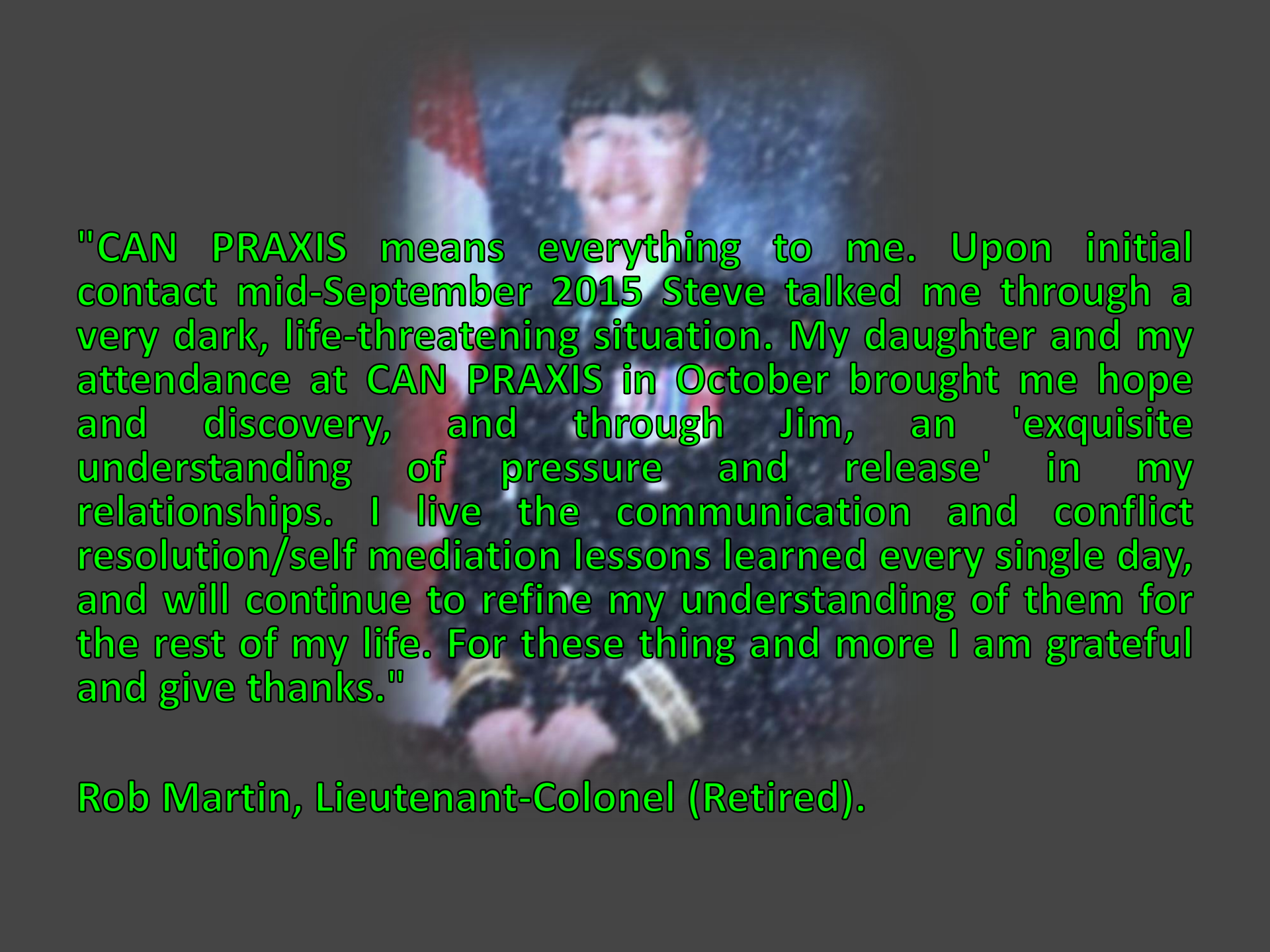




**Can Praxis: A Model of Therapeutic
Learning for Veteran Couples
Impacted by PTSD**

A blurred photograph of a man in a military uniform, likely Rob Martin, smiling and holding a child. The man is wearing a dark uniform with gold rank insignia on his shoulders. The child is wearing a dark jacket with yellow trim. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be an indoor setting with other people.

"CAN PRAXIS means everything to me. Upon initial contact mid-September 2015 Steve talked me through a very dark, life-threatening situation. My daughter and my attendance at CAN PRAXIS in October brought me hope and discovery, and through Jim, an 'exquisite understanding of pressure and release' in my relationships. I live the communication and conflict resolution/self mediation lessons learned every single day, and will continue to refine my understanding of them for the rest of my life. For these thing and more I am grateful and give thanks."

Rob Martin, Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired).



Always begin with the end in mind...

To have the **Can Praxis** Therapy program considered an eligible treatment benefit in the long term mental health strategies of organizations like the VAC and RCMP

Can Praxis EAL Program



PTSD CRISIS & CONFLICT

SILENCE = SUICIDE

SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE = REALISTIC HOPE

TALK & SURVIVE

Can Praxis EAL Program



The **Can Praxis** EAL program

Innovative and Unique

- 1. Veterans' Spouses/Partners**
- 2. Self-mediation techniques**
- 3. Qualifications**

Can Praxis Program Objectives:

- **repair relationships**
- **interpersonal skills and knowledge**
- **relief from their PTSD symptoms**
- **gain emotional stability**



Why include Spouses/Partners?

“My spouse is coping with PTSD – I needed to learn to cope with his coping. PTSD was a big scary entity that I avoided. We no longer leave things unresolved by avoiding them.”

THE PUDDLE

What is practical Self-Mediation?

(based on the work of Dana, 2006: Managing Differences)

- **A communication strategy**
- **Develop behavioural skills**
- **Couple Mediation... they do it**
- **Not you against me, its us against the problem.**

Why is a Self-Mediation process required?

“I find I am better able to process any situation that arises – conflict with my family, resolution of old problems, working through my own issues of PTSD & abuse & anger.

I have a concrete mental place of reference to return to (point of return)

that I can use for myself and remind my spouse as well. I have confidence that arguments & disagreements can ALL be resolved – maybe not fixed 100%, but we can get to a place of win/win – agree to disagree – and be HEARD by all involved. It is an amazingly FREEING thing to experience.”

Intended Outcome:

**Relationships are difficult to change.
Without change people die.**

**Improve communication
Change behavior
Repair relationships
Flourish**

**Horses Relieving
Operational Stress
Through Experiential
Relationships (HOLSTER)**

The scientific implementation process includes an instrument validation process for the **HOLSTER** and its companion instrument, **Benefitting from Experiential Learning Together (BELT)**

**Horses Relieving Operational Stress Through
Experiential Relationships (HOLSTER)**

**The HOLSTER Scale:
Phase II – The Riding Experience**

There is something about the outside of a horse
that is good for the inside of a man.
(Winston S. Churchill)

Developed by:



In Partnership with:
C. Randy Duncan, PhD

Revised August 15, 2014 |

Sample as of Sept. 30, 2015

24 workshops starting from March, 2013:

Data Point 1 (End of Initial EAL Session):

- 108 Veterans & Spouses/Partners
- 2 Veterans & Daughters
- 5 RCMP Members & Spouses/Partners

115 Total Couples

Data point 2 (back in everyday environment):

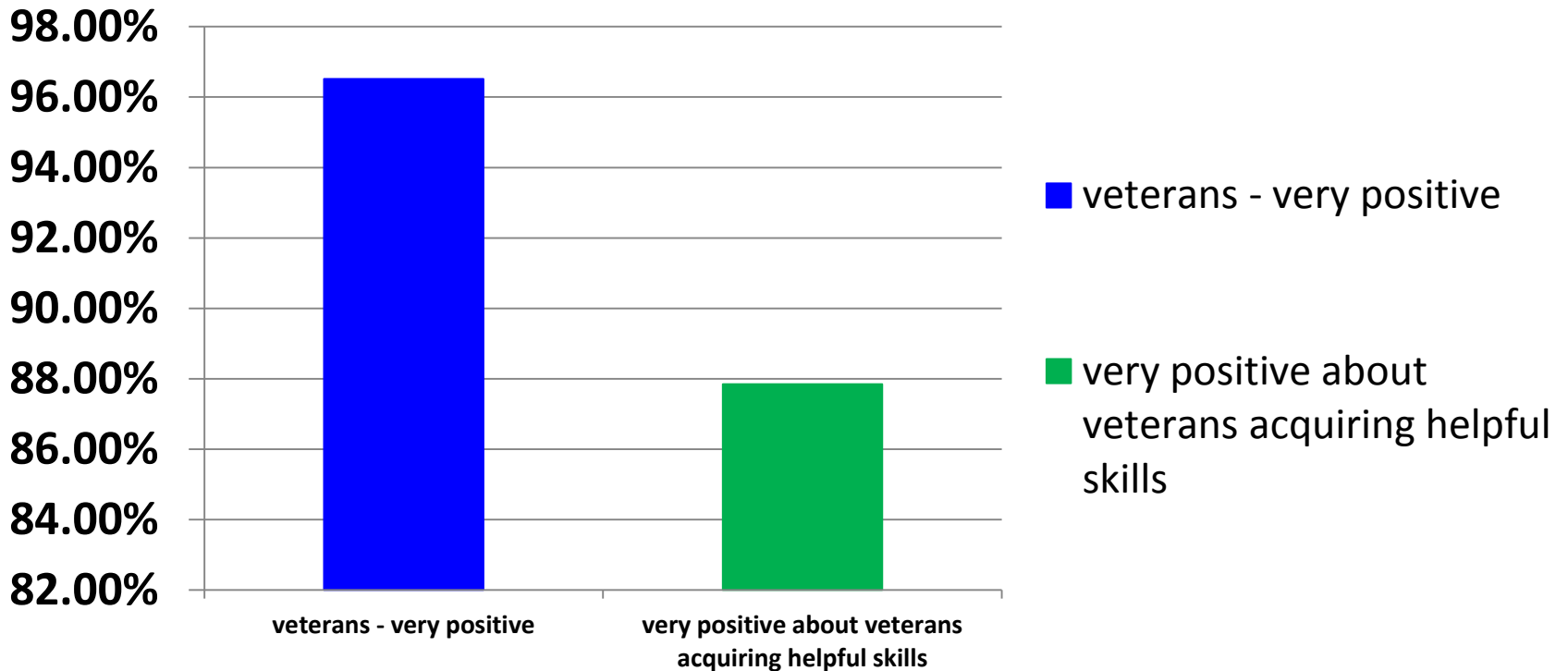
- **22 Veterans & Spouses/Partners (11.7 months post treatment)**

1st Data Point for Measuring Outcomes:

1. At the end of the 3-day EAL session:
 - i) **Veterans' self report of:**
 - a) reduced PTSD symptoms, and
 - b) acquisition of self-mediation skills and knowledge
 - ii) **Spouses/Partners perception through self-report of:**
 - a) Veterans' reduction in PTSD symptoms, and
 - b) Veterans' acquisition of self-mediation skills

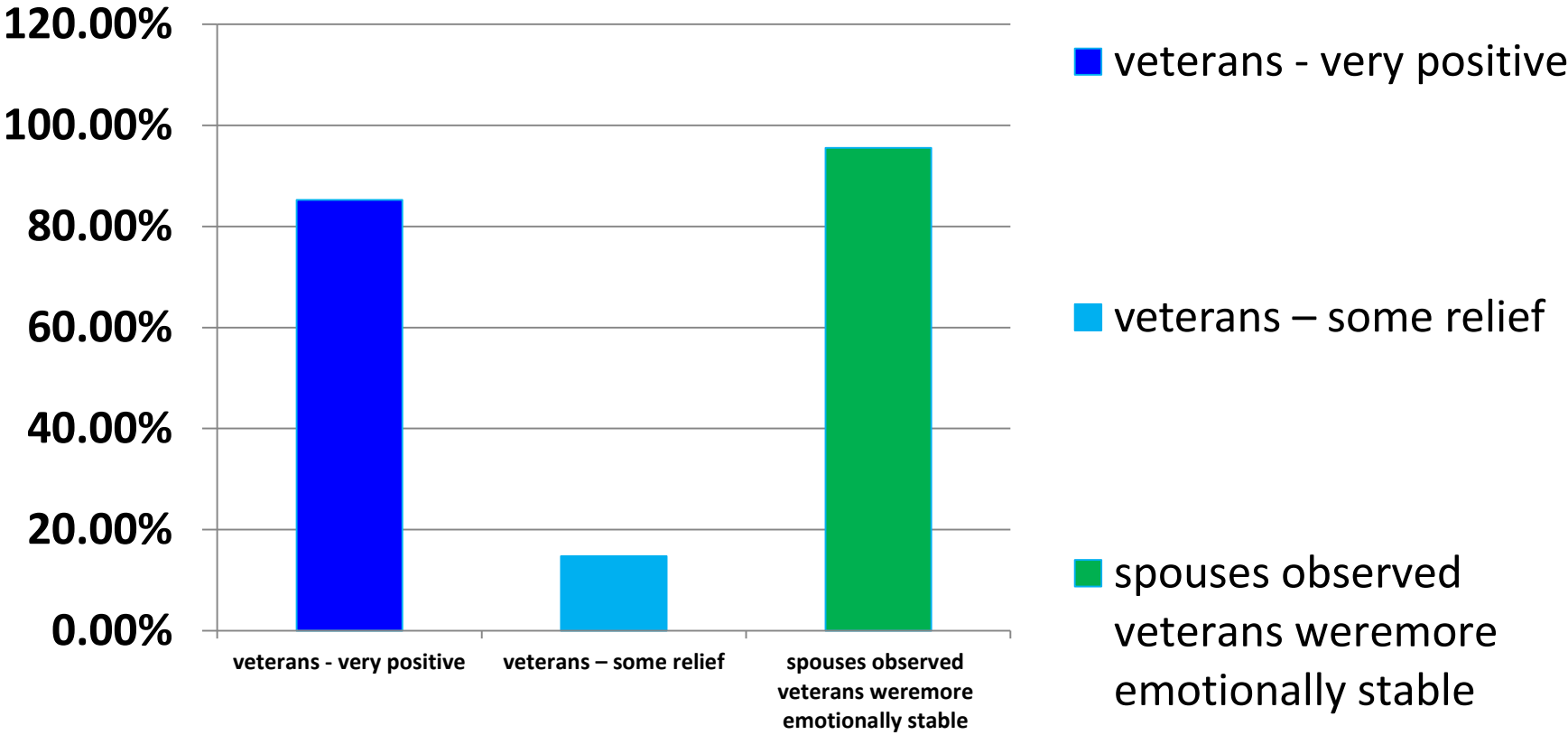
Data Point 1 Results:

Acquisition of Self-Mediation Skills:



Data Point 1 Results cont:

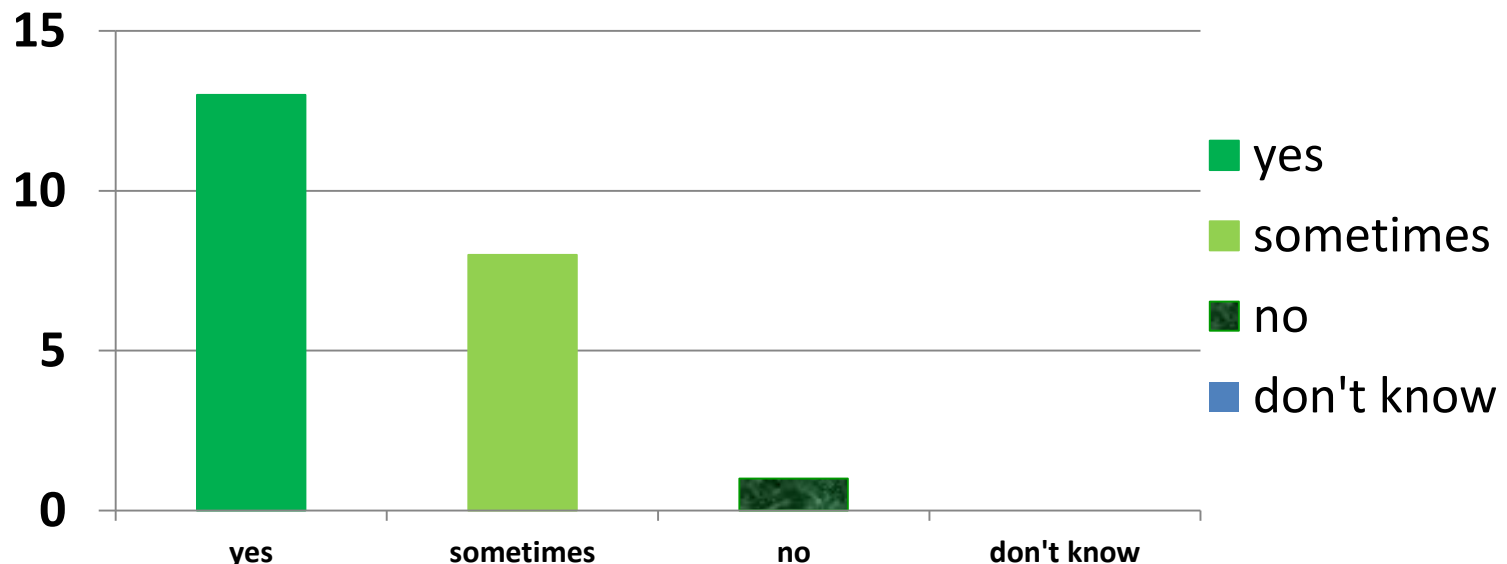
Relief from PTSD Symptoms:



2nd Data Point Results:

90.9% (20 of 22) Veteran couples reported an overall improvement (... at least 'sometimes') in their personal relationships - 11.7 months post-treatment:

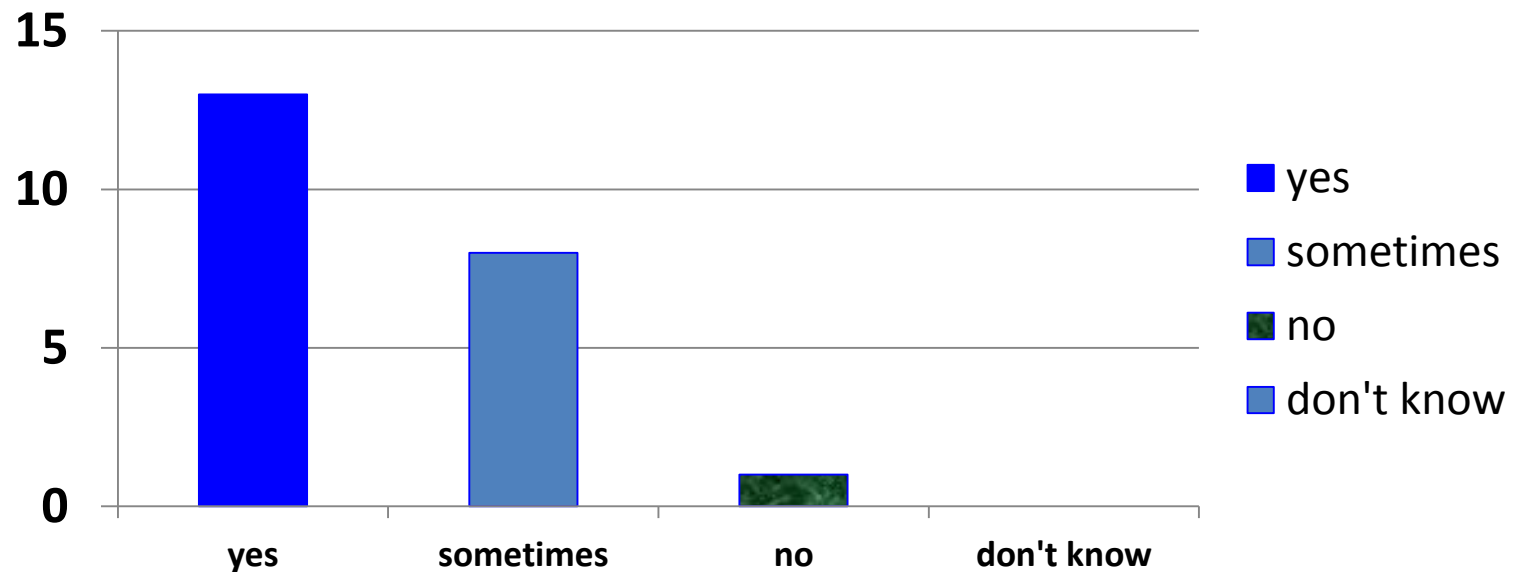
Spouse/Partner responses:



2nd Data Point Results cont:

90.9% (20 of 22) Veteran couples reported an overall improvement (... at least 'sometimes') in their personal relationships - 11.7 months post-treatment:

Veteran responses:



2nd Data Point Results:

The most prevalent PTSD symptom identified as 'improved' or 'more manageable' *by 50.0%* (11 of 22) Veterans after 11.7 months was:

Anger

Summary of comments:

- These Veterans generally felt they were able to let go of some of the chronic low-level anger and become more open to expressing their thoughts and feelings...

2nd Data point Results: (How have relationships improved?)

For Veterans one clear theme emerged:

68.2% (15 of 22) Veterans in the follow-up data indicated that their relationship(s) were better due to:

- the relationship has more regular and effective communication

2nd Data point Results: (How have relationships improved?)

For Spouse/Partners two main themes emerged:

1) 50.0% (11 of 22) Spouses/Partners in the follow-up data indicated their relationship was better due to:

-Veteran used more frequent and effective communication

2) 45.5% (10 of 22) Spouses/Partners in the follow-up data indicated their relationship was better due to:

- Veteran more willing to engage in safe conflict resolution and problem-solving

2nd Data Point Results: (How have relationships improved?)

Veteran:

“We are talking more openly about what is bothering us. We are speaking kinder and giving each other time and space to figure out what is happening for each other.”

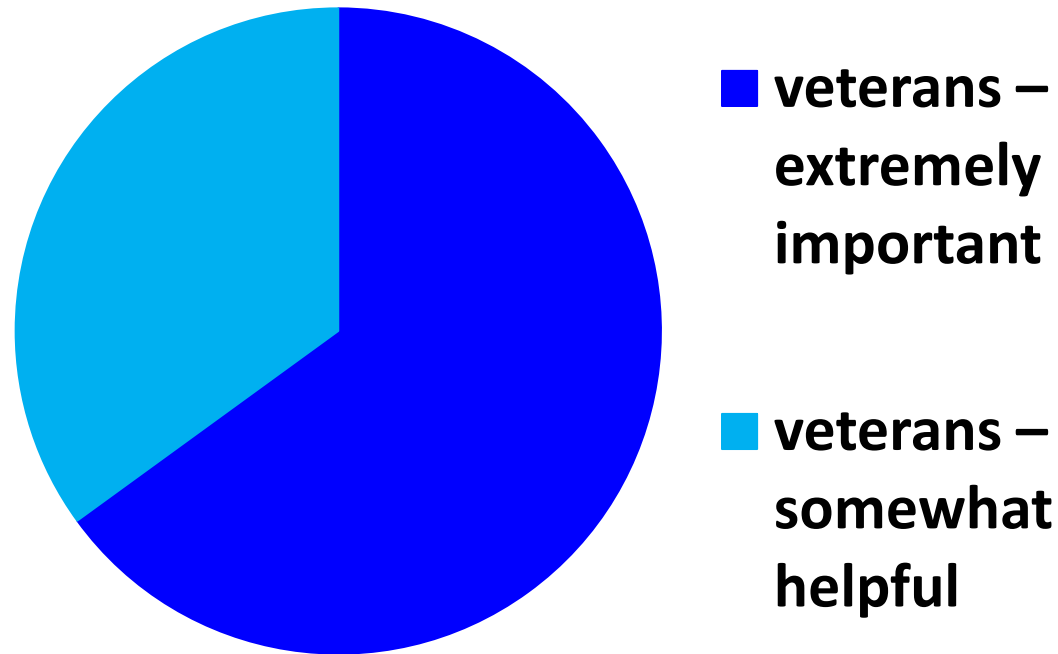
Spouses/Partners:

“We can now talk to each other about anything, even money and that was a very tough topic for us. He seems to listen to reason now, whereas before he would get defensive.”

Are Data Point 2 Results a Legitimate Effect of this PTSD-Tailored Equine Program?

Impact of Learning Self-Mediation Skills:

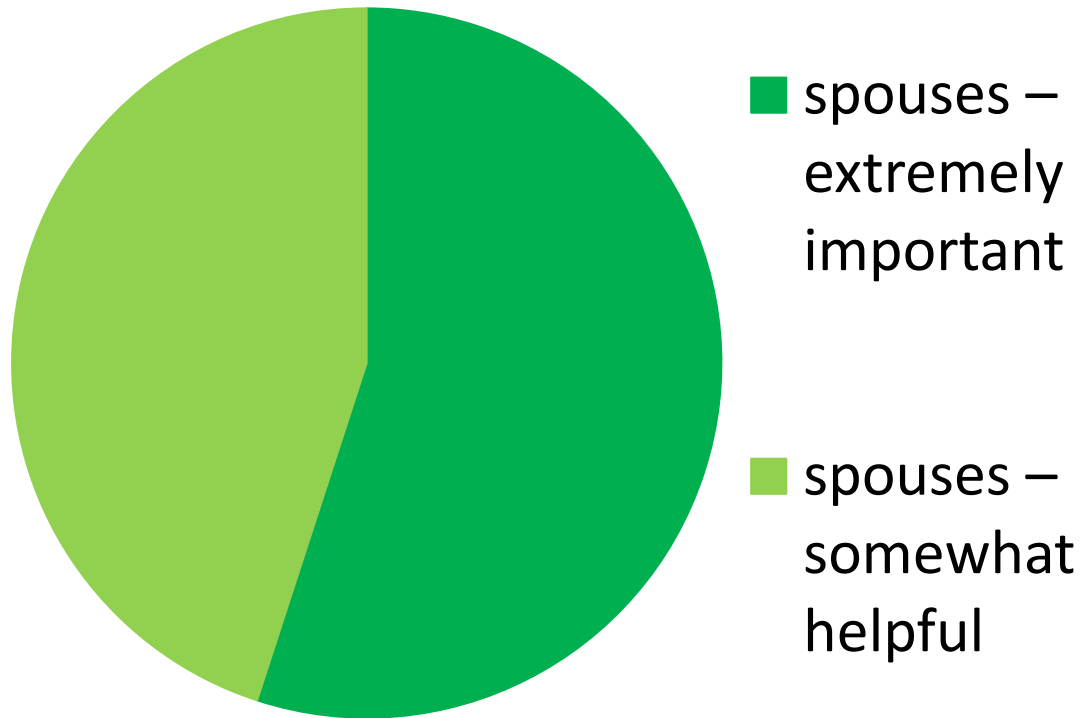
VETERANS



Are Data Point 2 Results a Legitimate Effect of this PTSD-Tailored Equine Program?

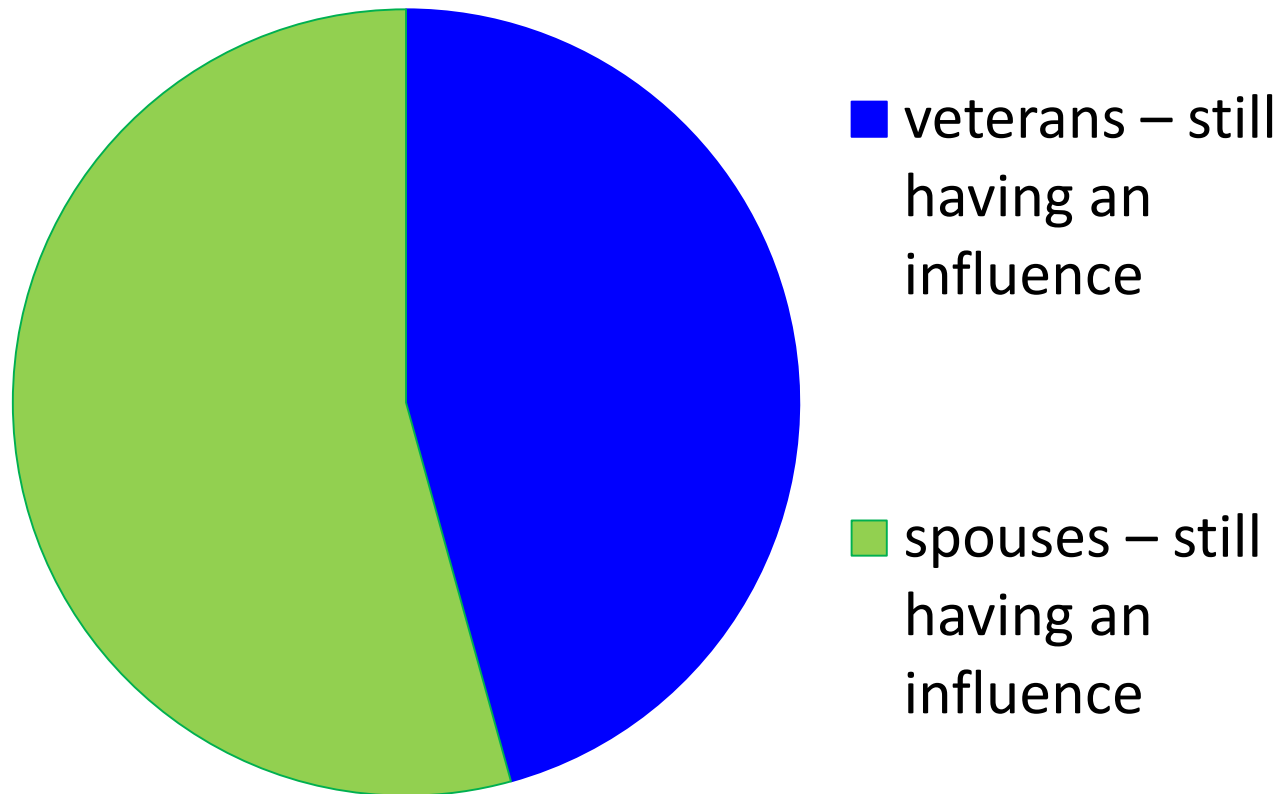
Impact of Learning Self-Mediation Skills:

SPOUSES



Are Data Point 2 Results a Legitimate Effect of this PTSD-Tailored Equine Program?

Long-term Effects of Interaction with Horses:



How are Horses having a Long-Term Effect on Relationships?

Summary (veterans)

There is still an awareness of body language and how they appear to their spouse/partner and other family members.

Continuing recognition of the need for more considerate and gentler communication.

Why is a PTSD-Tailored EAL Program Therapeutic?

“I have been in treatment for years and didn’t get the benefits I received after only a few days here.”

“I felt the benefits after the first day. Also, it is the first 3 days that I was able to function for full days.”

THANK YOU



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QUESTIONS?