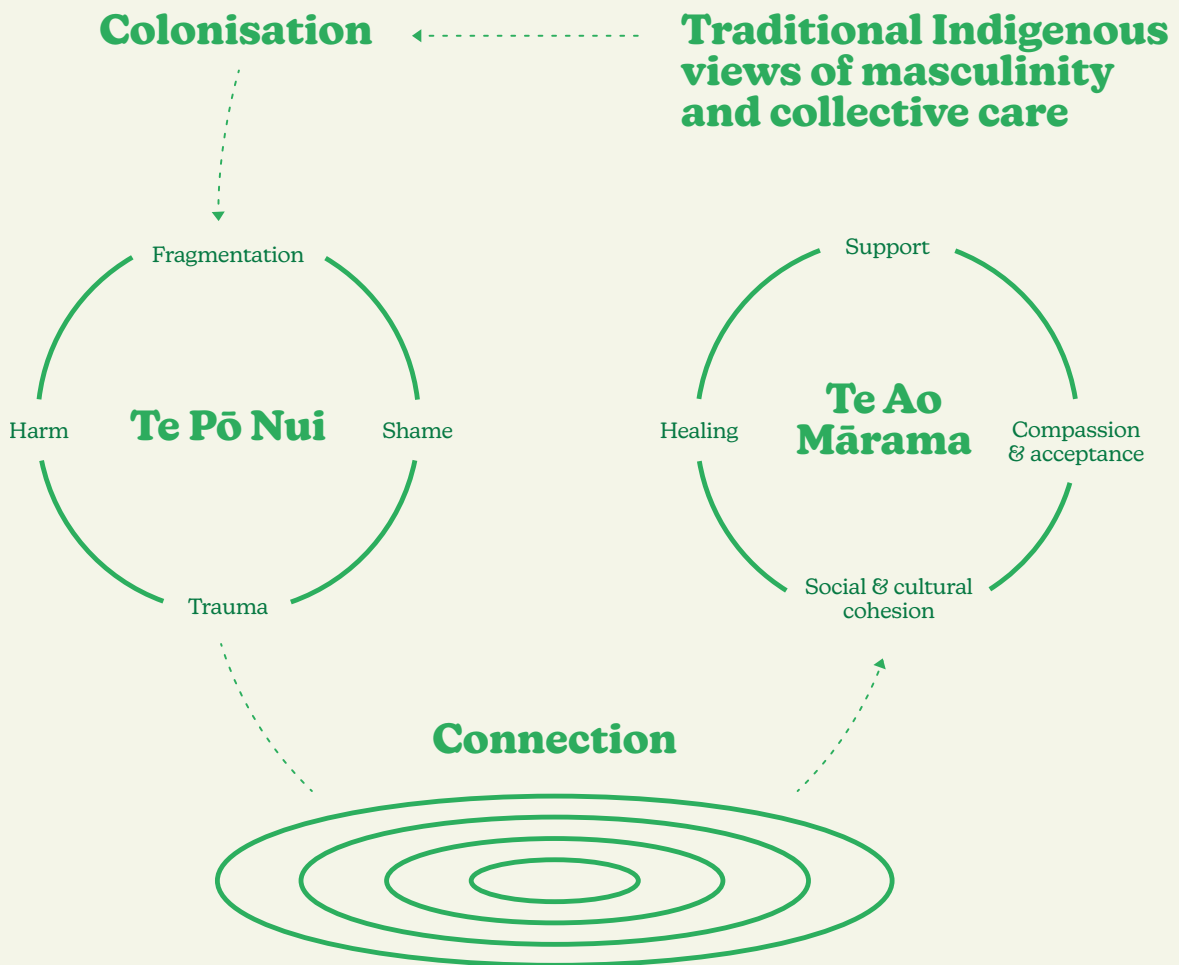


Figure 17: The MFB Process Model.

There are many reasons why the step to connection is difficult. Tāne interviewed commonly pointed to their experiences of trauma, of wearing 'a mask' to cover their feelings of shame, and how showing vulnerability had been considered a weakness – until the work of Matt Brown enabled them to see strength and mana in vulnerability.

"In the app it says, 'Take that mask off. You don't need to be the tough guy. It's okay to cry. It's the most healthy thing for a human being to do is cry. Really feel'." (Interview participant)

The innerBoy app leverages off Matt Brown's rare ability to connect with men who have found connection challenging in the past. This connection enables them to enter into a healing alliance with Matt through the app.

The success of the app should not be judged solely by completion rates. Completing one day may be an important achievement for some men as completing one day requires movement from 'Te Pō Nui' to 'Connection' and into 'Te Ao Mārama'. As discussed earlier, survey data indicates that innerBoy is the first step in a healing journey for many of the men who participate. Fifty-six percent of survey participants reported this was their first foray into healing from their trauma.

Spreading influence

All interviewed tāne spoke about their learning and how their change had sparked conversations with friends and whānau. This is consistent with the Influencer Framework (Fig. 18) that described how men moved from being recipients of support (teina) to supporting others (tuakana). The importance of creating a cohort of men across Aotearoa who are talking about healing from trauma, encouraging and modelling vulnerability, and providing space for safe conversations with their peers should not be underestimated.

"I pick through, I read, and I do it, and my flatmates also know about it, so we talk about it every now and then. I'm not really ashamed to talk about it, to talk about ... I'm even very open about it, I post about it on Instagram all the time." (Interview participant)

Helping others can be empowering for men who have experienced trauma. It can reinforce their own resilience and healing by turning their past pain into a source of strength and support for others. Matt has inspired many men to consider how they can use their own lived experiences to support others through their change journey. Some have taken on a 'rangatira' role in their own right.

"He was the first male to ever say I was amazing. Well, that one word, 'amazing', helped shape the life that I have now. And every man who I meet who is similar to me, I'll always make sure I tell them they're amazing and that they're beautiful and they can be whoever they want." (Interview participant)

With the correct support and training, a cohort of men who have completed innerBoy could form the backbone for a phone/chat support service. With the correct guidance, training, mentoring and supervision these men could fulfil a tuakana role for newcomers to the app, and provide a network of support at both teina and tuakana layers. This would provide teina with access to men with lived experience who understand their healing journey to help them overcome roadblocks as they progress through the app and develop a new rōpū of community change makers.

It is important to remember many of the men who access innerBoy have inflicted violence of various forms on those close to them, and are at risk of harming themselves or others. Providing immediate, accessible, and appropriate support to them as they work through traumatic memories and experiences recognises and takes steps to mitigate that risk.



"I've struggled with expressing vulnerability, partly due to the 'machismo' culture I grew up in. InnerBoy has been instrumental in changing that for me. It's helped me navigate my emotions and stress in healthier ways. It's comforting to know I'm not alone, and there are others who share similar struggles. Personally Matt has been a life saver."

Shane, 46



Figure 18: The Influencer Framework

Maintaining realistic expectations

This evaluation has found innerBoy is effective for the men who engage with it, even after a small number of sessions. This is particularly true for men who are limited by their economic resources, unable to access face-to-face or group counselling or are otherwise unable to participate in culturally congruent interventions. The online app appears to have filled a gap for many men who want to engage in a healing journey but do not have access, resource, and/or time.

The literature considered some of the disadvantages in utilising online and mobile phone therapeutic platforms such as innerBoy in terms of data sovereignty; mental health impacts of mobile phone overuse; data and technology inequities for some populations; and a lack of one-on-one connection.

Alternatively, the literature also acknowledged the potential benefits of mobile mental health apps in meeting whānau where they are (at any time of the day); the high uptake of smartphones and app usage; and utilising a platform that is comfortable for people (particularly younger people) to use.

The app was developed to fill a gap in service and has achieved this in some way. It should not be seen as the 'only' healing tool or an inoculation to heal trauma but rather considered a part of a range of tools that are available for tāne who want to heal. Given this, the app could expand influence by connecting tāne to services at the end of the course as suggested, including access to an up-to-date directory of support services and 0800 phone or chat support could enhance effectiveness.

innerBoy is effective for the men who engage with it, even at a very early stage. One of the key features of the innerBoy app is its emphasis on emotional regulation. Users are encouraged to explore their feelings and understand the root causes of their anger and violent behaviour. This approach aligns with trauma-informed care principles, which focus on understanding the impact of trauma on behaviour and providing tools for healing (Morrison & Davenne, 2016).

By addressing these deep-seated issues, the app helps men develop healthier coping mechanisms, understand their triggers and learn new strategies, reducing the likelihood of future violence. Testimonials from users highlight the app's positive impact on their lives, with many reporting improved relationships and a better understanding of their emotions (RNZ, 2023). These personal stories underscore the app's potential to contribute to broader efforts to reduce family violence in New Zealand.



"In a culture where academic and professional achievements often overshadow personal well-being, InnerBoy has offered me a safe haven to focus on my mental health. The app's approach to dealing with pressure and expectations has been eye-opening, I've learned to set healthier boundaries and prioritize my emotional health, which has surprisingly improved my performance in other areas of life."

Reuben, 25

Summary of Key Findings

The innerBoy site had 36,000 requests in the first hour and over 20,000 site visits since its inception. There are approximately 1,100 active users each month. An analysis of survey, social media and interview participant data indicates the app is being accessed by men from a wide range of ethnicities.

innerBoy is the first point of support for many of the men who access it. Engaging with innerBoy represents a significant shift for these participants. Seeking help represents an interest in shifting from a cycle of fragmentation, trauma, shame, and harm to connection and healing. This readiness can be many years in the making and is an important step. Many men discussed the societal and cultural shame associated with their actions, their trauma and help-seeking.

Matt Brown connects with a range of men who might not otherwise engage with non-court mandated counselling and support services. This group includes survivors of State Care and their children, past and current gang members and their associates, and men who have been incarcerated.

Matt Brown's personal journey of healing and recovery serves as a powerful role model for users of innerBoy, demonstrating that overcoming trauma and leading a fulfilling life is possible. His lived experience narrative is a crucial component of the app's success, lending authenticity and credibility to his message. Matt is viewed as a person with mana because of the work he has done to heal himself. Men believe they are increasing their own mana by engaging in healing work.

The majority of men using innerBoy can relate to Matt's experiences, even if their own stories differ. They respect his message about breaking cycles of trauma and aspire to emulate his example as a partner and father. Many are passionate about sharing their story to help others.

innerBoy creates a sense of community, even as users work through the app individually. Matt's integral role in innerBoy's success extends beyond his personal story; his voice, persona, and ability to connect with participants make the app more accessible and engaging. The combination of Matt's inviting presence, message of hope, and the app's thoughtful design (including voice pacing, colours, and overall feel) creates an environment conducive to healing and personal growth for the men who use it.

The anytime, anywhere nature of an online tool suits the majority of participants. This flexibility was beneficial for all interviewees and 81 percent of survey respondents. The flexibility of the app and ability to re-engage without judgement if they disengage was valued. Feedback regarding journaling was varied. Retaining journaling online has implications for data sovereignty.

All the men interviewed could discuss the strategies they learned through the app and how they applied

them in their daily lives. Men have learnt new strategies for dealing with their emotions; the strategies are valued and legitimised by Matt as he demonstrates how he applies them in his own life.

Survey respondents reported positive outcomes even after accessing a low number of sessions (<5). This is especially valuable for men with limited economic resources, those unable to access face-to-face or group counselling, or those who cannot participate in culturally congruent interventions. The online platform appears to have filled a gap for many men who want to embark on a healing journey but lack access, resources, or time.

innerBoy was not designed to replace culturally appropriate, face-to-face services, nor is it intended as a 30-step pathway to complete healing. The success of the app should not be judged solely by completion rates; there are a number of environmental, personal and app-based factors that can enable participation. However, it fills a significant gap in service for men seeking healing support.

There are several ways the innerBoy app can increase reach and impact, this includes gaining engagement, maintaining engagement and post-engagement support. Several interview and survey respondents identified the need to talk to a support person when faced with difficult topics or trauma resurfaced by activities within the app. There is a risk of harm to themselves or others if they are unable to access immediate and appropriate support. Men value additional support networks created through the Facebook closed group, messaging Matt directly and through Instagram. They acknowledge the demand providing additional support places on Matt and recognise this is unsustainable as the app grows.

The innerBoy app has the potential to reduce the impact of violence and cost to society in several ways; it is a low-cost way to reach hard-to-reach communities. innerBoy is a social investment that has the potential to engage with survivors of State Care abuse and their whānau in a way that is culturally located, safe and accessible.

Evidence indicates that men who engage with innerBoy are likely to share their learnings with others, spreading the reach and influence of the app. Because Matt Brown has mana through owning his story and utilising it to help others; men want to emulate him. The men featured in the case studies wanted to be identified. They have moved past shame to a place of healing, compassion, acceptance and support. Consequently they want to own their stories and leverage their experiences to help others.

The value is significant for Māori and Pasifika men who face challenges in accessing culturally congruent trauma counselling and support. innerBoy should not be seen as the 'only' healing tool or an inoculation to heal trauma, but rather considered as one in a suite of tools available for tāne who want to engage in a healing journey.

The net present value of the average impact on life satisfaction for each person who participated in the survey is \$175,667. If we multiply this value per person by the number of persons who participated in the survey, the total economic value to these 30 men is \$5.3 million. If this value is extended to the 1,100 men actively engaged in innerBoy the economic value is \$193.32 million.



05

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Fund a public awareness campaign

Fund a concerted public awareness campaign to increase the public awareness of innerBoy. Lack of public awareness was the most often mentioned barrier to participation. Ideally this campaign should be targeted at men of all ages, in particular Māori and Pacific men who have suffered trauma (and their sons). The campaign could focus on the opportunity to move from pre-contemplation to contemplation to action (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984).

Recommendation 2: Invest in app developments and improvements

The following enhancements are recommended:

- 01 Tuakana training:** Identify and train a tuakana group to provide assistance to men as they progress through the app.
- 02 Support line:** Fund a support phone line/ and or chat capability staffed by the tuakana group.

03 Sub-modules: Create sub-modules that enable men to spend longer and go deeper on a particular topic if they need increased opportunities to work through a challenging subject.

04 Reminders and notifications: Build in a customisable reminder notification to encourage men to re-engage with the app.

05 Online services directory: Include a link to a services directory so men can connect to available services during and after their engagement with the app.

06 Sound-only options: Enable sound-only options to reduce the data demand associated with streaming video.

Recommendation 3: Address data sovereignty and improve security

Ensure adequate and transparent efforts are made to ensure data sovereignty and security requirements are met in regard to online journaling.



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Appendix A

Methodology

Ihi Research was contracted by the Ministry of Social Development to undertake exploratory knowledge-building research on 'innerBoy'.

The research sought to answer four main questions:

RQ1: Who is using innerBoy?

- Demographics, ethnicity, age, location, history/ experiences
- How did they access/find the app? (Online, social media, service-led etc.)
- What other interventions are they engaged in?

RQ2: In what ways (if any) does innerBoy impact on healing?

- Are men talking about healing from their own trauma?
- What brings men to innerBoy, what holds them and what helps them shift?
- Are men learning new strategies and applying them in their life?
- Can the app reduce the potential cost/burden of FH in Aotearoa?

RQ3: In what ways can the app be improved or developed further?

- What aspects of the app do tāne find most useful?
- What aspects could be improved?
- In what ways does the 'lived-experience narrative' support change (if at all)?
- In what ways did the wider social network³ support the healing journey?
- What else do tāne need or want in their journey to wellbeing?
- What are the enablers and barriers to participation (e.g., data/access etc.)?

The research was informed by Kaupapa Māori theory, talanoa and human-centred design approaches that employed a mana-enhancing approach. It leveraged the collective ideals, contributions, collaboration and inclusiveness of innerBoy.

We partnered with wellbeing economists Professor Paul Dalziel and Distinguished Professor Caroline Saunders in order to understand the potential economic impact of innerBoy.

Kaupapa Māori approach

Graham Smith's (1997) six intervention elements were an integral part of the Kaupapa Māori methods used to guide this work. These are:

- Tino rangatiratanga (the 'self-determination' principle).
- Taonga tuku iho (the 'cultural aspirations' principle).
- Ako Māori (the 'culturally preferred pedagogy' principle).
- Kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kainga (the 'socio-economic' mediation principle).
- Whānau (the extended family structure principle).
- Kaupapa (the 'collective philosophy' principle).

Kaupapa Māori is about recognising the strengths and aspirations of Māori along with Māori rights to self-determination. This approach means the mana of participants and their organisations will always be upheld, acknowledging they are the innovators who are challenging the status quo and bringing about social change. In addition, the following values were upheld:

- Inquiry and innovation controlled by Māori, for Māori facilitated by Māori and with Māori.
- The prioritisation of Māori in inquiry questions, methods, processes, and dissemination.
- It is not a prescribed set of methods but rather about how the inquiry should be framed.
- It focuses on generating solutions and aspirations from within Māori realities.
- It contains a notion of action and commitment to change and to Māori development.

³ Wider social network refers to the innerBoy tāne Facebook group and other SYNRR social media.

Talanoa

Talanoa is a storytelling approach, and a way to facilitate (Pacific Island) participant engagement in collaborative and meaningful innovation-based work that serves the needs of specific communities. It takes a strengths-based approach, rather than focusing on deficits, and is therefore compatible with culturally diverse community interests. Co-constructed approaches are critical to talanoa. This is consistent with the best evidence about community development and organisational change as it maintains an optimistic view of human capability that focuses on the strengths of the community rather than the individual. Talanoa is an approach utilised by different Pacific communities, but it is important to note that it differs in its approach depending on the cultural context and locations to which it is applied (Otunuku, 2011). We were mindful that Māori and Pacific peoples are culturally diverse and not homogenous, meaning that interventions are needed to uphold the mana of all involved.

Creativity-based research The process of co-designing with users

The practice of co-design allowed participants to become an active part of the creative development of the evaluation approach. It is grounded in the belief that all people are creative and that users, as experts of their own experiences, bring different points of view that inform evaluation design and innovation direction.

Co-design was utilised in all stages of the design process, but especially in the ideation or conceptual phases. We wanted to ensure that the developers of innerBoy could participate fully in knowledge development, concept development and the evaluation process. This ensured we were able to produce a sound evaluation, ensuring we understood:

- What their research goals and questions were.
- What has the intention of innerBoy been?
- What are their aspirations for the future?
- Who is the audience for the research?
- What has instigated and supported change?
- What is their influencer concept, and how do they see this working in their community?
- The best approaches to capture the stories.

Whanaungatanga

Relational trust is essential for stakeholder engagement and ensuring sustainable relationships within a research context. Ethical responsibilities were taken very seriously and ensured our relationships were a priority. Ihi researchers worked to an engagement framework that ensured we worked to agreed values and principles. These were:

- **Manaakitanga** – acting in a caring and supporting way.
- **Whanaungatanga** – respecting the bonds of Māoritanga and 'kinship'.
- **Rangatiratanga** – supporting and respecting each other's authority, intelligence and mana.
- **Paeheretanga** – creating and nurturing the linkages between each other for a common purpose.

The research approach was built around whanaungatanga and underpinned all our interactions with whānau. This value demanded that Ihi researchers were connected to, and built connections with, the diverse communities we worked in for the life cycle of this evaluation. Whanaungatanga ensured we captured, created, nurtured, grew and protected the mātauranga shared with us during this evaluation, not for our own benefit or gain, but for the benefit of whānau involved. Whanaungatanga demanded we engaged with whānau in a respectful way that was mana-enhancing, respectful of each individual and of collective mauri and whakapapa.

Methods

As identified earlier, this research was exploratory. Exploratory research is primarily used when researchers are seeking to have a greater understanding of a new or existing phenomenon to gain new insights into it. A mixed-methods approach was undertaken that utilised qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis through a two-phased approach involving semi-structured interviews, analysis of data analytics and surveys. The following figure explains the overall research process:

Phase 1 Qualitative processes

Phase 2 Quantitative process/Case study development

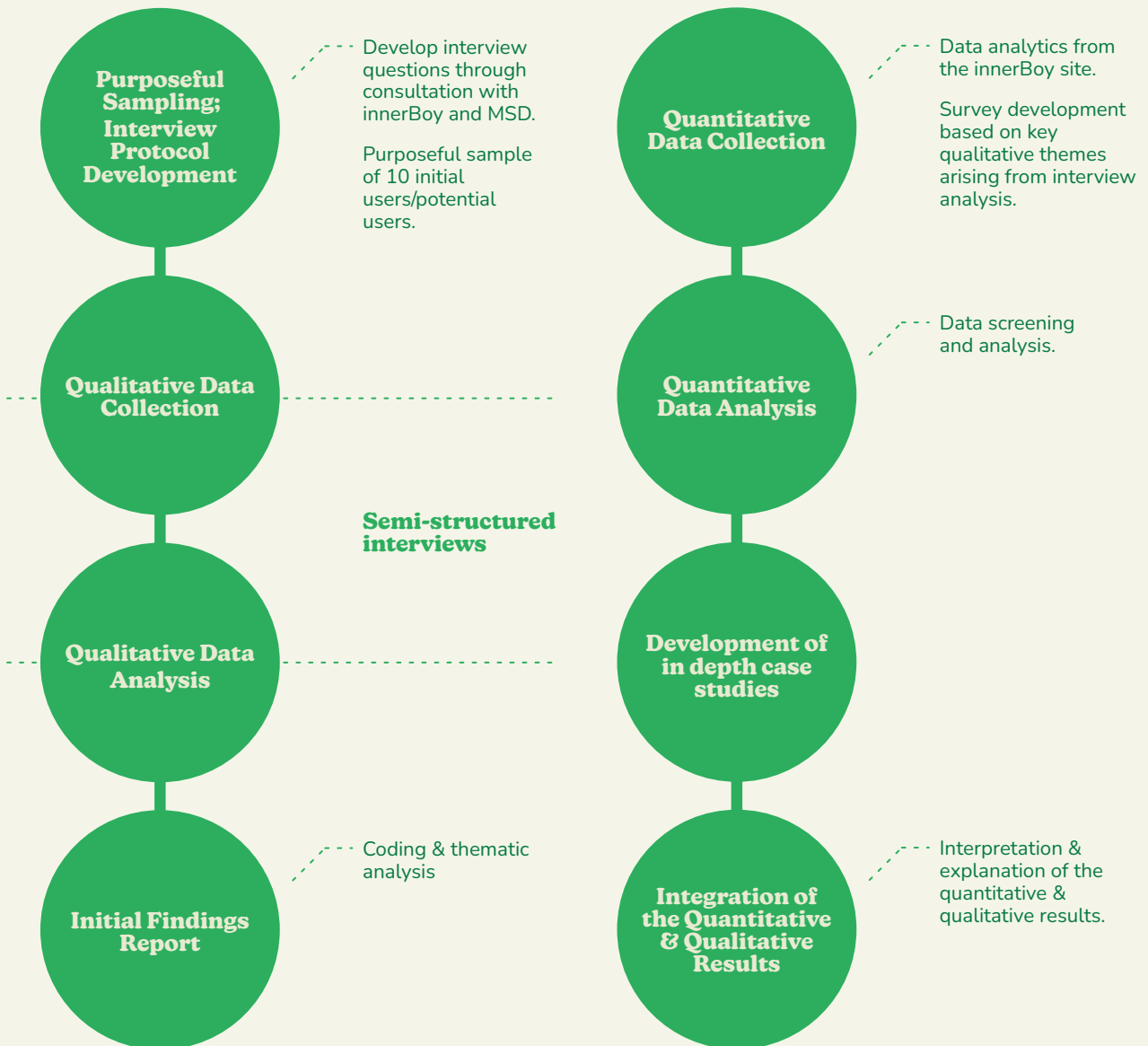


Figure 19. Explanation of the research process.

Participants and process

The research process involved different participants over time. Ten current or potential users of innerBoy and Matt Brown were interviewed. The main themes from qualitative data were identified inductively (Silverman, 1998). This meant categories were not imposed on the data but arrived out of data analysis to inform the overall evaluation. Results from the interview analysis were then used to design a short survey.

The purpose of the survey was to understand if the major themes arising from interview analysis were shared by other innerBoy users. The survey was distributed to the innerBoy mailing list and accompanied by an invitation from Matt Brown.

Data analytics from the innerBoy website were analysed for trends, drop-off points and other areas of interest.

Survey method

The online survey was set up in Qualtrics and open for completion from Sunday, June 23 to Monday, July 8. In total, 31 surveys were fully completed. Responding to the survey questions was voluntary, and respondents could skip answering any questions. Therefore, the total number of respondents per question may be variable.

Survey invitations were distributed by email, and reminders were sent via Mail Chimp, the innerBoy closed Facebook page and Instagram before the survey closing date.

The first section was designed to contribute to a Return on Investment analysis undertaken by Professor Paul Dalziel and Distinguished Professor Caroline Saunders. This section had five questions on a sliding scale of 1 – 10, and six questions with varied responses.

The second section was about men’s experience working through the app. This section had 19 questions utilising a Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree with a ‘Not applicable to me’ option. Men were also asked how far they had progressed through the app. Two qualitative items asked:

- 01** Can you tell us about your experience working through the app so far?
- 02** Is there anything you think should be added to the programme or that might make it a better experience?

The third was a demographic section to gain an indication of who responded to the survey and the demographic composition of the men utilising innerBoy.

As innerBoy collects no demographic information this is the only demographic data available. Demographic questions included: ethnicity, gender, age, location and relationship status.

The responses to the survey were kept strictly confidential. No IP addresses were collected, and all data was stored securely.

Survey demographics

There were 31 survey completions. Note: Two survey respondents were professionals working in men’s mental health/family violence. One had completed one session and the other five sessions.

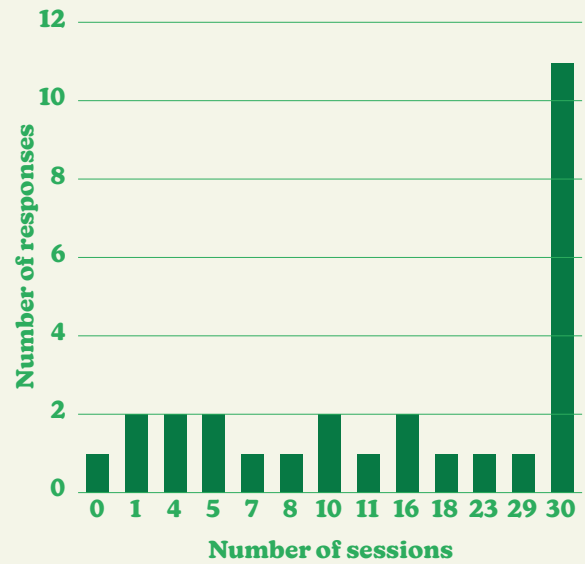
Ethnicity	%
Māori	43.90%
New Zealand European/Pākehā	34.15%
Samoan	2.44%
Cook Island Māori	2.44%
Tongan	2.44%
Niuean	2.44%
Other such as Dutch, Japanese, Tokelauan (please specify)	12%
Total	100%

Relationship status	%
In a relationship	48.39%
Single	41.94%
Prefer not to say	9.68%
Total	100%

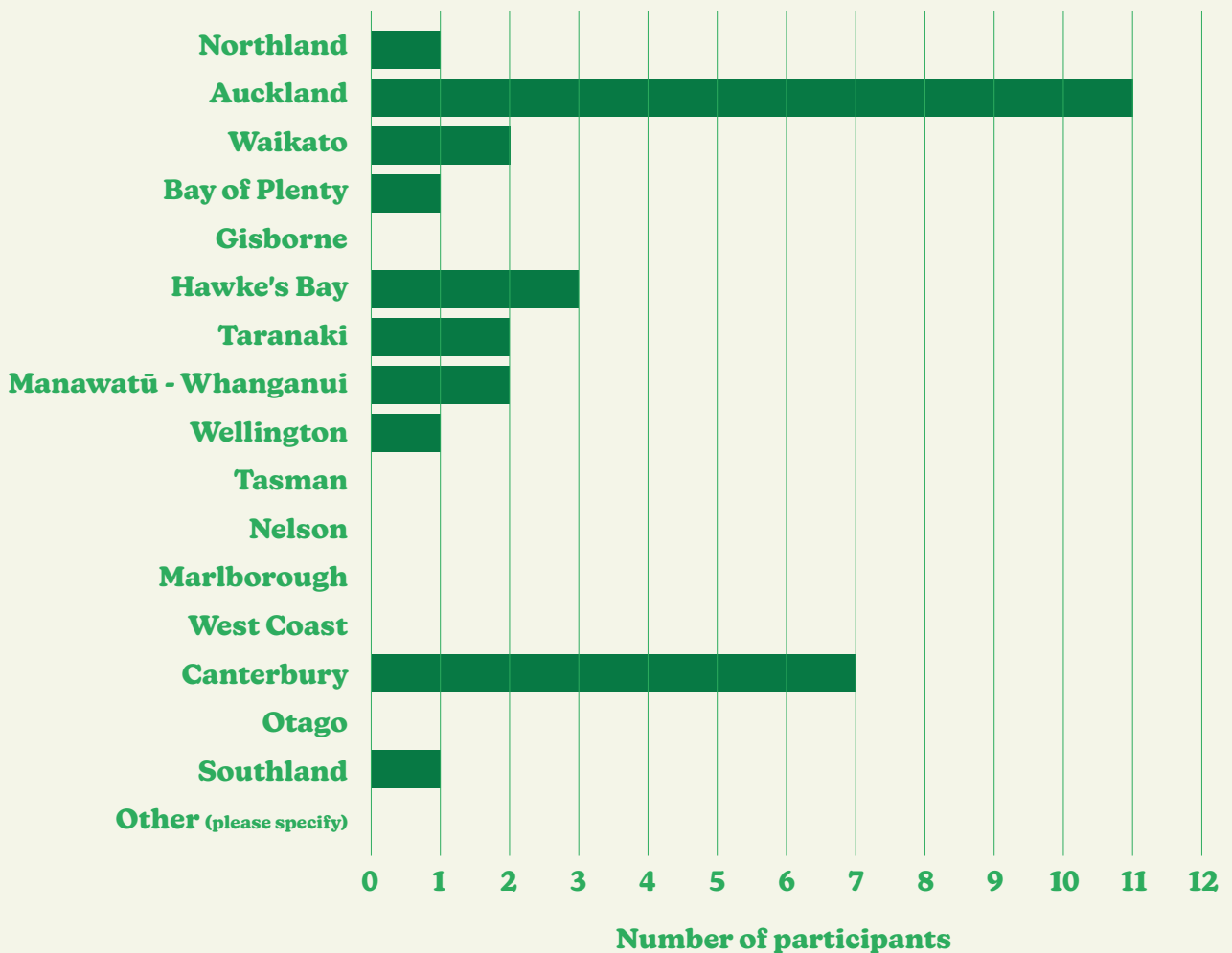
Gender	%
Male	87.10%
Female	3.23%
Non-binary/third gender	6.45%
Prefer not to say	3.23%
Total	100%

Age	%
Under 18	0.00%
18-24	0.00%
25-34	6.45%
35-44	48.39%
45-54	12.90%
55-64	22.58%
Over 65	9.68%
Total	100%

Right now, how far have you progressed through the app?



Location of survey participants



Limitations

This evaluation was impacted by the limited data available through the innerBoy app, as the app does not collect demographic data. Subscribers to the app do provide an email address but due to privacy these addresses were not provided to the research team. The innerBoy team sent out group emails offering the ability for users to participate in the research, but the research team did not have any direct contact.

The evaluation team was cognisant that the tāne accessing support through the app were likely to have experienced trauma of varying degrees. At times tāne initially indicated they were interested in being interviewed, only to later disengage. The team chose not to pursue interviews in these cases.

Research Activities

The research approach has been designed to answer the research questions and to minimise the load on participants. The research design will be sequential and is intended to be mixed-method, utilising data collected via the app and interview data from users.

Phase one – Formative

The purpose of phase one is to gain insight into the online approach to men's healing. This phase focuses on what we can learn about implementing the app and how new users can inform app improvements.

The research questions driving the first phase are:

RQ3: In what ways can the app be improved or developed further?

- What aspects of the app do tāne find most useful?
- What aspects could be improved?
- In what ways does the 'lived-experience narrative' support change (if at all)?
- In what ways did the wider social network⁴ support the healing journey?
- What else do tāne need or want in their journey to wellbeing?
- What are the enablers and barriers to participation (e.g., data/access etc.)?

Data Collection

Tracking app data

- We will work with the app developer to collect information directly from the app including:
- Collect demographic data via the app.
- Track points at which tāne engage or drop off the process.
- Develop ideas for collecting impact data in phase two.

Early user interviews

We will invite early users to participate in the first research data collection phase. The findings from this cohort will be considered phase one of data collection and will inform adaptations, future interviews, and a possible return on investment approach.

- Up to 12 interviews of early users of innerBoy – questions will be developed with MFB and MSD, exploratory in nature understanding the healing journey.
- Within these 12 interviews we may hold group interviews with users who are working through innerBoy as a group and/or several individual interviews.

The interviews will be held face-to-face, via Zoom or other online video platforms, or by phone, depending on the preference of the participants. These interviews will be analysed for shared themes and experiences, and case studies of healing stories will be developed to highlight how healing journeys and interactions with apps differ.

Key learnings from the phase one data will be identified.

The report will be produced at the end of January 2024, phase two will begin February 2024 and conclude July 2024.

Findings

A phase one report will be produced and a plan for phase two will be co-designed with MFB and MSD.

Phase two - Impact

This phase of the research will be co-designed at the conclusion of phase one to investigate the impact of online support for men's healing. Phase one insights will inform the second phase that will focus on answering research questions 1 and 2.

RQ1: Who is using innerBoy?

- Demographics, ethnicity, age, location, history/ experiences
- How did they access/find the app? (Online, social media, service-led etc.)
- What other interventions are they engaged in?
- RQ2: In what ways (if any) does innerBoy impact on healing?
- Are men talking about healing from their own trauma?
- What brings men to innerBoy, what holds them and what helps them shift?
- Are men learning new strategies and applying them in their life?
- Can the app reduce the potential cost/burden of FH in Aotearoa?

Data Collection

To be decided in co-design, likely to be mixed-method – app data, survey data and interviews.

Data collection plan will be decided in co-design.

Ethical considerations

Our researchers have professional and academic training in ethical procedures. We follow strict processes of informed consent which ensure the participants are clear about the purpose of the research and what will happen with the information they provide. A research and privacy statement will be included at all data collection points, including online surveys.

An information sheet for all interview participants will be designed in collaboration with SINYR and MSD. This will be discussed face-to-face and written/ verbal consent will be obtained by the researcher at the interview. The interviews will be digitally (either video or audio depending on the preference of the participant) recorded and transcribed. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement and will not share the information they receive.

All identifying information is removed from the transcripts and pseudonyms will be provided.⁵ All participants will be informed of their right to withdraw without explanation at any point in the research. Where case studies are created either via video or written – participants will view and agree on both the content and the use of the case studies.



⁵ Except in case studies where tāne asked to be identified.



Appendix B

Impact

(less than 5 sessions)

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	NA
An online approach works for me	0	1	3	0	0
The journaling has been helpful	0	1	1	2	0
The narratives in Matt Brown's videos have helped me	0	0	1	3	0
I have a better understanding of myself	0	0	1	3	0
I feel well supported	0	1	2	1	0
I know where to get further help if I need it	0	1	2	1	0
I have learnt new strategies to deal with my feelings	0	0	3	1	0
My relationships are improving	1	0	3	0	0
I am working towards healing some of the trauma I have experienced	0	0	3	1	0
I understand what triggers my negative responses	0	0	2	2	0
I am committed to working through the programme	0	0	3	1	0
I have felt emotionally drained at times	0	0	1	3	0
The content meets my needs	0	0	2	2	0
I have felt overwhelmed at times	0	0	1	2	1
I share what I have learnt with other men	0	0	0	4	0
I am happy with the progress I have made	0	1	3	0	0
I have found the programme rewarding	0	0	2	2	0
This is the first time I have engaged in work to address my trauma	1	0	2	1	0
I am less likely to respond aggressively to stressful situations	0	0	4	0	0

Table 2: Impact for survey respondents who had completed five or less sessions.



