

---

# INTERNATIONAL LAB SURVEY REPORT 2020/21

## LAB CYCLE OCT 2020 - JULY 2021 REPORT

### SUMMARY

*Three different theoretically framed assessment tools were used before, during and after the International Lab cycle 2020/2021 to track the development of the subjective level of distress and the trauma response ability of participants. The overall data suggests that the ability of participants to stay alert, awake and able to concentrate increases from before to during and after the lab participation. Similarly, the ability to respond to trauma also increases. Participants' reported level of fear in relation to respective trauma-related areas of the International Labs increase, indicating higher awareness, response flexibility and relational sensing.*

### AIM AND DESCRIPTION OF THE POCKET PROJECT SURVEY

The aim of the evaluation was to shed light on the psychological state (before, during and after) of participants in the International Labs of the Pocket Project that have been carried out to date. The purpose of the research was to better inform the work and development of the Pocket Project in its continuation, as a leading actor in expanding the new frontier of cultivating trauma-informed conversations and increasing our collective capacity to witness and begin to integrate individual, ancestral and collective trauma. This Report presents the main findings of the evaluation carried out on the overall research data drawn from the 23 International Labs of the Pocket Project from November 2020 to July 2021.

### INTERNATIONAL LABS, METHODOLOGY, AND EVALUATION DATA

Each Lab began with a specific practice, taught by Thomas Huebl and replicated by the facilitators, known as a "3-Sync" process. It is a brief guided meditation that allows participants to gain greater awareness of their physical, emotional and mental states in the moment. It effectively trains the mind to witness and recognize states of relaxation, tension, sensation or the lack of feeling (numbness) at the start of each Lab session. This cultivation of witnessing oneself is then extended to another

person as a co-regulation process ( I feel you feeling me) and finally extended to the entire group as a way to build group coherence and synchronization of the collective nervous system.

The data for this evaluation is drawn from three different samples of participants<sup>1</sup> who responded to the questionnaires administered before, during and after the lab, respectively. The findings are presented in percentages. Based on the knowledge and expertise of the Pocket Project research team, a set of theoretically informed evaluation tools were selected for analysing the data. The two primary tools used are the Subjective Units of Distress (SUD) scale and a first adapted prototype of a Trauma Response Index (TRI). Additionally, the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI) was used for contextualising the data.

Both the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory and the SUD scale were conducted before, during and after each International Lab. The first collective SUD Scale functions as a baseline measure at the start of the International Lab sessions in order to track how participants were responding to the trauma content brought up in the Lab over the course of the Lab journey.

Each of these analytical framework tools are described in more detail below.

### SUBJECTIVE UNITS OF DISTRESS SCALE (SUDS)

In our evaluation, we included the SUD Scale in order to give us an indication of the substantive state of distress responses of participants, given that it is considered a strong indicator for trauma activation. The SUD Scale<sup>2</sup> is a scientific valid self-assessment tool ranging from 0 to 100 and measures the subjective intensity of disturbance or distress currently experienced by an individual. In 2008, a study was conducted with 61 patients treated with EMDR to test if the self assessment of the SUD scale correlates significantly to the outcome of the Clinical Global Impression–Change (CGI-C) scale.<sup>3</sup> The research found that both the initial and the final score significantly correlated with the CGI-C score. In addition, a study in 2012 by Tanner concludes that the SUD Scale is an appropriate global measure “of both physical and emotional discomfort”.<sup>4</sup> For our purposes we chose this

---

<sup>1</sup> Because of the fluctuations of responses, 410 who responded to the first, 200 to the second and 178 who responded to the third questionnaire, we could only compare the relative % of each sample. Because of the anonymity of the participants we could not track the 178 participants that took all three surveys.

<sup>2</sup> <https://connect.springerpub.com/content/sgremdr%3A%3A%3A2%3A%3A%3A1%3A%3A%3A57.full.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233713225\\_VValidity\\_of\\_the\\_Subjective\\_Units\\_of\\_Disturbance\\_Scale\\_in\\_EMDR](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233713225_VValidity_of_the_Subjective_Units_of_Disturbance_Scale_in_EMDR)

<sup>4</sup> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22038278/>

indicator to give us a measure of the participant's transition towards presencing of what is rather than becoming numb or going into over-activated states.

### TRAUMA RESPONSE INDEX (TRI)

Given that collective trauma leads to individual and collective fragmentation, the ability to respond to trauma is crucial for collective trauma integration. For the purposes of assessing this ability, the internal research team of the Pocket Project developed a measurement tool, namely the Trauma Response Index (TRI). The TRI was developed as a first prototype to visualize and track the development of the response-ability of participants when presented with (collective) trauma topics. It was built using 5 specifically designed questions (items), and designed to capture the individual's ability to stay in contact with their emotions, the individual's understanding of the topic at hand, how the topic affects the individual, and the degree of numbness they feel when the topic is raised.

As Thomas Hübl points out in his new book 'Healing Collective Trauma', the inability to respond to systemic (global) problems is often due to not fully feeling into them, and he goes on to suggest that such an approach would require "*compassionate response-ability*". The notion of "*response-ability*" is similar to the theories presented by the sociologist Hartmut Rosa, who describes how resonance relationships are essential to overcome today's social pathologies.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the Pocket Project has found that a key capacity for enabling resonance to emerge is the ability of *relational sensing*.

Faced with the current global metacrisis<sup>6</sup>, the current tendency is not to increase our response - ability but rather act out defense mechanisms (freeze, fight, flight). The TRI tool is thus a timely measure to track if participants are able to respond when presented with traumatic topics (as we did in the International Labs), and potentially a crucial indicator of capacity building more widely for (collective) trauma integration and relational sensing.

### FREIBURG MINDFULNESS INVENTORY (FMI)

[The Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory \(FMI\)](#) is a scientifically validated test to analyse the self reported state of mindfulness. Mindfulness can be described as the "awareness of present-moment experience, with intention and purpose, without grasping on to judgments." This includes traits of "having an open stance toward oneself and others, emotional equanimity, and the ability to describe the inner world of the mind" (Siegel, 2012).

---

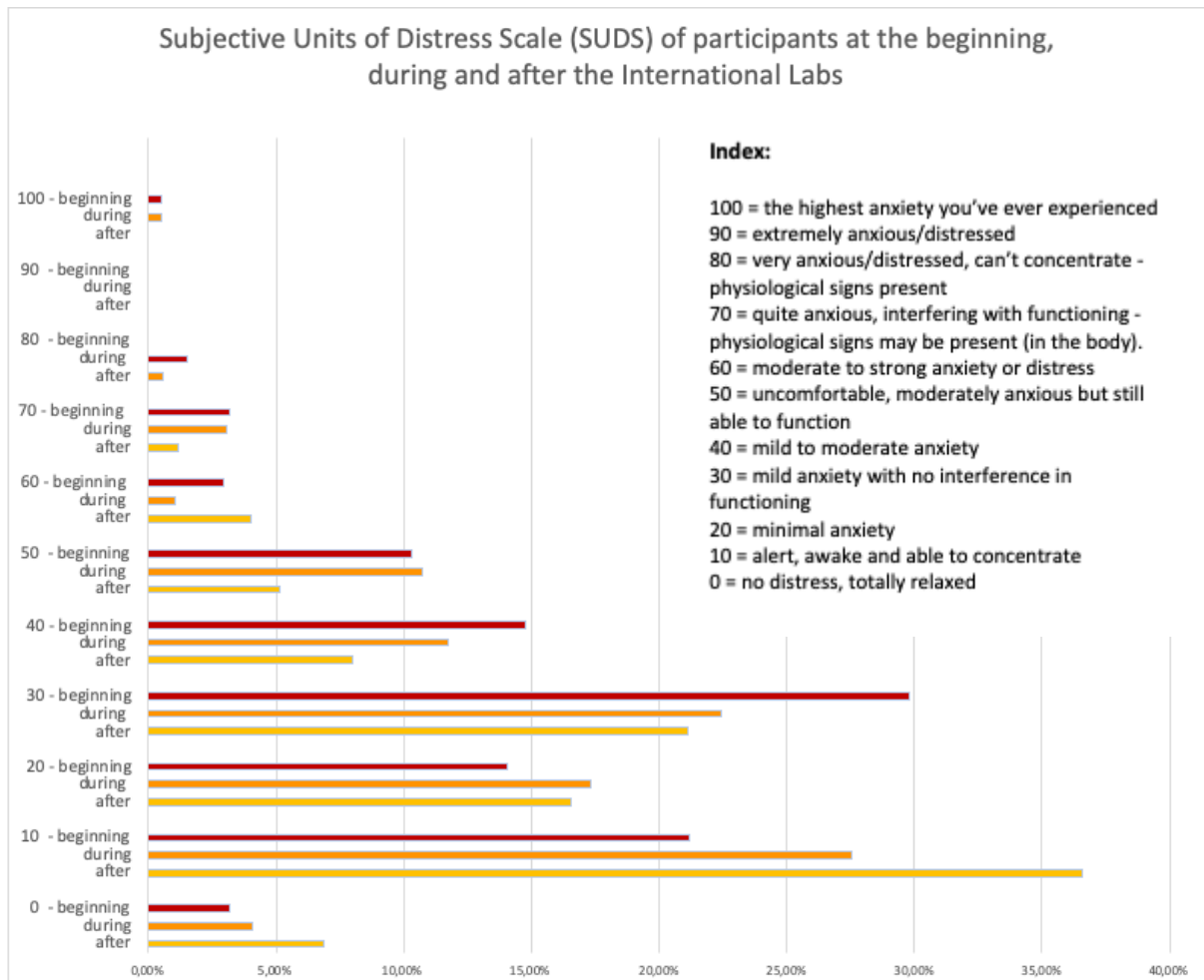
<sup>5</sup><https://archive.krisis.eu/beyond-the-echo-chamber-an-interview-with-hartmut-rosa-on-resonance-and-alienation/>

<sup>6</sup><https://systems-souls-society.com/tasting-the-pickle-ten-flavours-of-meta-crisis-and-the-appetite-for-a-new-civilisation/>

We included the FMI in our evaluation as we consider awareness, presence and mindfulness as important capacities for collective trauma integration, including the ability of *nonjudgmental awareness*. In our evaluation, we use a shorter version of the original FMI. This shorter version comprises 14 questions (items) and is suitable also for people without meditation experience.

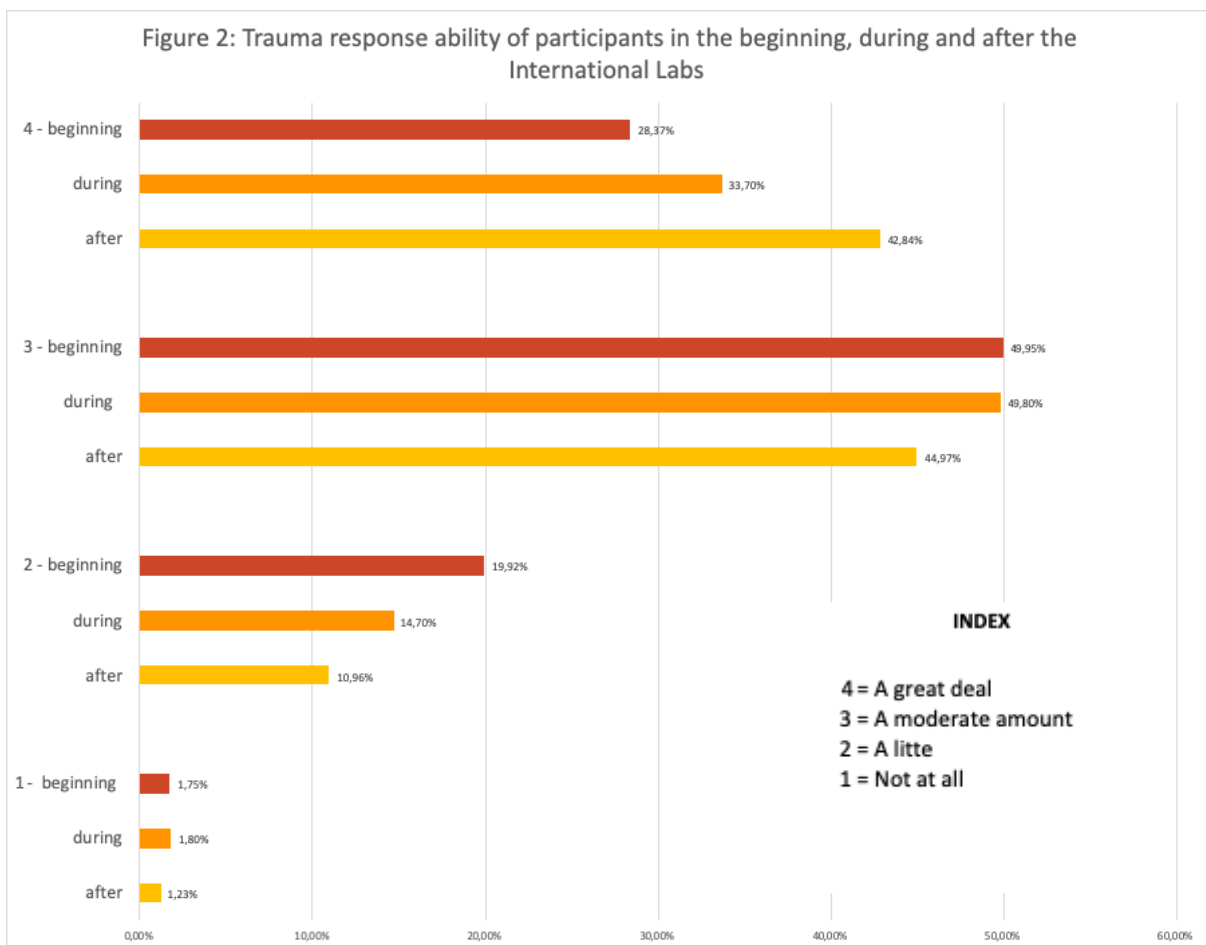
## OUTCOME OF SUBJECTIVE UNITS OF DISTRESS SCALE (SUD)

The data collected show that over the course of the International Labs, the percentage of people indicating a “high level of alertness, awareness and an increased ability to concentrate” almost doubled. While the average level of “minimal anxiety” increased slightly during the International Labs, the score “mild to moderate anxiety” as well as “uncomfortable, moderately anxious...” decreased substantially. Figure 1 presents the outcomes of the SUD.



## OUTCOME OF THE TRAUMA RESPONSE INDEX (TRI)

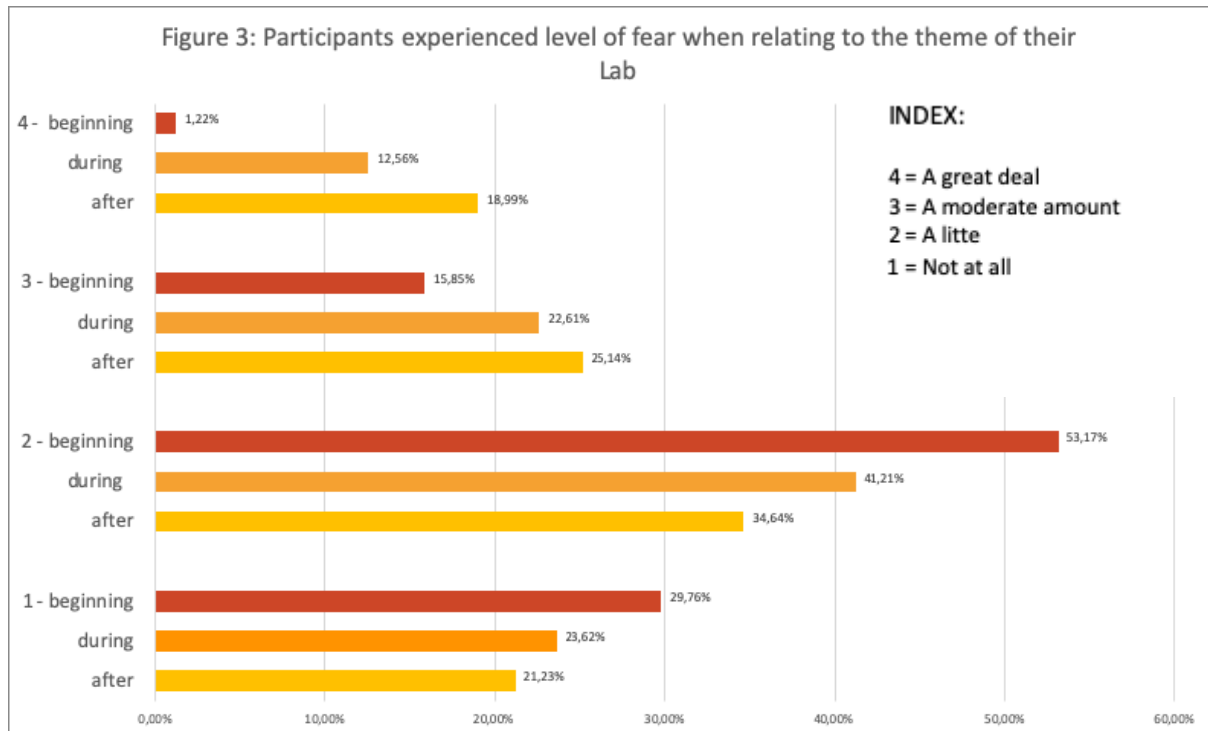
The trauma response score of the participants increased significantly during the course of the International Labs. The score of participants that said they had only ‘a little’ trauma response ability decreased by almost 10 %. Meanwhile, the percentage of participants reporting ‘a great deal’ of trauma response ability increased significantly by 14%. Figure 2 shows the TRI findings.



## LEVEL OF FEAR EXPERIENCED WHEN RELATING TO THE GEOGRAPHIC OR THEMATIC AREA OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMA THEIR LAB ADDRESSED

We found an increase over time of participants’ reports of experiencing fear when their specific collective trauma theme was raised. While at the beginning almost 30% reported experiencing “no fear” at all, this number had decreased by almost 10% by the end of the International Labs.

Participants who reported feeling “a moderate amount” of fear increased from 15% to 25% over the course of the labs. The most marked change from the first survey to the last survey is the percentage of participants feeling “a great deal” of fear. At the beginning, only slightly more than 1% felt “a great deal” of fear. This number increased to 12% in the second survey and to almost 19% in the last survey. The number of participants who felt “little fear” at the beginning (53%) dropped by almost 20% by the end of the labs. Figure 3 presents these findings.



## FREIBURG MINDFULNESS INVENTORY OUTCOME

The overall score of the FMI remained almost the same over the course of the International Labs, with only slight changes visible in the data. Overall, the average responses of participants stayed relatively stable. Over 70% of participants' responses score 'fairly often' (3) or 'almost always' (4) mindful compared to less than 2 % of participants' responses scoring 'rarely' mindful.

## DISCUSSION

One possible explanation for the general decrease in SUD levels is the 3-sync practice carried out during each lab, as explained above. In other words, the reinforcement and learning of the 3-sync process might over time lead to an increased ability of participants to be better aware of fear, numbness and trauma activation.

With regards to the significant increase in trauma response ability that we found, this could also indicate an increase in “response flexibility”. Based on Siegel's work, *response flexibility* is the “...ability *to respond flexibly and creatively to new or changing conditions instead of responding automatically and reflexively. Mediated by the middle prefrontal cortex, it allows the individual to pause and put a space between impulse and action.*”<sup>7</sup> Developing compassionate response-ability seems to be a key concept for collective trauma prevention and integration.

Similarly, new research by the interpersonal neurobiologist Siegel (2012) and the resonance sociology of Hartmut Rosa support our findings. From a micro perspective, Siegel describes how our nervous system and brain develops through responsive caregivers, able to promote secure attachment, therefore preventing trauma. Hartmut Rosa takes a macro perspective through his sociology of resonance. From his perspective, societal crisis and the alienation processes of modern societies make it increasingly difficult to enable responsive, resonant relationships. The need to re-establish such response ability and resonance relationships is therefore very important.

Meanwhile, our findings indicating increased levels of participants’ levels of fear over the course of the International Labs might be explained by the participants’ increased capacity to relate to the International Lab themes. Indeed, Hartmut Rosa argues in his book *Resonance* that an absence of fear is an indication of the “lack of connection between subject and world.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore, an increase in fear may well indicate a reestablishing of the relationship between the participant and the relative topic raised during the International Labs.

Another explanation is that participants actually gain contact with the fear that is already there and are finally able to feel it, rather than to suppress, numb or resist the emotions. In addition, when compared to the SUD scale and the TRI, our data demonstrate that while more fear rises (or is felt), this is also accompanied by an increased ability to stay more awake and alert, as well as increased response ability. We suggest that the state between numbness and over-activation is closely related to the ability to practise [global social witnessing](#)<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook of the Mind von Daniel J. Siegel, 2021

<sup>8</sup> Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World, Rosa, Hartmut, 2020

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334138431\\_Defining\\_%27Global\\_Social\\_Witnessing%27](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334138431_Defining_%27Global_Social_Witnessing%27)

Fear only becomes an “resonance killer” when overwhelming and overpowering (Rosa, 2020). Given our outcomes on the other indicators (SUD, TRI and FMI) this ‘resonance kill’ is not the case in our study. Feeling high levels of fear, while still being able to maintain high levels of awareness and concentration, suggests an integration of otherwise often suppressed emotions.

Meanwhile, in terms of our FMI outcomes, the stability that we found in the FMI scores might be explained by several possible factors. Firstly, our findings seem to indicate that Collective Trauma Integration work attracts volunteers with an average high level of mindfulness and awareness based on the FMI. The average mindfulness score that Walach (2004 & 2006) found was 2,6, while in our study, the mindfulness score of participants in the International Labs ranged from 2,8 to 3.<sup>10</sup>

In the same study, Walach found that after a meditation retreat the average score of participants was 3,0 (Fairly Often). Comparing this to the International Labs, around 70% of participants scored 3.0 (Fairly Often) or higher (Almost always). This might be explained by a high level of mindfulness practise and mediation experience of the participants. Similarly, many of the participants had participated in the Collective Trauma Online Summit just before the International Labs started, and many have also studied extensively with Thomas Hübl and other spiritual teachers. Each of these might explain the relatively high mindfulness score found amongst the participants.

Finally, it is important to note the difference between collective trauma integration work as it was intended in the International Labs in our work and a meditation retreat as the one studied by Walach (2004 & 2006) which served as a comparative case study for our research and evaluation. In the case of the International Labs, collective trauma themes that may usually be suppressed or denied were given the space and even intention to be felt and addressed. In addition, the International Labs were able to provide for a safe container that enabled and resulted in the majority of participants to stay mindful during the collective trauma work, as demonstrated by our findings.

## CONCLUSIONS

The overall ability of participants to stay alert, awake and able to concentrate increased by more than 15% over the course of the International Labs. The felt ability of participants to respond to trauma increased by over 12% over the course of the International Labs. Participants reporting experiencing “a great deal” of fear when relating to the geographical or thematic area of their International Lab increased by around 18 % over the course of the labs.

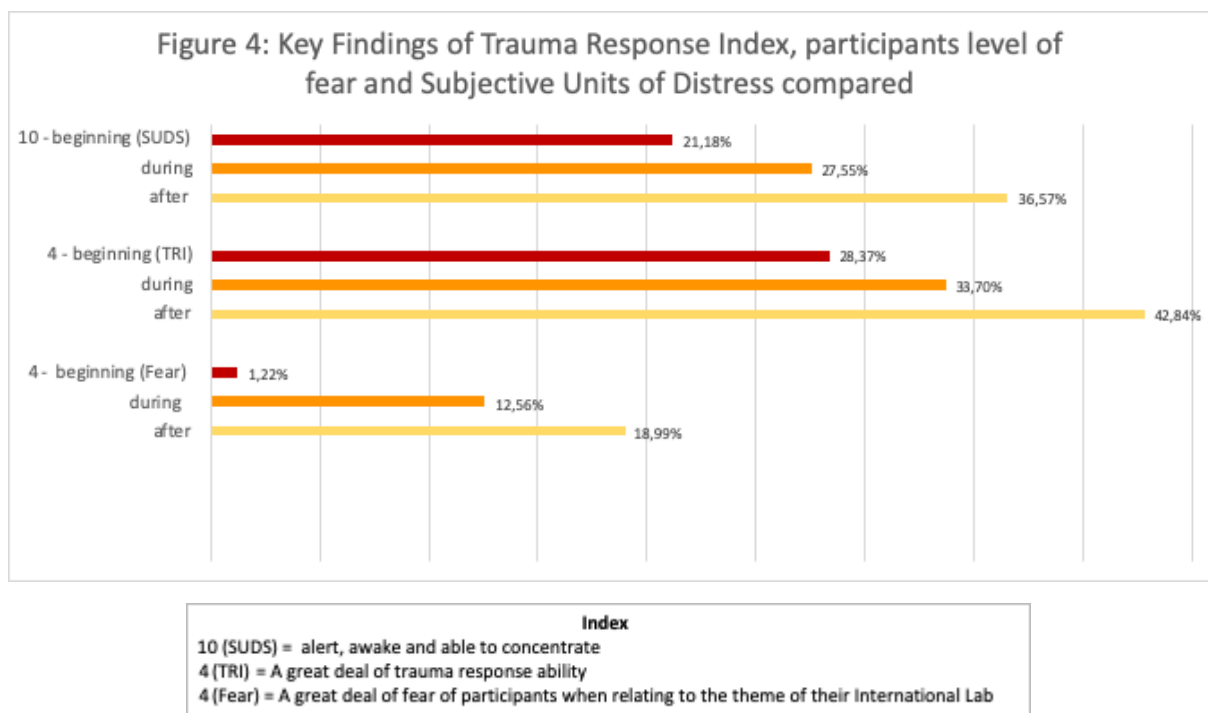
---

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.nina-rose.de/daten/2004\\_Walach\\_etal\\_Empirische\\_Erfassung\\_Buch.pdf](http://www.nina-rose.de/daten/2004_Walach_etal_Empirische_Erfassung_Buch.pdf)



Feeling high levels of fear while still being able to maintain high levels of awareness and focus, as was the case in our study, suggests an integration of otherwise often suppressed emotions. The average ability to stay mindful was consistently high for 70 % of participants over the course of the labs. Given our findings on mindfulness, we might argue that mindfulness is therefore not necessarily *increased* by collective trauma work but rather a *fundamental starting point* for collective trauma work.

Figure 4 outlines the key findings of the primary measurement tools and how they relate to one another.



While further research is needed to validate the outcomes of this evaluation, our findings suggest that mindfulness is a prerequisite for collective trauma work, and strong emotions like fear indicate an increased capacity of trauma integration when accompanied by an increased ability to respond to trauma and an increased ability to maintain awareness and concentration.

*With input from the Pocket Project Research Group: Kazuma Matoba, Laura Calderón de la Barca, Teddy Frank, Deepa Awal and Adrian Wagner.*

*Collated and edited by Adrian Wagner, Aili Pyhala and Kosha Joubert.*