

Sound Bath Participant Feedback: Key Learnings for Innerverse

Overview

As part of our exploration of immersive wellness experiences, the Innerverse team hosted a sound bath led by [Monique Mead](#) at the ETC. This sound bath exposed participants to a wellness modality that may be unfamiliar to many people. We then asked participants to reflect on the experience:

“Think back to the sound bath. How was it compared to other things that typically make you feel well?”

Six attendees responded, representing approximately 50% of the event participants. Their responses provide qualitative insight into what aspects of a passive, non-interactive wellness experience contributed to feelings of relaxation, safety, presence, and connection.

Rather than evaluating the sound bath itself, we looked for patterns that could inform the design of our **interactive immersive wellness experience**.

6 Key Findings

1. Stillness can itself be a meaningful wellness activity

Several participants described the value of simply being still. One participant, who typically prefers wellness activities involving movement such as walking, noted that the sound bath allowed them to:

“just be still for a while.”

Another participant similarly appreciated being able to “relax and not move.”

This suggests that wellness does not necessarily need to involve active participation. For some people, **having permission to stop doing** may be an important part of the experience.

Design implication:

Our interactive experience should not assume that interaction needs to mean constant physical activity. We can create moments where participants are invited to pause, remain still, and simply experience their surroundings. Interaction could be optional, subtle, or occur in response to the participant rather than requiring continuous input. Participants should be able to engage at their own level **rather than being required to constantly respond**. The question that emerges is: how do we have a clear beginning

and ending if our design demands no mandatory actions? Or should we still pursue having a clear beginning and end?

2. Psychological safety and control helped participants relax

One participant specifically identified the ability to leave or stay whenever they wanted as something that made them feel safe enough to fall asleep:

“Given the right to leave or stay whenever, it helped me feel safe sleeping there.”

For this participant, knowing they retained control over their participation reduced overthinking and made it easier to let go.

Design implication:

A wellness experience should communicate a sense of agency and control to help people feel safe. Participants may benefit from knowing that they are free to move, leave, change their position, or disengage at any time.

However, designing for individual agency also raises an important question about the group. If participants have control over how much they participate, how might that affect the people experiencing it alongside them?

3. Wellness can be both individual and communal

One participant described themselves as someone who typically prefers “solo wellness,” but found that the sound bath was:

“a successful group thing for me.”

This suggests that a communal wellness experience can provide value even for people who normally approach wellness individually.

Design implication:

We could explore different ways to help people feel connected without forcing social interaction. Participants can be together in the same environment without necessarily needing to talk, collaborate, or perform for one another.

This is particularly relevant to our goal of creating a multiplayer immersive experience: multiplayer does not necessarily need to mean competitive or highly social. **Simply sharing an experience with other people may itself be meaningful.**

4. Immersive sensory elements helped create a sense of escape

Participants described the experience as transporting them somewhere beyond the physical room. One participant said it felt:

“like a majestic movie, bringing me to a different world.”

Another connected the sound of water to being at the beach and to a feeling of home:

“I associate the beach with home.”

These responses suggest that sensory stimuli can do more than simply create relaxation. They can **evoke places, memories, emotions, and imagined environments**.

Design implication:

Our immersive environment can use sound, visuals, spatialization, and other sensory elements to create a strong sense of place. Rather than treating sensory effects as decoration, we can consider them as mechanisms for transporting participants psychologically and emotionally.

This also suggests an opportunity to explore **universally meaningful sensory cues**.

5. Novel and unexpected sensory experiences were engaging

One participant was particularly interested in the sounds themselves, describing them as:

“really soothing sounds that you don’t typically get to hear.”

Interestingly, the participant also became curious about how the sounds were being produced. In this case, the unusual sensory quality created engagement even within an otherwise passive experience.

Design implication:

Immersive wellness does not necessarily have to eliminate curiosity or stimulation. **Novelty can coexist with relaxation**. Our experience can introduce participants to sensory phenomena they do not normally encounter; in fact, this could be what differentiates our experience from taking a walk outside or other traditional methods of boosting wellbeing.

At the same time, this response highlights that different forms of sensory stimulation may affect participants differently. What is fascinating to one person may become distracting to another.

6. Sensory intensity needs to be carefully calibrated

While participants generally described the experience as relaxing, one participant specifically found the gong:

“a bit loud and disturbing”

while particularly enjoying the water sounds.

Another participant noted that people entering and leaving the space became a distraction.

These responses are important because they demonstrate that **a wellness experience is not universally relaxing simply because its intention is relaxation**. Sensory intensity, environmental interruptions, and individual preferences can significantly affect the experience.

Design implication:

We could design for **sensory flexibility and individual differences**. This could mean varying intensity based on participant behavior, providing quieter moments, allowing participants to move away from stimuli, or giving them some control over the sensory environment. (The Sonic Plunge experience received similar feedback, where some people wanted more haptics, while others wanted none.) **This is likely a reach goal, and might be out of scope for us.**

The physical environment also matters. Unavoidable interruptions in the ETC space affected immersion, suggesting that environmental consistency and spatial isolation should be considered when designing the experience. For instance, we should consider keeping the Cavern door closed during a run.

Side-by-side Summary of the Key Findings

Observed quality	What participants described	Potential design consideration
Stillness	Being able to stop moving and simply be	Include periods of low or no required activity
Agency	Feeling safe because participants could leave or stay	Make participation optional and communicate control
Sensory immersion	Water sounds, darkness, unusual sounds	Use multiple sensory channels to create a strong sense of place

Transportation	Feeling taken “to a different world” or reminded of the beach/home	Use sensory design to evoke environments, memories, or emotions
Novelty	Interest in inputs participants do not normally encounter	Introduce unfamiliar but positive sensory experiences
Individual variation	Some sounds were soothing; others were disturbing	Allow sensory intensity and interaction to adapt to participants
Shared experience	A participant who prefers solo wellness enjoyed the group format	Explore communal experiences without requiring social interaction
Environmental control	People entering/leaving caused distraction	Minimize interruptions and protect immersion

Final Thoughts

Participant responses suggest that feelings of wellness were associated not only with the sounds themselves, but with a broader combination of **stillness, psychological safety, sensory immersion, novelty, agency, and shared presence**.

The sound bath gave us a useful baseline: **a wellness experience can be effective without requiring participants to actively do anything**. The next step is not simply to add interaction for the sake of making the experience “interactive.” Instead, we can ask how interaction can preserve the qualities that participants already found valuable.

Appendix

Feedback

1. Typically I have a lot of trouble staying still, and so things for me involve a lot of movement (walking etc). But in the sound bath I was actually able to just be still for a while. Oh also I'm usually a doing stuff solo wellness guy, but this was a successful group thing for me.
2. Given the right to leave or stay whenever, it helped me feel safe sleeping there. I overthink a lot, so it helped me stop.
3. thank you for hosting it! it was really nice :) I really enjoyed how relaxing it was! tbh I was kind of distracted by how cool the sounds they made were (and my brain couldn't stop trying to figure out how) but im a nerd and that may just be a me thing. It was really soothing sounds that you don't typically get to hear and nice that there was a person controlling it - felt a lot more personal. oh i will also note that i did get a little distracted by people walking in and out, but its the etc and ik its kinda unavoidable.
4. I think I liked that it was dark and that I could relax and not move, the gong thing was a bit loud and disturbing to me personally but I really liked the water sounds. It reminded me of being at the beach even if there wasn't one to go to here, and I associate the beach with home.
5. i think just a sense of being and it felt like a majestic movie, bringing me to a different world. Feels nice and no need to worry, but present.
6. It was relaxing. I felt refreshing after the experience. I would like to attend more of those in future.

Photos



Left photo: during the Sound Bath. Right photo: Participants asking questions after the session.