

MATES 4 MATES

Supporting Injured Defence Force Mates.



mates4mates.org

The Healing Power of Horses

Suzanne Desailly
General Manager Operations



Our Programs.

Mates4Mates provides physical, psychological and social support services to improve the wellbeing of veterans and families.



**Physical
Rehabilitation &
Wellbeing Services**



**Psychological
Services**



**Social
Connection
Activities**

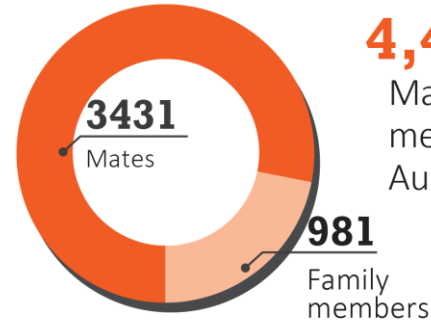


**Skills for
Recovery**



Our Impact.

26,242 face-to-face contacts nationally.



4,412
Mates and family members across Australia.

13,892

Physical rehabilitation and **wellbeing connections**

8,062

Social connections fostered through regular activities for Mates and families

4,175

Psychology appointments were provided to Mates and family members experiencing mental health-related issues.

113

Mates participated in a life-changing **Rehabilitation Adventure Challenge** in Australia or internationally

Why Equine Therapy?

- Mental health issues, particularly PTS, in veteran population is well documented
- Partners of veterans vulnerable to psychological distress
- Stigma associated with accessing traditional psychological support
- Growing interest in 'adjunct' therapy interventions
- Research base for Equine Therapy – can help people manage anxiety & depression, build trust & confidence, enhance social skills
- Majority of research is on child and adolescent populations – limited in veteran populations

Our Equine Program

- Adjunct intervention that incorporates experiential activities with horses with a traditional framework (Relational Gestalt Therapy)
- Delivered in conjunction with Equine Encounters Australia (EEA) – certified with Equine Psychotherapy Institute Australia Model of Equine-Assisted Learning
- 5-day residential program
- 2 EEA facilitators and 1 Mates4Mates Psychologist



Our Equine Program

- Sessional work is experiential – learning new skills to create social engagement (no horse riding)
- Therapeutic work is integrated throughout the activities by inviting participants to notice and explore their issues, challenges and behaviours and build awareness of their responses (fear, anxiety, anger)
- No recounting of past experiences
- Groups discussions
- Couples and Individual Veteran Programs

Table 1. Content for individual and couples equine-assisted therapy program.

Activity	Purpose
Herd Meets	Daily activity each morning to raise awareness that every day is different for self and others.
Ground Work	Based around learning natural horsemanship skills, these activities are undertaken daily and build in complexity and proximity to the horse.
Grooming	Skills based activity where participants make close and tactile contact with a horse.
Liberty Work (No contact with lead rope)	In the latter stages of the program, the participants 'tie-off' the lead ropes and move the horse by energetic connection only.
Obstacle Course	'Metaphorical' activity where the course represents obstacles in life.
Trail Walks	This activity goes from the known to the unknown, as the group takes their horses out from a fenced arena into open fields and along bush trails.
Mindfulness	Led mindfulness sessions are incorporated into the program. This is used to support grounding, self-regulation and provide resources for use at home.
Photo Languages	Undertaken at a suitable point in the program to help participants view themselves and their perspectives.
Group Discussions	Group discussions are led by an EEA facilitator and form a major part of the program
Couples Dates (Couples Program Only)	Each day the couple will go on a date to give the couple quality time to re-connect and share the days' experience.
Couples Counselling (Couples Program Only)	Each couple is assigned a 'counsellor' from within the Facilitation team. Each day the couples will have a private session with their 'counsellor' to discuss their day, their date and any issues that have arisen.

Program Evaluation

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Evaluation of an equine-assisted therapy program for veterans who identify as 'wounded, injured or ill' and their partners

Madeline Romaniuk^{1,2,3,4*}, **Justine Evans**¹, **Chloe Kidd**¹

1 Gallipoli Medical Research Institute, Veteran Mental Health Initiative, Greenslopes Private Hospital, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, **2** Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, **3** Institute of Health & Biomedical Innovation, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, **4** Institute of Resilient Regions, University of Southern Queensland, Springfield Central, Queensland, Australia

* romaniukm@ramsayhealth.com.au

Program Evaluation

- Conducted by the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation (GMRF)
- 10 programs in 2016
- 47 participants (25 in Individual Program; 22 in Couples Program)
- Non-controlled within-subjects longitudinal design
- Between-subjects also conducted to compare outcomes of the Individual and Couples Program

Program Evaluation

- DVA ethics approval
- Measures completed pre, post and 3 month following program
 - PCL-5
 - DASS-21
 - Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ)
 - Quality of Life, Enjoyment and Satisfaction Questionnaire-Short Form (Q-LES-Q-SF)

Results

Frequency, means, and standard deviations of measures across data collection time points.

	Individual Program						Couples Program					
	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention		Follow-Up		Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention		Follow-Up	
DASS-21 Depression	25	10.72 (5.83)	25	4.80 (4.10)	12	12.58 (6.45)	22	9.00 (6.06)	22	3.77 (3.77)	16	5.44 (2.29)
DASS-21 Anxiety	25	9.68 (4.89)	25	6.04 (4.26)	12	7.92 (5.05)	22	7.95 (5.82)	22	5.45 (4.00)	16	4.31 (3.46)
DASS-21 Stress	25	12.84 (4.84)	25	7.48 (4.79)	12	12.33 (4.77)	22	11.68 (4.91)	22	7.09 (5.09)	16	7.88 (3.85)
PCL-5	20	43.70 (17.82)	20	29.60 (17.90)	12	47.92 (17.51)	22	40.73 (20.27)	22	28.41 (19.75)	16	24.88 (16.57)
OHQ	25	3.11 (0.83)	23	3.70 (0.99)	11	3.16 (1.14)	22	3.25 (0.83)	22	3.75 (0.74)	12	3.41 (0.51)
Q-LES-Q-SF	25	37.88 (9.38)	25	47.88 (10.37)	12	35.92 (9.63)	22	39.86 (9.75)	22	49.64 (7.30)	16	43.31 (8.59)

DASS-21 = Depression Anxiety Stress Scale– 21. PCL-5 = Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Checklist–DSM-5. OHQ = Oxford Happiness Questionnaire.

Q-LES-Q-SF = Quality of Life, Enjoyment and Satisfaction Questionnaire–Short Form.

Results

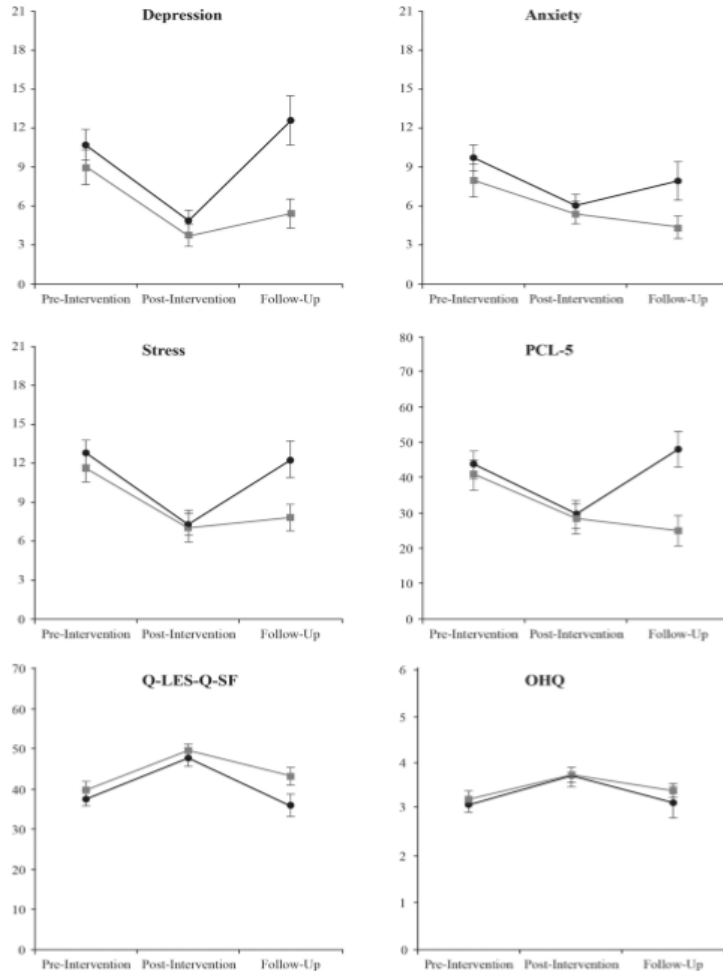


Fig 1. Mean scores on outcome measures at pre-intervention, post-intervention, and follow-up for each program. Grey line represents Couples Program. Black line represents Individual program. Error bars represent standard errors.

Results

Individual Program

- Individual and Couples programs, significantly fewer psychological symptoms and significantly greater levels of happiness and quality of life at post-intervention.
- Significantly lower scores on the **DASS-21** and **PCL-5** at post-intervention.
- Significantly higher scores on the **OHQ** and **Q-LES-Q-SF** at post-intervention.
- Follow up at 3 months: significantly higher scores on the **PCL-5** and the **DASS-21** depression and stress subscales. Significantly lower scores on the **OHQ** and **Q-LES-Q-SF**.
- No significant differences between pre-intervention and follow-up on any of the measures.

Results

Couples Program

- Maintained a reduction in symptoms of **depression, stress, and PTSD** at 3 month follow-up compared to participants in the Individual program.
- Significantly lower scores on the **depression and stress DASS-21** subscales as well as the **PCL-5** at post-intervention and follow-up compared to pre-intervention.
- Significantly lower scores on the **anxiety** subscale at follow-up compared to pre-intervention.
- No significant difference in **anxiety** scores between pre-intervention and post-intervention.
- No significant difference in **DASS-21** and **PCL-5** scores between post-intervention and follow-up.
- Significantly higher scores on the **OHQ** and **Q-LES-Q-SF** at post-intervention vs. pre-intervention; however, there was no significant difference between pre-intervention scores and follow-up on these measures.
- Significantly lower **Q-LES-Q-SF** scores at follow-up compared to post-intervention.

Results Summary

- **Individual Program** - symptoms of **depression, anxiety, stress, and PTSD significantly reduced** and participants' self-reported **happiness and quality of life significantly increased** from the beginning of the program to the conclusion of the program.
 - Results short-term on all measures, except anxiety, returning to pre-intervention levels three months following the conclusion of the program.
- **Couples Program** - symptoms of **depression, stress, and PTSD** significantly reduced by the conclusion of the program and remained three months later.
 - Gradual reduction in **anxiety** from pre-intervention resulting in a **significant reduction** at the three month follow-up point.
 - Significantly higher scores on the **OHQ** and **Q-LES-Q-SF** at post-intervention vs. pre-intervention; however, there was no significant difference between pre-intervention scores and follow-up on these measures.

Discussion

- Reduced psychological symptoms were maintained at 3 months follow-up for participants of the Couples program.
- The Couples program may facilitate greater psychological outcomes long-term than the Individual program.
- Importance of partner involvement:
 - rehearsal and reinforcement
 - improved quality of relationship associated with better mental health
 - partners willingness to engage in therapy

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