CASE STUDY

The Student Who Thought He'd Hit Rock Bottom

What happens when a young **adult stops judging every move he makes** and starts training his mind instead?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Arman, a college student, and a corporate intern (at the time of recording this interview).

Context: Joined Inside Out Labs in the second year of college, at 19, as part of Helping Kids Thrive's (HKT) inaugural university cohort.

Core Struggle: Grades in free fall, chronic procrastination, an attention span limited to 15 to 30 minutes, and a habit of saying yes to everyone. Underneath it all, lay a relentless **inner judge** and a defensive ego that blocked accountability.

Program: Inside Out Labs Full Curriculum.

The Result: The best academic semester of his college life, months without a single missed deadline, and the capacity to regulate his panic under exam pressure.

The Behavioural Shift: Moved from excuses to accountability, from defensive ego to grounded self-trust, and from constant self-judgment to proactive self-support.

His Current Daily Practices: A whiteboard priority matrix, a daily journal, and breathwork.

THE CHALLENGE

“I Genuinely Thought I Hit Rock Bottom”

Arman

*When Arman joined the program in his fourth semester, he was, in his own words, at "**a pretty low point**" in his life. On the outside, he was simply an easygoing college student going with the flow. Inside, every **self-regulatory system was failing** simultaneously.*

The Restless Mind

He was **unable to sustain focus on academic tasks** for longer than 15 to 30 minutes. Studying started "at 12 AM or a few hours before the exam," followed by sleepless nights until 4 or 5 AM and a 6 AM alarm for college. **“Procrastination and time management. These two were my biggest enemies that I couldn't conquer.”**



The People-Pleaser Trap

Arman **struggled with boundaries, agreeing to every social invitation** during study hours regardless of academic consequence. **“I never understood the meaning of the word no, so I never used it to begin with.”**



The Relentless Inner Judge

The **inability to focus** created a vicious cycle of self-judgment. **"I basically let myself become a judge in my head... judging every single action that I was doing instead of actually performing and executing the action."**



The Armour of Ego

To protect himself from feeling inadequate, Arman hid behind **false confidence**. This showed up as defensiveness, constant quarrels with his parents, distance from his younger brother, and clashes with professors. **"If you'd talked to my 19- or 20-year-old self, I'd probably be spitting lies or excuses to get out of the call quicker."**



THE INTERVENTION

A Space With No Judgment

Arman came in **nervous**. He expected to have to face his faults under scrutiny. What he experienced was the **opposite.**

A Grounded Container

Arman found that every admission of **failure was met with calm neutrality and guidance** rather than blame. Engaging with university peers facing the same mental roadblocks normalized his experience. **"There was no judgment. Every answer was received with support and care."**



Naming the Saboteurs

Through an assessment, Arman identified his **primary behavioral defense patterns: the Restless and the Pleaser Saboteurs.** For the first time, he realized that his procrastination and inability to set boundaries were coping mechanisms, not his core identity.



Accountability Without Homework

Rather than formal assignments, the **weekly sessions**, and **check-ins** where he summarised his week and emotional state in four or five lines, kept him consistent. **"It didn't feel like a teacher gave me homework. It was more like a friend checking up on you... If it had felt like homework, I wouldn't have done it."**

THE SHIFT

From Excuses to Ownership

The change was gradual.

> **I don't even remember how it felt when the shift happened. It just naturally happened.**

But the markers were clear.

REAL-TIME SELF-AWARENESS

Arman developed the ability to notice **emotional hijacking** as it happened, interrupting the patterns. **"Mid-mistake, I was able to realise: okay, I'm messing up here, do something about it."**

THE SAGE PERSPECTIVE

A foundational teaching of the **curriculum** became his operating mantra: **"It is what it is. Whatever happened, it happened. You can't change the past."** He began applying this perspective across **academics, workplace dynamics, and family interactions.**

THE TURNING POINT

During a back-to-back exam period, Arman experienced a severe **panic episode**. Instead of spiralling, he reached out for **support** and used the **breathing exercises** from the program.



> **“They definitely did calm me down. They helped slow things down.”**
>
> *Arman*

From that regulated place, he planned his way through instead of crashing. Months later, during a grueling multi-week exam marathon, he used **breathwork audios** before revision sessions to access a consistent flow state, and released academic anxiety by writing it all down and tearing it up.

THE CURRICULUM IN ACTION

To move out of his **restless and reactive Survival Brain** and into his clear and focused Thrive Brain, Arman relied on **three core Inside Out Labs practices**:

1. **PQ Reps and Breathwork**

   Daily **micro-grounding exercises** (10-second sensory PQ reps) built the consistency he had previously lacked. **Breathwork** became his daily tool for the morning commute, pre-presentation anxiety before senior corporate colleagues, and late-night insomnia.

2 Write to Release

Daily **journaling** gave him an emotional outlet to externalize anxiety rather than bottling it up. **Rereading** it sometimes allowed him to see problems objectively and identify solutions unclouded by panic.

3 The Whiteboard Priority Matrix

Every night, Arman organizes the following day's priorities on a whiteboard using the **high/low urgency matrix**: "Prioritise **Now**, Prioritise **Later**, Prioritise **Last**."

> **"I have not missed a single deadline after that. It's been months."**
>
> *Arman*



THE RESULT

Today, Arman summarizes his transformation with **quiet clarity**:

> **"I'm in a mentally better position. I'm stronger. I'm self-aware. I'm humble. I take accountability for my actions."**
>
> *Arman*

Academic Turnaround

Arman completed his sixth semester with the highest academic marks of his three years at college. His chronic procrastination dropped to almost nothing, and he started preparing well in advance.

A Voice of His Own

He learned boundary setting: **"I know when to say no, and I do not let others' opinions derail me."**

Grounded Confidence

He learned to distinguish ego from self-confidence: "Ego says: 'I can't mess up, I'm the one that's right.' Self-confidence says: 'If I'm wrong, fine. I messed up. I can work on it.' "

Relationships Repaired

Minimal arguments at home. He became present for a younger brother going through the same pressure he once did. He established respectful relationships with professors and entered a corporate internship understanding that defensiveness limits him.

Resilience Over Perfection

He still slips sometimes. The difference is in how he resets: **"You make a mistake one day, you don't repeat it the second day, because at that point it just becomes a cycle."**

EXPERT ANALYSIS

Why This Worked

By Aparna Gupta, Founder, Inside Out Labs, Helping Kids Thrive



Arman was never lazy, and he was never a "bad student."

He was a young adult running on **survival patterns**: he had a **Pleaser voice** that did not let him establish boundaries, and an **internal Judge** that turned every missed action into a verdict of “not being good enough.”

When **self-criticism** is that loud, executive function collapses – and a defensive ego steps in to protect what remains.

Mental fitness operates identically to physical training. At the beginning, Arman felt as though he was lifting the heaviest weight of his life. But that is the workout that wires and strengthens **neural pathways**.

The program didn't give him fleeting motivation. It gave him **daily, repeatable conditioning**: **a breath, a written page, a priority** plan on a whiteboard. Repeated consistently, they rewired how his nervous system responds under pressure.

> **"It's perfectly fine to be down, but it's not fine to stay down."**
>
> *Arman*

His next chapter is the working world, where the **old *Pleaser*** pattern will inevitably be tested.
But Arman now possesses the **somatic and mental tools** to self-regulate, prioritize his well-being, and lead from authentic self-trust.