



Timor Awakening 22

24 February to 4 March 2023

Participant Evaluation and Feedback

Your reflections on the Program, your experience and growth:

- 1) How are you feeling today in comparison to how you were feeling before coming?
 - A lot calmer and my emotions are more regulated.
 - I feel amazing today I have a lot of clarity and a clear direction on change I want to make. Before coming, I was anxious and knew I need to make changes but didn't know where to start.
 - Overwhelmed but in a good way; I feel I have opened up and feeling hope again for the first time.
 - Less anxious, clear/ clarity, insightful, validated, connected, relieved, acknowledged, supported.
 - On a scale of 1-10 I was a 4 on arrival at the program and now I am feeling a 10.
 - Feeling privileged to be with like-minded tribe sharing and just being together.
 - I am feeling more positive about making changes to my life to help myself and to help others
 - Relaxed and more aware of myself
 - I feel great, I feel motivated to make necessary changes towards a more fulfilling life.
 - Less overwhelmed emotionally and ready to make changes.
 - Calmer- was quite anxious and stressed on arrival. Excited to get started on a few plans
 - Significantly more connected to the people and mentors in the course and more connected to everyone in the Open Arms team.
 - Less anxious, more enlightened, increased resilient to change, recharged even though I am drained.
 - I was anxious on arrival – this was for multiple reasons: one reason being due to my anxiety and the other being the one responsible for initiating the Open Arms team to participate so there was concern if it didn't go well. However today I feel that it could not have gone better! The team leant in and explored beyond what I could of ever imagined! I myself feel a bit emotionally wrecked but I think this is the start of my personal changes.
 - Physically better I have not had much chance to engage in PT, team activities and exposure since the arrival of my newborn.



2. What discussion topic was the most interesting and impactful?

- I liked the overall emphasis on wellbeing, including exercise and nutrition.
- Compassion fatigue; I thought there was something wrong with me but now understand what's going on and how I can work on fixing it.
- Compassion fatigue – great video and clip; big talk – cutting through the shit and just connecting with someone was very powerful; circle time – everyone's bravery to be open; John's talk – wow sharing and feeling his journey with him.
- Mentors – I had 2 great mentors in my life that had a massive impact. Talking about the importance of finding a good mentor and how peer support provides mentorship was a lightbulb moments.
- Compassion fatigue – very relevant to personal situation.
- Holistic health and selfcare.
- Theory provided on peer mentoring, backed by life experience and thoughtful discussion; experiential stories/journeys of John and Pete are powerful inflection reflection points in developing and showing the real life impact of the theory discussed in the program; Christians short talks on Psychology.
- The topics about the values of my story, and that my voice should be heard.
- I found the circle at the end of the day to be the most impactful, it was great to hear and see people open up and share their insights. I also enjoyed peters life story as if provided me with a new perspective on my obstacles.
- John White's testimony and compassion fatigue.
- Compassion fatigue – wasn't aware of it as an actual condition; John white and Pete Rutland's different stories that inspire resilience were incredibly impactful.
- Big talk – had the fortunate experience of completing it with a team member who had never met and had the most wonderful conversation with them; john white talk was absolutely brilliant; Pete from RSL advocate was a great talk about resilience.
- Professional – difference between peer and mentor; personal – moral injury
- Compassion fatigue- big light bulb moment for me; active listening; moral healing; John and Pete's stories.
- Farmer Dave and organic sustainable farming. It is an area I have been interested in and believe is important, but have not had the time and space to engage. Great kickstarter for a new project and future research/ experimentation (wish he game more information handouts though)



3) What was the most effective part of the program, in terms of education or inspiring your intention to change, and why?

- I really liked the big talk exercise and the openness of speakers that shared their stories it really set the scene for the group to be able to share our own experiences.
- I got something from every session which created a small piece of the puzzle each time; I not only learnt from the program material but also from the sharing of all participants mentors of the program.
- Morning swims – colins energy, rows positivity; trying activities I would normally say no to yoga, surfing; Educational – all of it was amazing and delivered so well.
- Circle work-reflections – provides everyone with the opportunity to share at their own pace and without any negativity.
- Loved journey circle and listening to others insight to add to my own insight. Great connecting with mentors on course, everyone of them had a lot of value to add to the program.
- Reiteration of self-care and community.
- The focus on extending beyond just being “okay” to live a life of hoy and meaning and then using this to reach out to others.
- A change in habits and daily progress.
- I thoroughly enjoyed the VHA education talks prior to PT as it reemphasised what I already knew about routine and the importance of exercise. I also liked being around vets for the first time in a long time it has inspired me to join a vet surfing ESO and take up surfing.
- Listening to others’ stories which made me realise I am not alone and that people do care for the wellbeing of veterans.
- Circle time – to hear different opinions on the same on similar topics give you different ways to look at things. This allows you to grow your tool bag to help yourself and others.
- 2 very inspiring individuals John and Pete discussing their life experiences in such an open, direct and vulnerable way. Ill never complain about my injuries again and focus on what I can do rather than what I cant.
- Circle time and personal reflection; listening to personal stories (Brad, Pete, John, Scotty); stories gave me strength and motivated me for change; circle time allowed me to reflect and be vulnerable and hear other peoples stories.
- Farm tour and nutrition and the physical activity! It’s the stuff I know I should be doing but I needed a reminder of the importance of both nutrition and exercise have on your overall health.
- The informal. One on one chats outside of the activities and forming connections, which were supported by classic activities around vulnerability and ‘ big talk’.



4) How was your support on the program?

- I felt very supported and safe enough to contribute in the group activities
- Great, Nathan often checked in and was very kind and gentle which I appreciated. ; I also was lucky enough to have the support of my colleagues who are also my close friends.
- My mentor dawn, AKA woolfie AKA Gwen. Is a beautiful lady with a big heart and a kind soul. Her support throughout has been; amazing, she needs a pay rise, but all the support from ‘mentors’ has been fantastic. Thank you.
- Awesome – Scotty Mac is the man. I think he gained from us as much as we gained from him.
- Amazing! 10/10 – Pete was flexible giving me time and space when needed.
- Support on the TA program has been great from the team peer mentor to all the other mentors and the participants.
- Excellent, mentally, physically, emotionally and logistically I was supported; my mentor Lee was constantly supporting and checking in with me.
- Excellent, all TA staff were approachable, friendly and willing to help.
- Adequate
- Good – Dawn is a very kind and compassionate person and easy to talk to
- Adequate. Me mentor checked in when he needed to. I didn’t feel I had a lot of time with him but as he explained he felt we were travelling fine, he didn’t need to . the support from the rest of the team was really good.
- I felt supported throughout the course.
- Amazing support all around.
- Amazing. The TA/VCA team are the most compassionate, patient and energetic people I have ever met!
- Great, people were understanding, considerate and accommodating of my circumstances with wife and baby. This was important in managing and potentially distracting circumstance.

5) How does this program differ from other programs or treatment you have experienced?

- I have not been on a program like this to be able to compare
- This was the best program I have been on. I felt there was a perfect balance of intensity and own time which allowed me to wind down and reflect. I am usually exhausted on other programs making it more difficult to properly absorb the content.
- Its honest, live experience with humour, safety and non-judgement. I have loved it.
- This is the first program I have done like this.
- Real Connection!!
- To date, I have not encountered any other similar live in programs. This is where I think the strength lies with this program
- This program is holistic, focussing on mind and body and also the focus on assisting others in whatever way you can.
- This is my first program.
- I have never felt more inspired to make so many changes to my life. I am excited to get home and get started. The positivity and authenticity of the mentors was great.
- Specific to what I needed. The inclusion of Open Arms staff added a different perspective to the veteran space.
- The holistic view and focus on growth and the future rather than the past. The access that



you have at anytime to people that have endured similar situations to you so valuable.

- Its holistic this course tries to touch on all the aspects of your life and provide you with the information necessary to make change.
- Longer more immersive, less clinical and more human to human.
- I have never done anything like this! I have dabbled in therapy etc and of course applied techniques I have learnt in my career. This made everything make sense from a wellbeing perspective!
- The holistic aspect, many programs/ retreats I have been on have perhaps gone 'deeper' with the material covered and circle time sharing, but have lacked in other areas holistic health (especially PT, fiestas and nutrition). Also, there is a good blend of fun/play and serious talk. Many great programs I have been on focus in the serious/trauma side and can be rather intense and emotionally draining.

6) **What could be done to improve the Timor Awakening Program?**

- I honestly have no suggestion; I have been blown away by all aspects.
- More Hugh time! Ommm; maybe more swimming time for G.C as a team.
- I think a walk and talk at the start of the program would be a great ice breaker, especially for the more introverted. (outside of the walk for Pt)
- Nothing comes to mind great work team!!
- An extended session with Christian on practical psychological change
- Continue to develop the program as more finding/ education/ updates occur.
- Perhaps more constructive social activities, a chance to have a conversation with outcomes during the program with a person you don't know.
- I think having more than 2 people (mentees) in a mentor group maybe 4 -6 and 2 mentors would be beneficial but overall the program is very good; we say a lot during this program and with the majority of veterans suffering some form of injuries more movement throughout the day could be beneficial.
- I felt that there was a bit too much of a focus/ push to learn to become a mentor or to better understand the process of although I would assure that the course would normally not run scenarios in their standard courses.
- More 1:1 with the mentor, from simple designated check ins to more structured chats. Would be a soft into to someone who may be adverse to help seeking.
- I honestly cant answer this right now. I have found it to be transformative and I worry if anything changed it would lost that magic.
- More depth in some of the topics with contributions from different disciplines. One example – 'big talk' is a great topic and way to let the zone. However many big/relevant stories remained centered



7. What is the greatest challenge? In what area do you feel stuck?

- Prioritising myself
- The anxiety before the program was tricky however deciding to attend with an open mind helped to reduce the anxiety.
- Feeling things I have not for a long time.
- I have had a lot of clarity from this program, I think I feel more ' free' than stuck.
- My greatest challenge was being away from family. However the support I received from staff and participants made this challenge easier to overcome.
- I personally did not identify any challenges for myself on the program; all staff were open and approachable.
- Connecting with others , making big and small talk; I find friend ships and conversation difficult.
- Spiritual awareness, I need to dedicate time and effort in this area.
- I still feel as though I should be able to share more but I am improving
- Fearing change. Remaining in my comfort zone.
- Worrying about what other people think of me.
- I actually found myself getting in my head throughout the course in different periods, feeling socially awkward and over compensating which had made me realise that I still have work to do with myself acceptance.
- I feel my connection to my soul is uncharted this course has given me food for thought.
- Anxiety, phobia public speaking.

8) What is your advice for DVA and the ESO community to enhance results in reducing Veteran Suicide, domestic violence and helping veterans onto the earliest possible path of wellbeing.

- Continue to invest in lived experience and see the value of seeking guidance from veterans prior to implementing change.
- More education to staff and an understand of support services available, with the confidence of managing expectations - eg, wait times, availability, risk.
- DVA need to offer more supports for carers and families, that will reach further.
- Inspire a new purpose and meaning by a foundation of community and connection.
- Working together rather than independently; supporting each other which make a stronger support base for those who are struggling.
- Focus on developing meaning and purpose in veterans lives and support programs that do this. De-emphasises the focus on dependence that I believe the current DVA/ESO environment cultivates.
- DVA need to have more human interaction not just automated responses. More employees, this will reduce clients and allow more personal interaction.
- Streamline the claims process and advertise the full suite of available services and how to access them



- Gaining access to current serving soldiers. At recruit training/ officers training but also to roll out a wellness program package within defence not just to soldiers transitioning out of defence.
- ESO would be better if they talked to each other more, more collaboration is needed in the space; DVA need more staff, the demand is too high; I think the ADF should provide staff with compulsory MHFA & ASIST training or at a minimum safe Talk, Bi-Annually.
- Education and early intervention in order to dispel myths.
- Peer support programs

9) How do you intend to engage in ongoing support for your personal growth?

- Look for more organisation that fit what I'm looking for and prioritising my needs and actually reach out and be involved in opportunities available.
- Connecting more in the community
- I am going to book in with my GP for an overall health check and for referrals to a exercise physio and nutritionist.
- Check in with professional mentors to see how Im tracking, further psychoeducation and study/ learning.
- Find a mentor!
- Increase my network with different tribes to allow me the ability to give more options for my clients and friends.
- I intend to go to a psychologist or therapist to explore my mental wellbeing further. I have avoided this assistance for many years.
- Stay in touch with VCA; reach out to ESO's
- I am going to join a veteran surfing group. Something I never thought I needed or would do.
- Connecting more within my community
- Staying connected to relationships established through two Timor Awakenings and identifying some mentors.
- I think ill reach out to one of my friends and ask if hes interest in becoming accountable buddies with me; ill consider putting money aside for seminars of interest; continue supervision both internal/external for work.
- Lean heavily into my internal/external supervision; focus on my I can control and engage into these activities.
- Linking in with a mentor; filling my own cup more; applying a routine

10) Please provide feedback for St Georges Defence Suites as a venue. Please list recommendations to pass on to St George's Management.

- I think it's a great venue, extremely calming location and seemed to be a good location for support from external parties.
- The venue is amazing, the rooms were very comfortable, clean and secure. They are also family friendly.
- Towel and sheet change service (one for one swap). The accommodation, location and standard was amazing, Thank You.
- Awesome, lifts are slow to arrive so most took the stairs; a Jacuzzi or hot spa; daily or inter-stay cleaning for rooms and towels/ linen changes.



- Great staff; outstanding facilities; Thank you
- The venue for this course is perfect. The ability for me to facilitate my own self-care has been awesome.
- This is an excellent venue for the program, its environment is complementary to the nature of the program. One improvement I could suggest is an on-site sauna, there are proven mental and physical benefits to sauna use.
- Awesome facilities, extra towels more readily available.
- Increase housekeeping (linen/towel change).
- St Georges apartments are perfect. I would definitely stay here again, particularly now knowing the history.
- Fabulous venue. Maybe some bean bags or other sitting options in the common room.
- Great location, friendly staff, good facility.
- Could not fault this amazing space, we will be back.
- Cannot fault them! Absolute luxury, amazing location

11) Any additional comments or feedback

- Thank you so much.
- Thank you for the educations but for the well needed reset.
- Awesome program, I have learnt a lot.
- Great program I feel privileged to have heard so many inspiring stories, what is most inspiring is the fact VCA mentors are volunteers
- I came on this course as a reserve and found that the group made up of Open Arms members. I can see how beneficial it has been for them as a group and organisation but I felt for them that their bosses were present. It also made it harder as an outsider to fit into their already formed relationships and at times I felt isolated because of this. I feel if the course was solely ran for them or with a random selection of people would be more beneficial.
- The mentors on the course were fantastic, very warm and welcoming. It's the people that make the course great.
- Loved it and loved to see how you roll.
- You guys are making a difference in the veteran world and the lives that will be transformed is remarkable; I feel so honoured to have been able to participate, thank you.