

Resilient Retreat, Inc.



RESILIENTRETREAT

Program Evaluation

2021



Table of Contents

I.	Summary	3
II.	Introduction	4
III.	Survey Data Report	5
	Response Rate	5
	Participant Demographic Information	6
	Program Evaluation	7
	Program Evaluation by Type	11
	Evaluation of Community Trainings	14
IV.	Use of Findings and Next Steps	15
V.	References	16

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Summary

In 2021, Resilient Retreat served 445 participants served and had 2,403 interactions with participants. Resilient Retreat conducted 181 sessions of neurofeedback, 113 equine therapy sessions, and 74 workshop sessions (e.g., support groups, meditation, trauma-informed yoga, journaling).

Before and after completing Resilient Retreat programs, participants were asked to complete surveys on their health and wellness. 246 program participants completed the pretest survey and 97 completed the post-test, 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 (83%) women (89%) with an average age of 48. 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 all 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:

- Decrease in overall stress
- Decrease in depression
 - Decrease in suicidal ideation
- Decrease in PTSD
- Increase in feeling like others rely on you
- Decrease in difficulty with goal-setting and impulse control

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 January 2021-December 2021, 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

In 2021, Resilient Retreat served 445 participants served and had 2,403 interactions with participants. Resilient Retreat conducted 181 sessions of neurofeedback, 113 equine therapy sessions, and 74 workshop sessions (e.g., support groups, meditation, trauma-informed yoga, journaling). Survivors of abuse and first responders/helping professions participated in a survey on health and wellness before and after completing programs with Resilient Retreat.

246 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=246)		
	N	%
Survivor of Abuse		
<i>Total</i>	193	98.0%
Childhood victimization	188	94.9%
Adult victimization	184	93.4%
First Responder / Helping Professional		
<i>Total</i>	113	73.9%
Mental Health Professional	29	12.1%
Crisis Center	9	15.8%
Medical	44	18.3%
Education	35	14.6%
Law	1	0.4%

2. Participant Demographic Information

In Table 2, we present demographic characteristics of participants at pretest. Survey respondents were most likely to identify as female (89.4%). The average age of participants was 48 years old and most identified as White (82.8%).

Table 2: Participant Demographics (N=246)		
	N	%
Gender Identity		
Woman	220	89.4%
Man	24	9.8%
Age Range		
18-24	5	2.0%
25-30	17	6.9%
31-35	17	6.9%
36-40	24	9.8%
41-45	43	17.5%
46-50	27	11.0%
51-55	35	14.2%
56-60	47	19.1%
61+	31	12.6%
Race		
White	198	82.8%
Non-White	40	16.7%
Ethnicity		
Not Hispanic/Latino	148	91.9%
Hispanic/Latino	13	8.1%
Residence		
Sarasota County	135	57.0%
Manatee County	45	19.0%
Other County in FL	22	9.3%
Out of State	35	14.8%

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, 2021; 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 (10% 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:

- Decrease in overall stress
- Decrease in depression
 - Decrease in suicidal ideation
- Decrease in PTSD
- Increase in feeling like others rely on you
- Decrease in difficulty with goal-setting and impulse control

Table 3: Pre- and Post-Test Comparison Data (n=246)				
Outcome	Before Treatment Average	After Treatment Average	Significance	% Change
Stress & Health				
Overall Stress	2.43 48.8% reported high stress	2.22 32.6% reported high stress	p<.01	33.20% decrease in high stress
Overall Health	2.98	3.11	Not Significant	-
Exercise	3.66	4.20	Not Significant	-
Missed Days of Work (from stress)	2.74	1.73	Not Significant	-
Missed Days of Work (from Health)	1.91	1.68	Not Significant	-
Smoking	10.46	1.64	Not Significant	-
Alcohol	1.34	1.23	Not Significant	-
Drugs	.03	.00	Not Significant	-
Hope				
Hope	39.23	40.45	Not Significant	-

Table 3: Pre- and Post-Test Comparison Data (n=246) *continued*

Outcome	Before Treatment Average	After Treatment Average	Significance	% Change
Coping				
Appraisal	6.96	5.90	Not Significant	-
Self-Care	4.72	4.50	Not Significant	-
Behavior Management	5.34	5.55	Not Significant	-
Behavior Other	3.23	3.20	Not Significant	-
Mental Health				
Depression (14 or higher clinical cut off)	15.78 35.6% met clinical criteria for depression	10.58 15.8% met clinical criteria for depression	p<.10	55.62% decrease in depression 42.53% decrease in suicidal ideation
PTSD (15 or higher clinical cut off)	25.55 78.1% met clinical criteria for PTSD	21.55 69.3% met clinical criteria for PTSD	p<.05	11.27% decrease in PTSD
Resilience	2.02	2.05	Not Significant	-
Happiness	4.57	4.94	Not Significant	-
Optimism	14.27	15.60	Not Significant	-
Post-Traumatic Growth				
Post-Traumatic Growth	2.60	2.60	Not Significant	-
Mattering				
Mattering-Overall	2.81	3.01	Not Significant	-
Awareness	2.87	2.95	Not Significant	-
Importance	2.72	2.70	Not Significant	-
Reliance	2.83 52.2% reported high reliance	3.37 75.0% reported high reliance	p<.05	43.68% increase in feeling others rely on them
Emotional Regulation				
Lack of Emotional Awareness	3.98	4.65	Not Significant	-
Lack of Emotional Clarity	2.83	2.40	Not Significant	-
Difficulty with Goal-directed Behavior	6.34 45.7% had difficulty with goal-directed behavior	4.65 25% had difficulty with goal-directed behavior	p<.10	45.30% decrease in difficulty with goal-directed behavior
Difficulty with Impulse Control	2.54 23.9% had difficulty with impulse control	0.95 10.0% had difficulty with impulse control	p<.05	58.16% decrease in difficulty with impulse control



RESILIENTRETREAT

Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses	4.02	2.80	Not Significant	-
Limited ER Strategies	2.89	1.90	Not Significant	-

3A. Program Evaluation- Participant Qualitative Feedback

After treatment at Resilient Retreat, participants answered questions about their satisfaction with the programs and provided feedback about their experience.

- 95.8% of participants reported that the program helped them
- 84.0% of participants reported feeling better after treatment

Below, we present qualitative responses from participants after participating in Resilient Retreat programs.

- “Resilient Retreat captures the essence of a "safe haven" the beautiful grounds, compassionate staff, professional services truly help in the healing from my long-term trauma-like nothing previously experienced.”
- “I am so thankful that Resilient Retreat offers workshops that aid in my healing from childhood abuse. Everyone I have interacted with have been so welcoming. It is refreshing to have a safe place to talk about the hard things that need to be talked about.”
- “For the first time in my life, I feel I'm going to be ok. I am ok. I've come to trust myself. I did this with all the supportive people and programs here.”
- “Resilient Retreat has helped me so much, as I was newly out of my abusive relationship, along with others that have experienced what I have. I felt understood. I am developing the ability to trust myself again. I also am learning how to express and release my feelings to help my nervousness and anxiety, truly leaning into the process and getting better. Thank you.”
- “Resilient Retreat helped me destress and relax from the business of my days. It was a wonderful experience! It has given me a time to destress and give myself so e self-care that we often forget about. It was amazing!”
- “Coming from various traumatizing experiences, Resilient Retreat programs and staff have created a safe space to truly express and move through issues to a new place of empowerment. I feel more centered & aware as I move forward with increased courage and confidence. Thank you so much!”
- “Resilient Retreat is a piece of Heaven on Earth!”
- “It has helped me to get in touch with my feelings and better control with me and others”
- “It has made me stop and practice self care for a couple of hours weekly. It has brought creativity back into my life. I have even redone a part of my house to bring me peace.”
- “Thanks so much! It's wonderful to have a place like Resilient Retreat offering support and workshops for those who have experienced trauma!”
- “Resilient Retreat is a peaceful, wonderful place with people who really care.”
- “I didn't even know how deep I had buried some of my feelings related to trauma until we began to explore them. Now I know that there is more work to do, but I feel confident that with your help someday I would look at them without any regretful feelings attached to them.”
- “A culture of health and wholeness experience, knowledge wisdom training excellent!”



- “The workshop though short (only because we were all enjoying it a lot) covered key points in identifying the benefits of the techniques. I felt very encouraged by the facilitator and it was very nice to have so much support from volunteer's during all our sessions. The group size was perfect and I felt very comfortable and heard, the workbook given at the end of the workshop provided an excellent way for all of us in the group to hone our skills further and to keep in touch.”
- “While participating in many of the various workshops, you are surrounded by beautiful nature. The service offerings are all free, safe, confidential and highly effective in transformation and healing. I absolutely love and appreciate everything about Resilient Retreat, the extra special staff and their mission!”
- “The soundbath therapy workshop gave me a chance to escape and move some of the trauma and stuck energy that had been pent up in my body. I felt relaxed and refreshed coming out of it and was able to be more present with my children after a long day.”
- “By actually seeing different characters acting and conversing with their movements/ emotions was very valuable in exposing my own emotions as I saw this from my own perspective, I would definitely recommend to anyone going through dealing with their traumatic experiences.”
- “I started this with the thought that I would just allow myself sometime to myself. I have 2 teenage boys, work 60+ hours a week with dementia patients and their families, and never do anything for myself. I am leaving here on my 5th week of equine therapy realizing I have stayed busy to not deal with many layers that need to be addressed to become whole again. I have started marriage counseling, begun a celebrate recovery program at my church and am beginning to do things I love again. It truly has been the beginning step for a life changing commitment I have made to myself. I can't thank you enough!”
- “I feel more confident and aware of how to be aware of my breathing when I approach a situation.”
- “I felt less stressed during the sessions focusing more on my position in the saddle and how to steer than my everyday life stressors.”
- “I highly recommend this program. Whether you're an experienced rider or just starting out, you will learn something new every session. It has helped me to get back into riding and more comfortable after 15 years off a horse. I feel less stressed when I'm here and I am grateful for the experience.”
- “Yoga has been proven to help PTSD sufferers and those who already live with pre-existing anxiety or depression. Thank you for having this opportunity available to the community. You are bettering lives with these yoga practices!”
- “I've always known that we all have room for improvement in our lives. Resilient Retreat helped me see the areas I would like to improve.”
- “RR equine therapy is an amazing opportunity to help find some serenity and to be more mindful of my breathing and my needs. It helps me, as a helping professional, get rejuvenated and return to work more motivated and with less compassion fatigue. Highlight for me is being able to not only bond with and 'be one with' the equine; but riding and having control of the reins.”
- “This workshop inspired me to feel better about myself and my possibilities for the future.”

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. Workshop participants only received some of the measures at pre- and post-test. We were in the process of collecting post-test data for neurofeedback as this report was being prepared. In Table 4, we present the average scores on health questions before and after programming.

Among equine therapy participants, we found the following positive results:

- Increase in seeing more positive aspects related to their mental health
- Decrease in depression
- Decrease in PTSD
- Increase in feeling others rely on you
- Decrease in difficulty with impulse control

Among workshop participants, we found the following positive results:

- Decrease in alcohol consumption

Table 4: Pre- and Post-Test Data by Type of Program (N=225)								
Outcome	Equine Therapy (n=29)		Neuro-feedback (n=19)		Workshops (n=177)		Sig.	Outcome
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post		
Stress & Health								
Overall Stress	2.28	2.00	2.39	-	2.45	2.35		
Overall Health	3.17	3.35	2.89	-	2.97	3.05		
Exercise	3.22	3.23	1.53	-	3.91	4.73		
Missed Days of Work (from stress)	2.86	0.63	0.59	-	2.55	2.27		
Missed Days of Work (from Health)	1.89	0.42	3.00	-	2.09	1.93		
Smoking	0.43	0.40	0.39	-	0.62	0.65		
Alcohol	0.67	1.92	3.33	-	1.24*	0.48*	p<.05	Workshop participants reported a 61.29% decrease in alcohol consumption.
Drugs	0.00	0.00	0.00	-	0.01	0.00		
Hope								
Hope	38.14	40.45	41.00		-	-		
Coping								
Appraisal	6.64	5.90	7.44	-	-	-		
Self-Care	4.66	4.50	4.83	-	-	-		
Behavior Management	5.62	5.55	4.89	-	-	-		
Behavior Other	3.48	3.20	2.83	-	-	-		

Table 4: Pre- and Post-Test Data by Type of Program (N=225) continued

Outcome	Equine Therapy		Neuro-feedback		Workshops		Sig.	Outcome
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post		
Mental Health Stigma								
Mental Health Discrimination	19.22	22.00	-	-	-	-		
Mental Health Disclosure	21.44	20.57	-	-	-	-		
Mental Health Positive Aspects	11.00*	16.75*	-	-	-	-	p<.10	<i>Equine therapy</i> participants reported a 52.27% increase in positive aspects related to their mental health
Mental Health								
Depression (14 or higher clinical cut off)	16.29*	10.58*	14.94	-	-	-	p<.10	<i>Equine therapy</i> participants reported a 35.05% decrease in depression
PTSD (15 or higher clinical cut off)	19.30*	12.72*	17.00	-	27.72	25.60	p<.10	<i>Equine therapy</i> participants reported a 34.09% decrease in PTSD
Resilience	1.94	2.06	2.03	-	2.03	2.05		
Happiness	4.61	4.94	4.51	-	-	-		
Optimism	14.44	15.60	14.00	-	-	-		
Post-Traumatic Growth								
Post-Traumatic Growth	2.18	2.14	2.89	-	2.75	2.65		
Mattering								
Mattering-Overall	2.70	3.01	2.98	-	-	-		
Awareness	2.78	2.95	3.00	-	-	-		
Importance	2.53	2.70	3.01	-	-	-		
Reliance	2.78*	3.37*	2.92	-	-	-	p<.05	<i>Equine therapy</i> participants reported a 21.22% increase in feeling others rely on them
Emotional Regulation								
Lack of Emotional Awareness	4.68	4.65	2.89	-	-	-		
Lack of Emotional Clarity	3.14	2.40	2.33	-	-	-		
Difficulty with Goal-Directed Behavior	6.11	4.65	6.72	-	-	-		



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Difficulty with Impulse Control	2.32*	0.95*	2.89	-	-	-	p<.05	<i>Equine therapy</i> participants reported a 59.05% decrease in difficulty with impulse control
Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses	4.00	2.80	4.06	-	-	-		
Limited ER Strategies	2.86	1.90	2.94	-	-	-		



5. Evaluation of Community Trainings

In addition to programming, Resilient Retreat offers trainings on trauma for the community. To date, trainings have been conducted on trauma-informed care, compassion fatigue, self-care, well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic, healing-centered engagement, and peer support. From January 2021-December 2021, Resilient Retreat provided 54 trainings to 1,830 attendees. After each training, participants answered questions about their satisfaction with the training and provided feedback about their experience.

- 100% of respondents stated that they would recommend the training to others (n=87)
- 99% of respondents found the information workshop to be helpful (n= 74)
- 95% of respondents reported that they had gained new knowledge from their attendance at the workshop (n=75)
- On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest, on average, respondents rated the presenter as a 4.96 (n=96)
- On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest, on average, respondents rated the presentation as a 4.60 (n=67)

Below, we present qualitative responses from participants after participating in Resilient Retreat trainings.

- “Overall, the training offered so much to the staff and myself. I loved the concrete strategies that were offered. The many different strategies provided different opportunities for each and every one of us to find something that we can use as an outlet to be reflective, mindful and allow us time to breathe.”
- “The information was presented in such a “down to earth”, approachable way.”
- “An enthusiastic, super positive, experienced, sincere instructor.”
- “I have 2 pages of notes. So many great takeaways.”
- “I enjoyed the scientific approach to mental health.”
- “This could not have come at a better time. Definitely feeling compassion fatigue and burnout in our office. This was incredibly helpful and I plan to share at our next team meeting.”



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 a decrease in overall stress, depression, suicidal ideation, and PTSD after participating in our programs. The results also suggested that participants experienced an increase in feeling like others rely on them and a decrease in difficulty with goal-setting and impulse control after participating in our programs.
2. The impact of type of treatment on health outcomes: For example, the results suggested that equine therapy was particularly helpful for depression, PTSD, and impulse control. However, it was not as helpful for alcohol consumption like workshop programming. 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. The impact of Resilient Retreat's training program on community members impacted by trauma. Training participants would recommend the training to others, found the training helpful, and gained new knowledge.
4. Future ways that Resilient Retreat can improve programming: In particular, it was surprising that we did not find that hope and resilience improved after completing programs. These findings maybe to due to the particularly challenging time in history with the COVID-19 pandemic. Resilient Retreat will continue to refine our programs to incorporate more about hope, resilience, and posttraumatic growth.

The present study had several limitations. First, many of our participants participated in more than one program (e.g., neurofeedback and workshops). Second, we did not measure how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted key outcomes (e.g., missed days from work). For example, due to remote and hybrid work options, it is possible that participants may have missed fewer days of work due to health and stress than prior to the pandemic. 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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