

Resilient Retreat, Inc.



RESILIENTRETREAT

Program Evaluation

2020



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Acknowledgements

Resilient Retreat, Inc. thanks our community collaborators for helping us to facilitate these programs for community members impacted by trauma. These programs would not have been possible without the help of: The Brainwave Center (neurofeedback) and InStride Therapy (equine therapy).

Summary

Before and after completing Resilient Retreat programs, participants were asked to complete surveys on their health and wellness. 69 program participants completed this survey with their results being included in this analysis. The majority of this group, composed of trauma survivors and helping professionals (these are self-identified classifications with some participants identifying in both categories) were white (88%) women (87%) with an average age of 50 years. Pre and Post Program survey questions centered around stress, health, hope, coping, mental health, post-traumatic growth, mattering, and emotional regulation. It should be noted that much of the measured programming occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been shown in other research to have a negative impact on well-being and programmatic outcomes. Despite this, participation in Resilient Retreat programming was found to have the following statistically significant positive results for participants:

- Increase in overall health
- Decreased in missed days of work due to stress
- Decrease in depression
- Decrease in suicidal ideation
- Increase in sleep quality
- Decrease in PTSD
- Increase in happiness
- Increase in feeling like you matter to others
- Increase in emotional clarity

Data collected supports the positive impact of Resilient Retreat programming on our participants. Further development of programs to facilitate these positive outcomes is warranted. The positive impact of Resilient Retreat's programs is two-fold: (1) Improvement in the mental and physical well-being of individual participants and (2) Strengthening of the community in which those we have served live.



Introduction

Resilient Retreat, Inc. is a new and innovative approach to help those impacted by trauma and abuse, specifically survivors of abuse and first responders/helping professionals. A vast array of inter-disciplinary evidence-based programs are currently being offered to address the impact of trauma on the mind, body, and spirit (e.g., journaling, yoga, neurofeedback, equine therapy). Resilient Retreat is also building a retreat center that will offer these programs in a comforting three-to-five day retreat. Moreover, Resilient Retreat offers community trainings on trauma-informed care and compassion fatigue on a sliding scale fee. Resilient Retreat, Inc.'s operation and programming is based out of Sarasota, Florida.

All of the programs that Resilient Retreat offers are grounded in research and evidence-based practice for trauma survivors (e.g., Elliott & Falot, 2005, Ginwright, 2018, SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014). From June 2019-August 2020, we offered workshops/support groups, equine therapy, and neurofeedback for survivors of abuse and first responders/helping professionals. Before and after treatments, participants were invited to complete a 1-hour survey that assessed demographic information, victimization history, health, stress levels, exercise, missed days of work, substance use, hope, depression, PTSD, happiness, optimism, resilience, coping strategies, post-traumatic growth, mattering, and emotional regulation. Our goal was to assess how our programs impact the health and well-being of the participants that we serve.

Prior to receiving treatment, participants were screened to confirm that they were a survivor of abuse and/or helping professional/first responder. All services were offered confidentially and free of cost. Consistent with trauma-informed practices of encouraging choice and empowerment, participants were not required to complete the survey. Surveys were administered as an online survey through Google Forms or a paper survey (when internet access was not available).

The results of this survey data will inform (1) the impact of Resilient Retreat's programs on the health and well-being of the participants that we serve and (2) how we can improve our programs to better serve the community.

Survey Data Report

1. Response Rate

Survivors of abuse and first responders/helping professions participated in a survey on health and wellness before and after completing programs with Resilient Retreat.

69 participants participated in the survey. Respondents could choose the questions they wished to answer and could stop the survey at any point. Accordingly, the number of responses presented in the following tables vary by question because some participants chose to skip some of the questions. However, most respondents completed the entire survey.

In Table 1, we present the response rate broken down by the type of participant. It is important to note, that the percentages sum to over 100% as many participants noted more than one experience.

Table 1: Response Rate (N=69)			
		<i>N</i>	%
Type of Participant			
Survivor of abuse		65	94.20%
	Childhood victimization	64	92.75%
	Adult victimization	62	89.99%
First responder/ helping professional		22	31.88%
	Mental Health Professional	14	20.29%
	Crisis Center	4	5.79%
	Medical	4	5.79%
	Police	1	1.45%
	Education	5	7.25%

2. Participant Demographic Information

In Table 2, we present demographic characteristics of participants. Survey respondents were most likely to identify as female (86.96%). The average age of participants was 50 years old and most identified as White (86.96%).

Table 2: Participant Demographics (N=69)		
	<i>N</i>	%
Gender Identity		
Woman	60	86.96%
Man	9	13.04%
Age Range		
18-24	3	4.34%
25-30	5	7.25%
31-35	3	4.35%
36-40	7	10.14%
41-45	4	5.80%
46-50	10	14.49%
51-55	10	14.49%
56-60	11	15.94%
61+	15	21.74%
Race		
White	60	86.96%
Non-White	8	11.59%
Ethnicity		
Not Hispanic/Latino	60	86.96%
Hispanic/Latino	7	10.14%
Residence		
Manatee County	17	24.64%
Sarasota County	36	52.17%
Charlotte County	9	13.04%
Other County in FL	3	4.35%
Out of State	2	2.90%

3. Program Evaluation

Participants answered questions about their stress, health, hope, coping, mental health, post-traumatic growth, mattering, and emotional regulation before and after completing programming with Resilient Retreat. Prior research has suggested that these outcomes are incredibly important in well-being after experiencing or witnessing trauma (e.g., Moschella & Banyard, in press; Springer, et al., 2003).

In Table 3, we present the average scores on these questions before and after treatment at Resilient Retreat. For each measure, we assessed whether the change in scores after programs were statistically significant, meaning there was a low likelihood (5% or less) that the change in outcomes were due to chance alone. Finally, we provided a percentage change which demonstrates how much of a change the participants had on average for each outcome. Despite some of the programming occurring in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been shown to worsen outcomes in the community (Xiong, et al., 2020), we found the following positive results after completing programs at Resilient Retreat:

- Increase in overall health
- Decrease in missed days of work due to stress
- Decrease in depression
- Decrease in suicidal ideation
- Increase in sleep quality
- Decrease in PTSD
- Increase in happiness
- Increase in feeling like you matter to others
- Increase in emotional clarity

Table 3: Pre- and Post-Test Comparison Data (n=30)				
Outcome	Before Treatment Average	After Treatment Average	Significance	% Change
Stress & Health				
Overall Stress	2.17	2.03	Not Significant	-
Overall Health	3.00	3.33	p<.05	11% improvement in overall health
Exercise	4.26	5.40	Not Significant	-
Missed Days of Work (from stress)	4.50	0.40	p<.05	91.1% decrease in missed days of work due to stress
Missed Days of Work (from Health)	0.08	0.33	Not Significant	-
Smoking	0.52	0.55	Not Significant	-
Alcohol	1.00	0.93	Not Significant	-
Drugs	0.38	0.31	Not Significant	-
Hope				
Hope	56.38	55.92	Not Significant	-



Table 3: Pre- and Post-Test Comparison Data (n=30) Continued				
Outcome	Before Treatment Average	After Treatment Average	Significance	% Change
Coping				
Appraisal	6.63	6.92	Not Significant	-
Behavior	11.83	12.46	Not Significant	-
Self-Care	4.29	4.29	Not Significant	-
Behavior Management	4.96	5.17	Not Significant	-
Behavior Other	2.58	3.00	Not Significant	-
Mental Health				
Depression (14 or higher clinical cut off)	16.83	10.71	p<.001	36.36% decrease in depression, from clinically meeting criteria for depression to no longer meeting criteria for depression (79.17% reported a decrease in depression) 40.91% decrease in suicidal ideation 38.76% improvement in sleep
PTSD (15 or higher clinical cut off)	20.90	16.31	p<.05	21.96% decrease in PTSD (68.97% reported a decrease in PTSD)
Resilience	1.93	1.99	Not Significant	-
Happiness	4.05	4.53	p<.05	11.85% increase in happiness
Optimism	23.04	24.21	Not Significant	-
Post-Traumatic Growth				
Post-Traumatic Growth	2.65	2.46	Not Significant	-
Mattering				
Mattering-Overall	2.51	2.81	p<.05	11.95% increase in mattering to others
Awareness	2.58	2.85	p<.05	10.47% increase in feeling like people are aware of their presence
Importance	2.29	2.73	p<.01	19.21% increase in feeling important to others
Reliance	2.66	2.86	Not Significant	-
Emotional Regulation				
Lack of Emotional Awareness	4.54	3.67	Not Significant	-
Lack of Emotional Clarity	3.79	1.96	p<.001	48.28% increase in emotional clarity
Difficulty with Goal-Directed Behavior	6.58	5.67	Not Significant	-
Difficulty with Impulse Control	1.50	1.58	Not Significant	-
Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses	4.88	4.08	Not Significant	-
Limited ER Strategies	3.08	2.83	Not Significant	-



3A. Program Evaluation- Participant Qualitative Feedback

- “Resilient Retreat is a rarity. EVERYONE there has a good vibe. I started with a face to face workshop with writing. When COVID hit, I was able to access support with a daily check-in call. I support myself and my healing through accountability, like having a sponsor. Only this works much better for me as sponsorship in various 12 step programs didn’t work for me. Although I know that has helped many, many people, it didn’t get to the root of my problem, which is CPTSD. But through RR, I have been able to daily touch base with people who are trauma-informed. It has changed my life and I know I am fortunate beyond measure to have an agency filled with wonderful people.”
- “Working with the horses forced me to be present and mindful and adapt [an] on the go thing that I can carry with me in life.”
- “Very professionally handled. I feel this has helped me but it will take some time to know for sure. I am confident that it will.”
- “This was an amazing experience. I learned a lot about myself and how I can overcome obstacles with others. This is a brilliant group!”
- “This incredibly kind service has been life changing for me. I have found greater peace in setting boundaries to keep me safe. I have enjoyed a quieter mind. I have been able to ease my all or nothing thinking by seeing that I do have so many choices [in] times of trouble. The staff and volunteers are so welcoming, kind, and compassionate. What an incredible gift!”
- “The staff at Resilient Retreat are wonderful! I feel respected, safe and cared for every time I talk to them on the phone or via email. I appreciate the Nutrition Workshop I attended with them. The things I learned are very simple to apply to my daily life. They also allowed us to interact and share our thoughts/questions, or remain silent if we didn’t feel like talking. Thank you for helping me feel better physically, as well as succeed mentally and be more balanced emotionally, sensing that I am able to accomplish what I set out to do to help myself and take care of me. I am grateful and I give thanks.”
- “The staff at Resilient Retreat are kind, caring, non-judgmental and compassionate. I didn’t know what to expect when I began, but I am pleased with the results. I feel that the treatments benefited me. I feel less anxious, more thoughtful and calm. I am sleeping better and feel centered. I find pleasure in the small delights of life. I like the way I feel. Thank you for providing me with this opportunity.”
- “Thank you so much Resilient Retreat for the neurofeedback treatment. The experience is life changing & your support throughout the process very helpful. Overall my outlook on life is more optimistic and enjoyable.”
- “My experience in equine therapy has been awesome. I feel empowered and more confident. It was a good way to see how asserting your boundaries to an intimidating animal can create mutual respect.”
- “It has been a great experience. I learned so many tools that will help me be more assertive.”
- “It gives me great comfort I am not alone in facing past abuse. Resilient Retreat has helped to educate me about abuse and normalize my responses to the abuse. I don’t



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feel as isolated and no longer believe I am just sensitive. What happened to me was not ok and not in my imagination. I didn't realize until I became involved with Resilient Retreat how common abuse is. I am deeply grateful for the positive impact Resilient Retreat has had on my life."

- "I was able to better understand myself in a way I really only dreamed of. With every breath I take I believe. I just believe there can be something better."
- "I gained tremendous insight of myself. My confidence grew and assertiveness in going forward in my life. I am very grateful to everyone who guided me on this journey."
- "I found this experience to be very helpful. I found that I had better sleep quality, more creativity, and my mind felt like it had more capacity."
- "I feel as though neurofeedback keeps me more focused. I felt improvement about 10 sessions in. I also feel my emotions are more under control. I recommend it!"
- "Excellent staff, loving horses, and a program around patience, understanding, kindness, and a willing to learn and listen."
- "A great experience. Highly recommend."

4. Program Evaluation by Type of Program

Our goal was to examine the impact of each different type of program on health outcomes for our participants. However, like many non-profits, we had to adjust our programming to respond to COVID-19; moving many of our programs online. As a result, we were not able to collect the data that we hoped we would be able to collect. Collecting surveys from participants is notoriously challenging to do online and some of our programs (e.g., equine therapy) require that they are done in-person.

As a result, we only had a sample of participants large enough to look at the impact of one type of program (neurofeedback) on our participants. In Table 4, we present the average scores on health questions before and after neurofeedback. We found the following positive results after completing neurofeedback:

- Increase in overall health
- Decrease in depression
- Increase in sleep quality
- Decrease in PTSD
- Increase in happiness
- Increase in feeling like you matter
- Increase in emotional regulation (emotional awareness, emotional clarity, goal-directed behavior, and acceptance of emotional responses)

Table 4: Pre- and Post-Test Comparison Data for Neurofeedback (n=16)				
Outcome	Before Treatment Average	After Treatment Average	Significance	% Change
Stress & Health				
Overall Stress	2.19	2.06	Not Significant	-
Overall Health	2.87	3.44	p<.01	19.86% improvement in overall health
Exercise	3.22	4.69	Not Significant	-
Missed Days of Work (from stress)	4.58	0.50	Marginally significant, p=.09	89.08% decrease in missed days of work due to stress
Missed Days of Work (from Health)	0.00	0.13	Not Significant	-
Smoking	0.32	0.37	Not Significant	-
Alcohol	1.00	.94	Not Significant	-
Drugs	0.38	0.32	Not Significant	-
Hope				
Hope	57.32	55.56	Not Significant	-



Table 4: Pre- and Post-Test Comparison Data for Neurofeedback (n=30) Continued				
Outcome	Before Treatment Average	After Treatment Average	Significance	% Change
Coping				
Appraisal	6.13	6.13	Not Significant	-
Behavior	11.75	12.31	Not Significant	-
Self-Care	4.25	4.13	Not Significant	-
Behavior Management	4.94	5.19	Not Significant	-
Behavior Other	2.56	3.00	Not Significant	-
Mental Health				
Depression (14 or higher clinical cut off)	16.69	7.88	p<.001	52.79% decrease in depression, from clinically meeting criteria for depression to no longer meeting criteria for depression 0% change in suicidal ideation 52.94% improvement in sleep
PTSD (15 or higher clinical cut off)	21.31	13.13	p<.01	38.39% decrease in PTSD, from clinically meeting criteria of PTSD to no longer meeting criteria for PTSD
Resilience	1.95	1.99	Not Significant	-
Happiness	4.20	4.90	p<.05	16.67% increase in happiness
Optimism	24.19	25.81	Not Significant	-
Post-Traumatic Growth				
Post-Traumatic Growth	2.40	2.37	Not Significant	-
Mattering				
Mattering-Overall	2.58	2.99	p<.01	15.89% increase in mattering to others
Awareness	2.68	3.05	p<.05	13.81% increase in feeling like people are aware of their presence
Importance	2.25	2.86	p<.01	27.11% increase in feeling important to others
Reliance	2.80	3.08	Not Significant	-
Emotional Regulation				
Lack of Emotional Awareness	4.50	3.31	Marginally significant, p=0.08	26.44% increase in emotional awareness
Lack of Emotional Clarity	4.50	2.0	p<.01	55.56% increase in emotional clarity
Difficulty with Goal-Directed Behavior	7.0	5.38	p<.01	23.14% increase in goal-directed behavior
Difficulty with Impulse Control	1.63	1.38	Not Significant	-
Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses	5.06	3.44	p<.05	32.02% increase in acceptance of emotional responses
Limited ER Strategies	3.19	2.13	Not Significant	-



Use of Findings and Next Steps

The report findings illustrate the importance of providing services to survivors of abuse and first responders/helping professionals that are struggling with mental and physical health outcomes after experiencing trauma. The results from this data will help inform Resilient Retreat, Inc. about:

1. The impact of Resilient Retreat's programs on participants in our community: The results suggested that participants experienced an increase in overall health, sleep quality, happiness, feeling like they matter to others, and emotional clarity after participating in our programs. The results also suggested that participants experienced a decrease in depression, PTSD, and suicidal ideation after participating in our programs.
2. The impact of type of treatment on health outcomes: For example, the results suggested that neurofeedback were particularly helpful for depression, PTSD, and emotional regulation. However, it was not as helpful for suicidal ideation. This suggests that if a participant comes to Resilient Retreat with a specific concern, Resilient Retreat can recommend services that can best address the needs of the participant. More research is needed to further understand the impact of different treatments on participant outcomes.
3. Future ways that Resilient Retreat can improve programming: In particular, it was surprising that we did not find that posttraumatic growth, hope, and resilience improved after completing programs. This suggests that Resilient Retreat should further refine our programs to incorporate more about posttraumatic growth, hope, and resilience.

The present study had several limitations. First, the present study only assessed program outcomes from 69 participants, with only 30 participants completing both an assessment before and after programming. Second, we did not have enough data to compare outcomes across all programs. We would like to collect more data so that we can continue to assess how programming impacts health outcomes for our participants.

We welcome any questions or comments regarding this report. Please contact Sidney Turner, Ph.D., (Sturner@resilientretreat.org) with your feedback.

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