

Practicing the Five Heart Qualities Through the 5XIN App

Introduction

In the rush of modern life, many of us have lost touch with our hearts, distracted by the daily demands that disconnect us from our inner peace and wisdom. Ren Xue, a profound life cultivation system rooted in ancient Chinese wisdom, offers a path to reconnecting with our true selves through the cultivation of five essential heart qualities: Trust, Openness, Love, Gratitude, and True Respect. The Institute for Compassion in Heidelberg is dedicated to sharing Ren Xue's transformative teachings with the world, making them accessible through the 5XIN App—a new mobile application offering heart-focused audio reflections and daily meditations designed to restore balance, joy, and well-being. This app-based approach serves as a welcoming first step for newcomers to begin their inner journey, while also offering valuable practice for experienced practitioners.

Inspired by research on app-based mindfulness interventions¹, this pilot study explored how the 5XIN App can uplift and enrich one's life. Through a combination of validated questionnaires and interviews, the study aimed to better understand the ways the 5XIN App may reduce stress, deepen mindfulness, and nurture self-compassion.

Methods

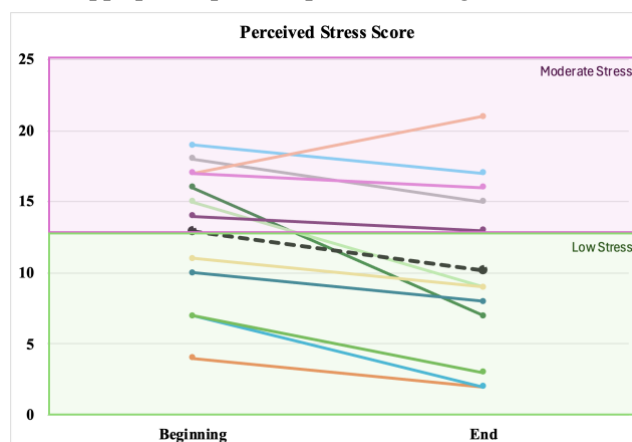
In 2025, the Institute for Compassion invited 16 individuals² to take part in a 25-day guided journey with the 5XIN App. This pilot study aimed to explore how the five heart qualities, introduced through daily practice, might benefit participants' inner lives in measurable and meaningful ways. Each day, participants were provided a short audio reflection (5–10 minutes), followed by a 10-minute guided meditation and a short reflection task to encourage deeper self-awareness. The teachings were divided into five courses, with each heart quality explored over five consecutive days.

To observe changes throughout the journey, we used a blend of validated questionnaires and interviews. Before starting the program, all participants completed three questionnaires to assess their current levels of stress (PSS³), mindfulness (FFMQ⁴), and self-compassion (SCS-short⁵). At the end of the 25 days, participants completed the same set of questionnaires again. In addition, each participant was invited for an interview with a staff member to reflect on their journey and describe, in their own words, the internal changes they experienced.

Results & Discussion

After completing the 25-day journey with the 5XIN App, participants reported feeling less stressed, more mindful, and more self-compassionate. These self-reported improvements were reflected both in the questionnaire data and the reflections shared during post-study interviews.

Stress: 11 out of 12 participants showed a reduction in their stress scores by the end of the program. Of the seven individuals who initially reported moderate levels of stress, three shifted into the low-stress range. On average, the group's stress score decreased by -7%. While participants' external circumstances likely remained unchanged, many described a



¹ Huberty, J. et al., (2019). Efficacy of the mindfulness meditation mobile app “calm” to reduce stress among college students.

² Four participants did not complete the full program and were therefore excluded from the final analysis.

meaningful shift in how they perceived and responded to stress.

“I notice I’m somehow more balanced. Calmer. Especially right after I’ve listened to a session, there’s this certain deep relaxation that comes up.”

Self-Compassion: The group showed a small overall increase in self-compassion (+1.5%). While only trivial, this shift is significant given that 9 of the 12 participants already began the study with high baseline levels of self-compassion. The data suggests that the 5XIN App supported a further deepening of this quality, even among those who already identified being very compassionate with themselves.

“Something really softened in me, you know, like I’m allowed to be more loving with myself or don’t have to be so strict with myself when I don’t get it right straight away. And when I notice that something feels closed off inside, I’m also allowed to open up again somehow.”

Mindfulness: Over the course of the month, participants reported clear improvements in mindfulness. As one participant simply put it: *“I do feel like you start the day more mindfully.”* 10 out of 12 participants showed increased mindfulness scores, with some improving by as much as +17% (group average was +5%). In more detail, improvements were observed across all the five facets of mindfulness measured (observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging and non-reactivity). One participant reflected *“I found I had greater mindfulness for nature... I looked at trees differently, more detailed,”* showing a deeper awareness to the present.

Conclusion

Embracing the life-cultivation system known as Ren Xue can be a deeply transformational experience. To better understand how this transformation reveals itself in everyday life, the Institute for Compassion conducted a small-scale pilot study. This pilot study demonstrated the App’s potential to reduce stress, deepen mindfulness, and nurture self-compassion. In doing so, the 5XIN App supports the Institute’s broader mission: to uplift lives through the practice of inner cultivation, and to gently guide people back to their natural state of being. While the study involved a small group, the results were encouraging. Designed to bring Ren Xue’s heart-based teachings into a simple, accessible 25-day format, the 5XIN App offers both newcomers and experienced practitioners a meaningful way to reconnect with their inner wisdom. In future, larger studies will continue to document how the App helps restore the five heart qualities—Trust, Openness, Love, Gratitude, and True Respect—back to the forefront of human experience, gently transforming how individuals relate to themselves, others, and the world around them. To conclude, one participant summarized the transformative journey:

“It has become even more clear to me how much we perceive our life based on the state we’re in. That changes everything, doesn’t it? And it’s become even clearer to me that in a calm, relaxed, loving state, you not only interpret things differently, but of course you can also act differently. And that this, this inner state, holding onto it, is really a key to acting in the world, because it’s so decisive. The same situation can come up on different days, and how I react, for example as a mother, depends entirely on what state I’m in, how I can be and what kind of person I can be for others.”

³ Reis, D. et al., (2017). The German Version of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10): Evaluation of Dimensionality, Validity, and Measurement Invariance With Exploratory and Confirmatory Bifactor Modeling. *Assessment*, 26(7), 1246-1259.

⁴ Baer, R., Gu, J., & Strauss, C. (2025). Five facet mindfulness questionnaire (FFMQ). In *Handbook of assessment in mindfulness research* (pp. 307-329). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

⁵ Neff, K. et al., (2021). The development and validation of the state self-compassion scale (long-and short form). *Mindfulness*, 12(1), 121-140.