




2024

annual report





"Mental health is now a resource that enables me to have a positive mindset toward myself. We have received many gifts from this program. We have the inner strength to remain firm in adverse circumstances. Thank you."

- Ramakant, classroom teacher in Samastipur, Bihar, India



about Brio

Mental health is critical to addressing the world's toughest challenges— and to leading lives of meaning, purpose, and vitality. And yet, 1 in 2 people globally are expected to experience poor mental health in their lifetime. Marginalized communities are especially at risk, creating a vicious cycle of poor mental health and marginalization that threatens our collective wellbeing and shared future.

Raising awareness and providing treatment are important, but ultimately insufficient to address the global scale of this problem. We must also cultivate positive mental health— helping individuals and communities build psychological skills that reduce their risk of illness, while promoting freedom and agency in difficult circumstances. Only when we address mental health at the community and population level will the tide begin to turn.

Brio advances global mental health and wellbeing through design and collaboration with local leaders and organizations. Through partnership, training, and resource creation, we are building a world where marginalized communities lead our collective liberation.

what we do

Partnering locally with design, training, and systems strengthening

We work with extraordinary civil society organizations and networks to design effective mental health promotion. We partner for multiple years to create initiatives that resonate in local contexts and can be integrated into local systems.

[Learn more about our collaborative approach.](#)



Building psychological flexibility at scale:



We center the programs we design on the framework known as Acceptance and Commitment Training, or ACT (pronounced “act”)— a proven transdiagnostic behavioral approach to improving mental health by helping people shift their inner mental processes, connect with their chosen values, and take committed action. As a framework, ACT seeks to cultivate **psychological flexibility**, which has been proven across thousands of studies to support individuals in a wide range of contexts. As a construct, psychological flexibility encapsulates the ability to actively engage the full range of the human experience while choosing to take action toward one’s chosen values. [Learn more about our framework.](#)



by the numbers

6

years collaborating with civil society organizations to strengthen mental health in their communities

17

new, evidence-based mental health initiatives created and launched in Latin America, Asia, and the United States

133,500+

individuals directly reached with access to contextualized mental health programs in their communities

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Letter from the executive director

Dear friends,

The world is changing more rapidly than ever, with the impact of these changes causing disruption and uncertainty in our collective consciousness. Yet as I reflect on the past year, I'm awed by how, despite all of these dramatic shifts, our pathways to collective flourishing endure. I'm moved by the commitment of our extraordinary partners around the world who continue to show up for children, families, educators, young people, and their communities—who are deeply affected by our changing planet and global leadership composition.

In 2024, Brio held fast to our charge to cultivate psychological flexibility through design and collaboration—and because of thoughtful and persistent collaborators, we are now positioned to reach 4 million people directly by the end of 2028. Strengthening mental health in the midst of adversity continues to be our deep commitment, because without it, individuals and communities will continue to be overwhelmed by the inevitable hardships they face.

We must think of mental health as a source of agency: expanding the range of circumstances in which people are free to choose what they do next, even when life presents challenges and constraints. Doing so together with civil society organizations rooted in local contexts is how we ensure that we're not just codifying the convictions of our own experience and research onto others' lives, but truly centering their vision of wellbeing and flourishing and responding to their pain. Partnership and collaboration—though touted by many—comes with cultivating trust and endurance that I'm realizing only some have the patience for. And yet it's vital to building our shared future.

Furthermore, the work of social change is immensely challenging, and I'm increasingly convinced that individual organizations and their communities cannot stand alone in holding this change work. Yes, it must be rooted in their lived experience and their values; but we must bring others along.

We can start by creating change within the systems in which they work (beginning at the small levels of organizational systems), and move progressively toward addressing the structures, policies, and environments that shape their everyday life. That, in some ways, has been the shift in focus we made during this past year at Brio, and I'm really excited to share about it in the coming pages.

I'm writing you this letter in early 2025, as the new administration in the United States is sowing chaos and destruction to many important initiatives around the world (not to mention here at home). And the truth is, we don't know what's coming. But I will tell you this— we need the best of what each of us can offer. And we need a more honest understanding of power: how to build it collectively, centered on our shared sense of vitality.

At an event last fall, writer and organizer Marshall Ganz said, "Structural change is rooted in people, human beings, and the power we can create with each other when we find values we share, and our capacity to turn those values into sources of power."

On the edge of an uncertain future, I share the concern and anticipation you do. I am also grateful. It's a gift to have a front row seat to this movement toward our collective flourishing, led by courageous and creative souls around the world. It's a gift to share part of that story with you now.

Yours,

Daisy Rosales
Co-founder and Executive Director
Brio

STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH AT SCALE

Our children's wellbeing program is going statewide in Rajasthan, India



Khushi Shaala

Since 2022, we've been collaborating with our partners [Kshamtalaya Foundation](#) to design a curriculum and teacher training approach to improve children's mental health and wellbeing in Rajasthan, focusing on government schools as the center of implementation. Through a co-creative process with the Rajasthan education department (RSCERT), *Khushi Shaala* comprises of wellbeing sessions to be implemented weekly throughout grades 3-5. It also comes with a plan to train educators both to implement wellbeing sessions with children, and to experience wellbeing for themselves throughout the school day.



Launching the pilot in August 2024

In August 2024, we launched a pilot of the program with 120 teachers and 1000 children in two different districts in Rajasthan. The purpose of the pilot was to test the process of training teachers to implement the program (acceptability and feasibility), as well as to gain insights on how children responded. As key stakeholders in the process, children were invited to share their feedback on the program throughout the pilot. We also implemented simple data measures to understand the effectiveness of the program, though it was implemented partially for the purposes of a shorter pilot.

The training unfolded in collaboration with Rajasthan government stakeholders, local trained facilitators, and educators. Since *Khushi Shaala* is wellbeing-focused, Kshamtalaya started off with emphasizing the importance of teachers' own wellbeing. Sharing insights and content from our program *Hausla*, Kshamtalaya built trust with the teachers. By the end of the training, many teachers said they personally benefited from learning these skills that they would now teach their students.

“This training is the best I’ve experienced, I felt personally supported. I’m going to implement this with my own children at home, too,” said one teacher.



Promising results from the pilot and feedback from teachers

Throughout the pilot, Kshamtalaya team members, fellows, and staff from RSCERT visited pilot schools to see how the program implementation was going. They took note of how teachers felt about facilitation, how they used the handbook, the questions that arose, and any input they had about what else would be helpful for them.

In October 2024, the Brio team traveled to visit several schools together with Kshamtalaya to document the progress and listen to teachers’ and children’s feedback. One of the most important moments during the visit was that observers noted the increased engagement of girls in the classroom. Rajasthani culture is known for its male dominance, and there is a pattern of girls disengaging in the classroom from a young age, and eventually dropping out.

“The girls are especially responding to this curriculum. They’re sharing how they feel. They’re asking questions, even in other classes like math and language, when they’re normally silent,” one of the teachers shared.

This was born out in the observations too. Having visited other classrooms in the past, team members from Brio and Kshamtalaya noticed that the girls in *Khushi Shaala* classrooms seemed more lively. They were also making more eye contact with the teacher.

“These sessions are the children's favorite time now. They're attending school more just to do Khushi Shaala. **It has increased their engagement and improved my relationship with them as a teacher.** We really can create more compassionate classrooms.” – teacher implementing in Banswara, Rajasthan



Quantitative data from the pilot were really promising. Teacher feedback indicated a high level of acceptability and feasibility, which are critical for considering statewide scale.

- 91% Teachers found the curriculum useful
- 97% Teachers felt confident to implement the curriculum
- 96% Teachers said they started wellbeing practices in their personal life
- 84% Teachers rated quality of training as ‘excellent’
- 87% Teachers described the activities as helpful & interesting
- 31% Teachers created their own additional materials to implement a chapter in Khushi Shaala Book 1, without being required.

For children, the partial implementation of the 3-year program brought about promising quantitative results.

- **More than 50% of students increased their scores on the Life Skills Assessment**, a contextualized well-being measure that focuses on self-awareness, self-expression, and self-in-community skills.
- Importantly, **girls showed the most improvement**, with an effect size of cohen’s d 0.45 (on a scale from 0-1), which is considered a medium effect size. This is an extraordinary improvement for a low-cost, health promotion-based program in a classroom context.
- Teachers reported a **10-15% increase in student attendance** as a result of the program, which is an exciting and unexpected outcome.



“I can feel my heart now!”

- female student,
Banswara,
Rajasthan

Rajasthan decides to implement *Khushi Shaala* statewide

Following positive feedback and results from the pilot, officials in Rajasthan are eager to take the *Khushi Shaala* program across the state— reaching approximately **2.3 million children each year** for 3 years. This is an extraordinary next step for Brio and Kshamtalaya, to which we are committing ourselves for the next 3-5 years.

In order to implement successfully, we’ll work across the education system with high level officials all the way to local district and block/village-level stakeholders, in order to ensure that teachers receive the support and training they need to facilitate these classes every week.

In 2025, Kshamtalaya and Brio will enter into an intensive integration phase in which we’ll partner closely with the Rajasthan education department to co-create the training, support, and communications necessary to ensure all 33,000 schools in Rajasthan are able to offer this program to their students.

While this intensive partnership process is not always easy, we’ve learned that the most critical component is finding ways to align on deep core values across stakeholders. Education officials are becoming increasingly convinced of the importance of personal and collective wellbeing— and sometimes have even shared that journey publicly. We applaud their courage.

“You can see [the difficult health journey] that I’ve been going through. I am a living testament to why wellbeing matters. I’m here because of this work.” - Abha Ma’am, Head of RSCERT Division Five, at August 2024 training for teachers.



SHIFTING ORGANIZATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Building internal systems and capacity to support and improve mental health and wellbeing



Mental health and the social sector

Across the world, social change organizations of all sizes work to improve the conditions experienced by marginalized communities— and in many cases, to also support the process of behavior change. Large organizations work at scale, and face many environmental pressures as they do so. **It's critical for their leaders and frontline staff to experience positive mental health in an enduring way, so that they can show up everyday for meaningful and challenging work.**

Collaborating to improve social change workforce wellbeing

When organizations of substantial size commit to workforce mental health and wellbeing, it demonstrates an important shift in the broader narrative. For too long, civil society organizations are expected to make miracles happen on a shoe string. And while many of us do exactly that— the pace and expectation placed on team members is grueling and ultimately unsustainable.

Brio has committed to helping large organizations build systems and cultures that support worker wellbeing, in the interest of ensuring their long-term sustainability. Workforce turnover comes at a great cost, while worker engagement and productivity are critical to achieving any mission.

Case study: resourcing AmeriCorps members and staff at City Year

Since 2022, we've had the privilege of partnering with City Year, an education nonprofit in the United States working in 29 locations across the country. City Year employs 2000+ AmeriCorps members (young social change leaders) each year, and additional staff, to support the education of more than 200,000 students.

This year, we partnered with their headquarters team to create the Well-being Hub, an internal structure shift to address all well-being needs in a clear, concise, and positive manner.



Strengthening an organization’s internal mental health and wellbeing infrastructure is a pathway to sustainable impact over multiple years. By partnering with City Year’s team to imagine, design, and build what wellbeing resources and support can look like, we help the organization respond to mental health needs on a daily basis, regardless of where an employee is on the wellbeing spectrum that day.

In addition to building the Well-being Hub, we co-created a learning series that has now been offered twice since 2024, to resource staff and AmeriCorps members across City Year’s network to strengthen their individual and team wellbeing.



We’ve learned immense lessons from the City Year team on what it looks like to build a culture of wellbeing alongside the internal systems and structures to support it. The team has worked assiduously to communicate and offer leaders across the network what they need, when they need it, and to ensure that access is easy and clear.

Shifting a social change narrative focused on sacrifice for impact, toward one that honors everyone’s flourishing, is a process we’ve been grateful to witness.

“We are grateful to have gotten to partner with Brio on the creation of our Well-being Hub. The site offers easy access to our most critical benefits and resources and has reached hundreds of employees in less than a year.

In the work we do, it’s important to be able to care for ourselves so that we can serve others well. The Hub is intuitive and offers a gentle reminder to all of us about the importance of practicing self and community care. It also serves as a practical resource, guiding employees to the next best action while also showcasing the benefits we offer to our members.

The Well-being Hub is mentioned in company-wide meetings, highlighted in emails across the organization, and is on the front page of our most popular internal websites. We have no doubt that the Hub has helped many people already, in personal and profound ways, that we may never fully understand, and we know it will continue to do so because of the thoughtful approach upon which it was built and its flexible nature to evolve as we evolve.”

–Benefits Team, City Year

Case study: wellbeing training for Educate Girls co-led by Kshamtalaya

In March, we were excited to partner with Kshamtalaya to offer a training experience for frontline staff and impact managers at Educate Girls, an award-winning NGO focused on girls' education in India. Across the education system, Educate Girls has supported millions of children since their inception, and take their impact seriously.

The on-ground realities of supporting systems change and behavior change are challenging, especially in communities whose engagement with public education has been fraught or disconnected. Leaders at Educate Girls felt it was important to incorporate wellbeing and mental health into their workforce training to support team members' resilience in the face of structural, cultural, and logistical challenges.

Educate Girls' decision to invest in team mental health signals an important and exciting recognition that wellbeing is part of organizational sustainability and excellence.



“Identifying what matters to me was a challenge at first, but I can now visualize what I was doing. I noticed the negative thoughts moving me away from my values, stopping me. I realized during our discussion that I was not alone.”
- Educate Girls team member

A collaborative training experience

Working with Kshamtalaya, we designed a mental health skill-building experience to fit with the needs of the Educate Girls team. Virtual preparation led to an in-person training event that brought together multiple teams from across the organization to explore the capacities that support psychological flexibility. Our simplified framework covered the following mental health skills: Be present, Have compassion, and Do what matters.

Team members shared that the training helped them recognize some of their own internal barriers when it came to engaging fully at work— and how important it was to spend time reflecting on what mattered to them individually.

Mental health remains critical for social change

City Year, Educate Girls, and other partner organizations have led the way in imagining what it means for organizations engaged in influential social change work to reorient themselves to support team mental health. While in many companies this can look like offering healthy benefits, paid leave, and working conditions, it's also important to build the structures and capacity, as well as the culture, to support these commitments.

Prioritizing mental health is an ongoing journey, and the social sector has a long way to go. Shifting an organization for mental health requires an investment of time and resources, and— perhaps more significantly— an openness to changing our assumptions about what is worth the investment. If we are truly committed to a future in which everyone can flourish, we'll need to include our workforce in that vision.

Idealistic language aside, worker mental health and sustainability are necessary ingredients to creating change that lasts. **People who spend years on the ground, or managing teams that create impact, are precious to the movement, and losing them to burnout costs us immeasurably.** The knowledge and skills needed to engage communities, support marginalized individuals, navigate stakeholders, and advance behavior change are not easily replaceable. Integrating mental health into our organizational ethos in creative ways is the only road to bringing the best that we have to the communities we serve— and they deserve no less.

“The key insight I learned during this training is that the present is nothing but right now, the only time when I can make a choice.” – Educate Girls team member





PARTNERING FOR SHARED FLOURISHING

Co-creating a new vision for youth
mental health and leadership



Community-rooted youth leadership

Anyone who's worked closely with a young person recently will resonate with the realization that they understand far more than we expect them to, and their potential far exceeds what the world is prepared to offer them.

In marginalized communities, youth often experience even more doubt: in the form of restrictive cultural norms that are holdovers from the past, or a lack of opportunity to show what they're capable of and grow their sense of possibility. Our community-rooted partnerships in India, Colombia, and the US recognize that young people today need more than mental health care— they need the nourishment, encouragement, skills, and opportunities to thrive, even when life circumstances continue to be challenging.

Why we need a new vision for youth leadership



In recent years, many organizations involved in youth development have shifted their emphasis from reducing risk and harm toward fostering leaders and agents of change. One strand of this work has focused on youth voices and youth organizing as a pathway to engaging youth in making real shifts in their communities and environments. From local initiatives to high-profile stages, young leaders are invited to shape our world.

Meanwhile, young people in marginalized communities experience a vast range of challenges and opportunities to lead the way forward. These opportunities do include community projects and advocacy, but many other leadership moments occur more spontaneously. **Any time a young person is**

presented with a consequential decision— whether they are sought by peers for support, receiving difficult news, seeking a job, or responding to a crisis at home— their ability to lead becomes critical. Youth leadership models therefore must consider that for many marginalized young people, leadership moments happen everywhere. This is why mental health is essential: it underpins a young person's ability to respond to life circumstances with stability, courage, and wisdom.

Colombia: young people navigate their inner world with stability and connectedness



Together with *Amadeus*, our partners in Medellín, Colombia, we've created *Cultivando el bienestar*: a program promoting youth mental health through simple activities that build psychological skills.

Amadeus uses music to cultivate the wellbeing and development of young people in neighborhoods heavily affected by gang activity and drug-related violence. For 36 years, Amadeus has helped young people discover their potential through the discipline and freedom of music. And we're thrilled to partner with them to integrate mental health into their work, using the same creative capacities they've brought to developing and mentoring youth for more than three and a half decades.

In 2024, we launched the pilot of *Cultivando el bienestar* by training Amadeus teachers and equipping the team to support the mental health of young people through their sessions of music practice. The program includes music, dance, and storytelling activities that draw from participants' daily experience: helping them to reflect on their inner world, share their ideas in creative ways, and learn strategies to access stability and awareness in the midst of conflict.

"Today we learned to breathe deeply. And to stay in the present— not in the past, not in the future— in the present," reflected Daniel, age 11.

"I'm a sensitive person and I cry a lot and overthink a lot... this activity helped me realize when there's something bad in the darkness there will always be a light, a little ray of light that helps me to say, let's keep going, you can do it."
- Karen, age 16, Amadeus Fundación

India: adolescent girls expand their range of choices

In many communities, the life of a child fundamentally changes the day menstruation begins. Not only are menstruation and puberty physically painful at times, but they also bring about a new set of mental and emotional challenges that can interfere with daily life. Together with our partners at [Uninhibited](#), we're integrating mental health into cutting-edge menstrual health programs, together with adolescents and their communities. Through storytelling, theater, art, and conversation, we're leveraging the power of psychological skills to strengthen menstrual health outcomes, and creating a vision where menstrual health and mental health are bidirectionally improved.



"I couldn't focus on my studies or finish my homework. But then, Geetha ma'am had a session about making a choice point. After that, I decided to make decisions for myself, even if others think differently. I realized that my upset feelings were because of my friends. Now, I'm learning to be brave and not dwell on old things." -
Uninhibited participant, 9th grade

In 2024, we launched a pilot of a program we co-created with the Uninhibited team to draw from themes of their menstrual health program to expand the conversation to mental health. 500 adolescent girls in Karnataka participated, and many said these were the best conversations they've ever had about their lived experiences. **Importantly, the sessions focused on a simple concept in psychological flexibility: identifying our "choice points" and what a values-aligned decision could look like.**

Helping young adolescents at the beginning of puberty to build skills for decision making can benefit them for the long-term. Not only can they cultivate personal habits and behaviors that support their overall physical health, but they can also make choices about how they engage in education opportunities, romantic relationships, and family dynamics that critically affect their future. Resourcing adolescents with menstrual health knowledge, support, and hygiene products is important; however, it is ultimately their decision as to how to respond to these resources. By building their psychological skills to make decisions in the midst of challenging circumstances, they will exercise greater agency and initiative over their menstrual health.

Why this matters: a few words from our community-based partners

Young people who live in marginalized contexts and communities have so much to offer— and yet the world’s largest institutions continue to overlook them. This is why Brio partners with community-driven, locally rooted leaders who are addressing the systems and environments in which young people live, in partnership with young people themselves.

Community-based youth-serving organizations deserve all of our attention and support, because they must contend with the very same threats and challenges that young people themselves face. Organizations operate in locations affected by violence. They navigate the uncertainty of being heard and respected, just as their participants do. And they show up anyway, accompanying youth through some of the most important changes in their lives— creating a compounding effect into the future by offering skills, opportunities, and guidance.



“Through our collaboration with Brio, Amadeus fulfilled finally a dream: to create a practical and accessible methodology that combined the power of music to nurture mental health and emotional wellbeing of our students. *Cultivando Bienestar* allowed us to translate our educational philosophy into hands-on activities that our teachers could integrate into their music classes. **The most inspiring part was witnessing how the activities became a vehicle for deep, meaningful, engaging, fun, and transformative conversations and learnings.** We look forward to 2025, continuing to improve and expand this approach to foster harmony, positive social interactions, and wellbeing in our music schools.” - Daniela Ocampo, CEO, Amadeus

“While we engage adolescents on topics like puberty, menstruation, and body literacy, **we must also address mental health and emotional navigation. Development work cannot exist in silos, which is often the case.** At Uninhibited, we don’t have expertise in mental health, so we’re deeply grateful for our collaboration with Brio.” - Bhuvana Balaji, Co-CEO, Uninhibited

WISDOM SHARING

5 lessons from extraordinary leaders in advancing mental health

Over the past 6 years, we've had the privilege of learning from our partners and their communities on what it really means to collaborate for healing and flourishing in ways that endure. In October 2024, we gathered lessons from across our partners and are delighted to share them with you.

1. Storytelling is sacred and an intervention in its own right.
2. Listen carefully to community experiences and represent them fiercely.
3. Find champions for wellbeing in the systems where you work— and empower them.
4. Strengthening mental health is transformative, and greater than the sum of its parts.
5. The depth and quality of your relationships determine your impact, no matter how broadly you scale.

[To read the full article and details on each lesson, click here.](#)



Join us in 2025!

The world is full of big questions and the future is uncertain. And yet, it is a gift to be able to find each other, build momentum, and do what matters. This year, we'll be building upon the strategies we strengthened in 2024:

- Working with the state of Rajasthan for the next 3-5 years to integrate Khushi Shaala into all classrooms.
- Partnering with youth-centered organizations to advance the narrative of mental health for youth leadership.
- Strengthening organizations and collectives of organizations that believe in the power of mental health to nourish a future in which we can all flourish.

We can't do this work without our kind supporters, team members, partners and fellow leaders. Thank you for accompanying us.



 brio

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