

Veterans & Serving Personnel Virtual Retreat
Lighting the Lamp of Compassion:
Living & Dreaming Mindfulness & Compassion



8-12 June 2020

Evaluation report

Facilitators:
Dr Bill Paterson, Charlie Morley,
Fi Thompson and Penny Horner

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Acknowledgments

The facilitators would like to thank all the participants for taking part in this online version of the annual retreat. It is their commitment to the sessions and willingness to share that creates the potential for deep learning and healing. In addition, this report would not have been possible without the participants taking the time and effort to complete the evaluation. We are extremely grateful.

A very special thanks goes to Keith McKenzie. Now in its 11 year, this annual retreat was the initiative of Keith, supported by Lama Yeshe – the then Abbot of the Tibetan Buddhist Centre at Samye Ling, Scotland. As a military veteran, fire fighter veteran and now Buddhist Chaplain, Keith is inspired by his experience of the teachings and practice of metta (loving kindness) and self-compassion. As a consequence metta and self-compassion inform everything that Keith does, and provides the rationale for each retreat. Every year Keith has worked tirelessly to ensure that service men and women across the armed services, and their family members, have the opportunity to experience these teaching and practices. Sadly, Keith was unable to take part in this year's event and was greatly missed, but his commitment to metta and self-compassion inspired us all during this retreat.

Summary

- This eleventh annual retreat for veterans and serving personnel, many experiencing trauma related mental health issues, could not take place as a face to face event because of Government Covid-19 virus restrictions. A virtual version of the retreat was delivered on five consecutive days from 8th to 12th June 2020 via Zoom platform. The 12 participants included 8 women and 4 men of which 4 were veterans, 3 were veteran family members, and 5 were Serving Personnel. A member of the Serving Personnel was acting as a participant observer for 'Wounded, Injured and Sick Service Personnel' to determine if the retreat was appropriate for wider use with service men and women.
- The retreat programme '*Living & Dreaming Mindfulness & Compassion*' was based on mind-body interventions drawn from different mindfulness, compassion, sleep & dreaming and yoga teachings and practices.
- Attendance was high with 84% of 12 participants completing 19 interactive sessions
- No formal evaluation had been used in previous years. Given the change of format, the organisers wished to monitor the participants' evaluation of the impact of the teaching and learning from the practices introduced during the retreat. This paper reports on the findings of a questionnaire administered online and some completed by telephone interview immediately following the retreat. In total 10 participants completed questionnaire.
- The findings illustrate a positive reaction to the retreat itself, indicate that there were some immediate benefits from attending the retreat and intentions to use the learning from the retreat in the future.

- **Key findings are:**
 - **All** participants plan to use the learning from the retreat sessions in their lives
 - **All** participants considered the facilitators to be compassionate and motivated
 - Participants agreed that the virtual retreat had an impact on engagement with family, friends and at work. (70%, 60% & 50% fully agreed respectively)
 - 80% of participants would highly recommend the course to other people whilst 20% would also strongly recommend it to others.
 - **All** participants were interested in a follow up day of practice

Background

Prevalence of mental health problems amongst military personnel.

Due to their experiences of active deployment, veterans from every branch of the military are at risk of impaired mental well-being compared to the general population. Stevelink et al (2018) studied 8093 serving and ex-serving regular personnel who joined the UK armed forces between 2004 and 2009. They reported the prevalence for probable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), common mental disorders (CMD), and alcohol misuse as 6.2%, 21.9% & 10.0% respectively. Probable PTSD rose over (the three-phase course of) the study, from levels similar to those in the general population (4%) to an elevated level. Deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan and a combat role during deployment were associated with significantly worse mental health outcomes and alcohol misuse in ex-serving regular personnel but not in currently serving regular personnel.

The authors suggest that the disparity could be accounted for by personnel leaving the Services with mental health issues and by the transition to civilian life triggering mental health stresses. However, there could be under reporting of mental health symptoms by serving personnel for fear of stigmatisation or negative consequences.

Table 1 compares the prevalence of these conditions to those of the UK population, where available, (UK Gov 2019).

| | PTSD | CMD | Alcohol misuse |
|------------------------------------|------|-----|----------------|
| Ex- Serving regulars (combat role) | 17% | 31% | 15% |
| Serving regulars (combat role) | 6% | 20% | 12% |
| General population | 4% | 17% | 1.3%* |

*Statistic for English population

The long-term impact of the effects of exposure to active deployment and its contribution to acts of suicide also requires to be acknowledged. For example, 95 deaths (0.4%) from 25,948 UK Armed Forces personnel who served in the Falklands Campaign were attributable to suicide and open verdict deaths. (UK Gov 2013) This compares to a general population prevalence of 0.01% (UK Gov 2018) and accounts for 7% of 1,335 deaths of Falklands veterans and in-service personnel who have died since 1982.

Interventions for military veterans experiencing common mental disorders & post-traumatic stress disorder

An overview of the contribution of various interventions used to treat veterans is out with the scope of this report and are described by various researchers (Andres-Hyman 2013, Friedman 2015, Koven 2018). This report will focus on mind-body interventions.

Mind-body interventions

The programme '*Living & Dreaming Mindfulness & Compassion*' delivered in this retreat provides the elements of mindfulness, compassion, yoga, sleep & dreaming in a structured format as outlined in table 2 and can be considered as a mind-body intervention. The benefits of these individual components are described as follows.

a) Mindfulness based interventions (MBIs)

David A Treleaven (2018) asserts that “Mindfulness is a power of the mind that helps us recognise what is happening, without added commentary or judgement”. Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness training, he argues is central to learning enhanced self-regulation of attention, body awareness and emotional regulation. This concurred with Bessel Van der Kolk’s (2015) research with traumatized people, which also identified mindfulness training as central for regulating the autonomic nervous system, and developing the self-awareness necessary to identify, witness, and befriend the transitory nature of internal experiences. A trawl of the research literature reveals over 20 systematic reviews pertaining to the use of MBIs as a means of reducing stress in high stress disciplines such as healthcare and education. (McPhail 2019) A systematic review by Chiappetta et.al. (2018) concluded that mindfulness programmes (8 week or equivalent) were effective in reducing stress, self-compassion, burnout, anxiety and depression in healthcare workers. Burton et al (2016) came to a similar conclusion. A meta-analysis of the efficacy of MBIs with soldiers & veterans found general support in terms of reduction of symptoms of post-traumatic stress and depression (Clark 2018). A national survey of the Utilization and Perceived Effectiveness of Mindfulness Meditation in U.S. military veterans reported that approximately 18% of veterans have used mindfulness meditation in the past year (Goldberg 2019).

b) Compassion Based interventions (CBIs)

Compassion Based Training has been found to have a number of benefits for mental health, including emotion regulation and regulation of the autonomic sympathetic nervous system. Fewer research papers have been published evaluating CBIs, however Kirby (2016) in an overview of such interventions concluded that “*the current state of evidence highlights the potential benefits of compassion-based interventions on a range of outcomes that clinicians can use in clinical practice with clients*”. Schied & Singh (2019) developed a compassion focused programme for military veterans and concluded that upon completing the programme participants gained compassion and mindfulness skills with reduced depressive symptoms.

c) Yoga based interventions (YBIs)

Similarly, there are a limited number of research papers published on the evaluation on YBIs for military personnel and these tend to be US based. A number of small-scale studies have shown positive, but not always statistically significant, effects for those experiencing PTSD, (Johnston et.al. 2015, Reinhardt et.al 2018, Staples et.al 2013)). There is a larger body of evidence on the effectiveness of iRest yoga nidra in the military. Following a positive small-scale trial (Engel et.al. 2007) iRest yoga nidra was introduced into the recovery programme for wounded service members experiencing PTSD. Miller (2015,2020) lists numerous research studies showing some positive outcomes among both military personnel (e.g. Stankovic 2011) and others experiencing PTSD and other mental health conditions on his iRest website.

Although there is a lack of solid clinic trial data about yoga interventions, developments in neuroscience have been helpful in providing a framework to understand how yoga can improve trauma symptoms (Van der Kolk 2014, Gard et.al. 2014). Current thinking is that effectiveness of yoga as an intervention for mental health issues depends on how consistently yoga is practiced together with the specificity of the yoga for the mental health issues of the participants. (Mason & Birch 2018).

Pioneering work by Bessel Van der Kolk and David Emerson has led to the development of 'trauma sensitive' yoga for more acceptance and improved outcomes among those experiencing the symptoms of complex trauma and PTSD (Emerson & Hopper 2011).

d) Sleep & Lucid dreaming interventions

Sleep problems are a key feature of military veterans experiencing PTSD. The American Millennium Cohort Study reported that 92% of active duty personnel with PTSD experienced clinically significant levels of insomnia, compared to 28% of those without PTSD. (Seelig et al 2010). Currently there is insufficient evidence to support any particular intervention to improve sleep quality in military veterans (Phelps et al 2017) hence the inclusion in the programme of a novel intervention developed by Morley (2013).

Evaluation of Mind-body interventions

The delivery these interventions to military personnel are in their infancy but significant improvements in PTSD symptoms in participants have been reported. (Cushing & Braun 2018).

Caveats

Given that systematic research in the use of mindfulness, compassion, yoga and sleep interventions to reduce occupational stress & PTSD in military personnel are still in their infancy, it is important to note that the above researchers recommend that *'more high-quality research is required before such findings can be confirmed. Future studies would benefit from long-term follow-up measures to determine any continuing effects of training on stress outcomes.'*

Although more than 280 mindfulness apps are available on the UK iTunes app store. (Roquet 2018) only one (Headspace) has been evaluated as part of a randomised control trial (Howells, 2019). To date no direct comparison studies have been made between the use of apps and participation in face-to-face programmes.

Outline of virtual retreat

The course itself comprised of 19 interactive sessions held over 5 consecutive days (**Table 1**) Attendance at the sessions by 12 participants with an average of 10 people per session was high, with 84% of participants completing the retreat, the average number of sessions completed overall being 15.9 (2.9 Std Dev) The gender ratio was 60% female to 40% male. Participants also gave their consent for the completed questionnaires and comments to be used anonymously for the purposes of advertising the retreat and writing of reports to support future funding.

| Mon 8 Jun 20 | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------|
| Time | Event | Lead |
| 0930-1030 | Introduction to Virtual Retreat Mindfulness/Self-Compassion & Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep | All |
| 1130-1230 | Self-Compassion - Body Scan 1 | Bill |
| 1400-1500 | Settling the Restless Mind | Bill |
| 1600-1700 | Yoga 1 | Penny |
| Tue 9 Jun 20 | | |
| Time | Event | Lead |
| 0930-1030 | Mindfulness Part 1: Mind – allowing and letting go | Bill |
| 1130-1230 | Mindfulness Part 2: The Body | Bill |
| 1400-1500 | Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep 1 | Charlie |
| 1600-1700 | Yoga 2 | Fi |
| Wed 10 Jun 20 | | |
| Time | Event | Lead |
| 0930-1030 | Mindfulness of Dream & Sleep 2 | Charlie |
| 1130-1230 | Mindfulness Movement | Bill |
| 1400-1500 | Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep 3 | Charlie |
| 1600-1700 | Yoga 3 | Penny |
| Thu 11 Jun 20 | | |
| Time | Event | Lead |
| 0930-1030 | Mindfulness of Dream & Sleep 4 | Charlie |
| 1130-1230 | Looking After Your Self - Applying the Tools into Daily Life | Bill |
| 1400-1500 | Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep 5 | Charlie |
| 1600-1700 | Yoga 4 | Fi |
| Fri 12 Jun 20 | | |
| Time | Event | Lead |
| 1000-1100 | Lucid Dreaming | Charlie |
| 1100-1130 | Yoga 5 – A daily Self Practice | Fi/Penny |
| 1200-1230 | Closing Meditation | All |

Evaluation of virtual retreat

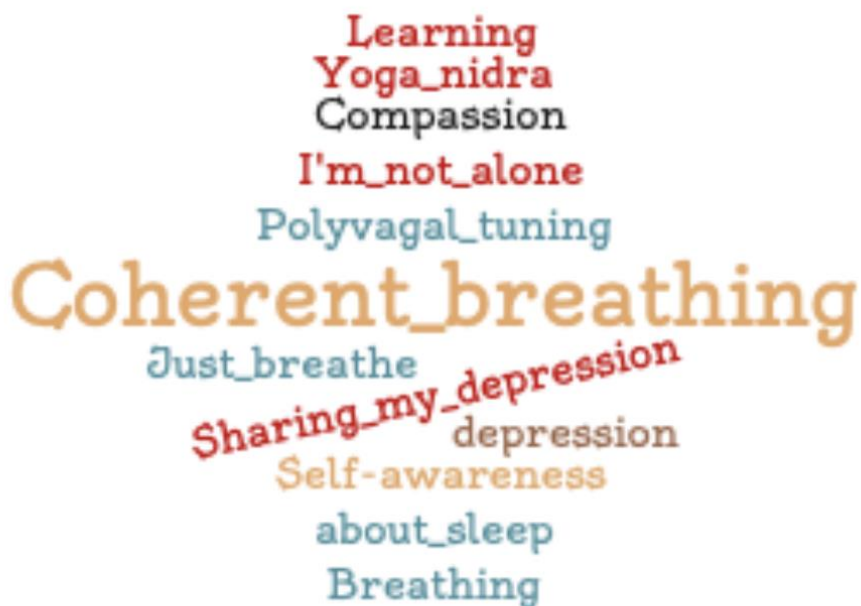
An evaluation form (appendix 1) was developed to capture key elements of individual learning experience arising from participation in the retreat. Participants completed the surveys electronically or in 1 case, by telephone. 10 (out of 12) completed the survey. One of the remaining 2 was the spouse of a participant who completed the survey with their combined responses, the other was involved in support services to the military so felt it inappropriate to complete. Compiled data and selected abbreviated quotations have been incorporated

into the body text of this report for brevity. Full details of the completed evaluation can be found in appendix 2.

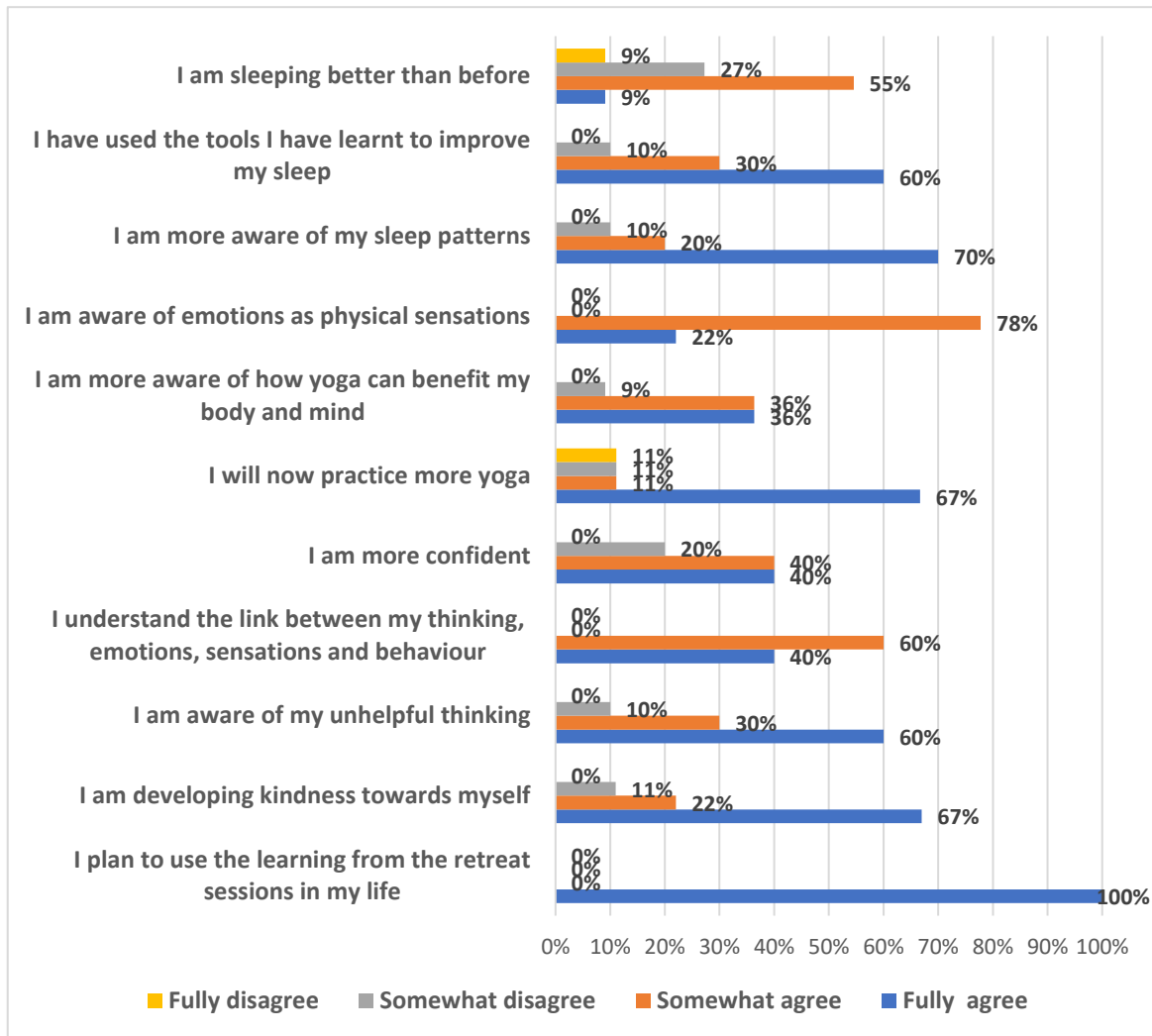
1) One or two words that captured participants experience of the online retreat



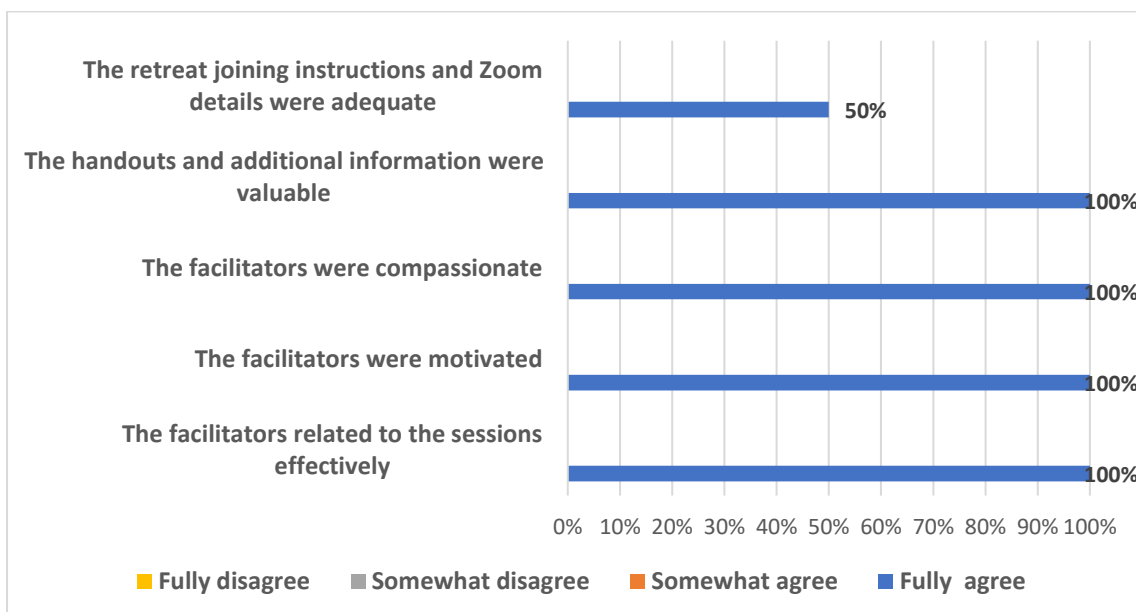
2) What, if anything, were the most important things participants learned on the online retreat, and why?



3) How did participants feel after completion of the retreat?



4) What was participants experience of the virtual retreat organisation?



5) What did participants enjoy most about the online retreat?

"Seeing people and speaking to them and sharing experiences"

"The yoga nidra and breath practices"

"It was the first time in a long time that I felt comfortable around people, even if it was virtually"

"To be honest all of it was captivating and really grabbed your attention"

"The opportunity to be able to practice new techniques"

"Meeting like-minded people, and feeling accepted "

6) What would participants have liked to have more experience of?

"I have to be honest I don't think I would change the time spent on any subject"

"I would love to do more about understanding what feelings actually feel like as a physical sensation"

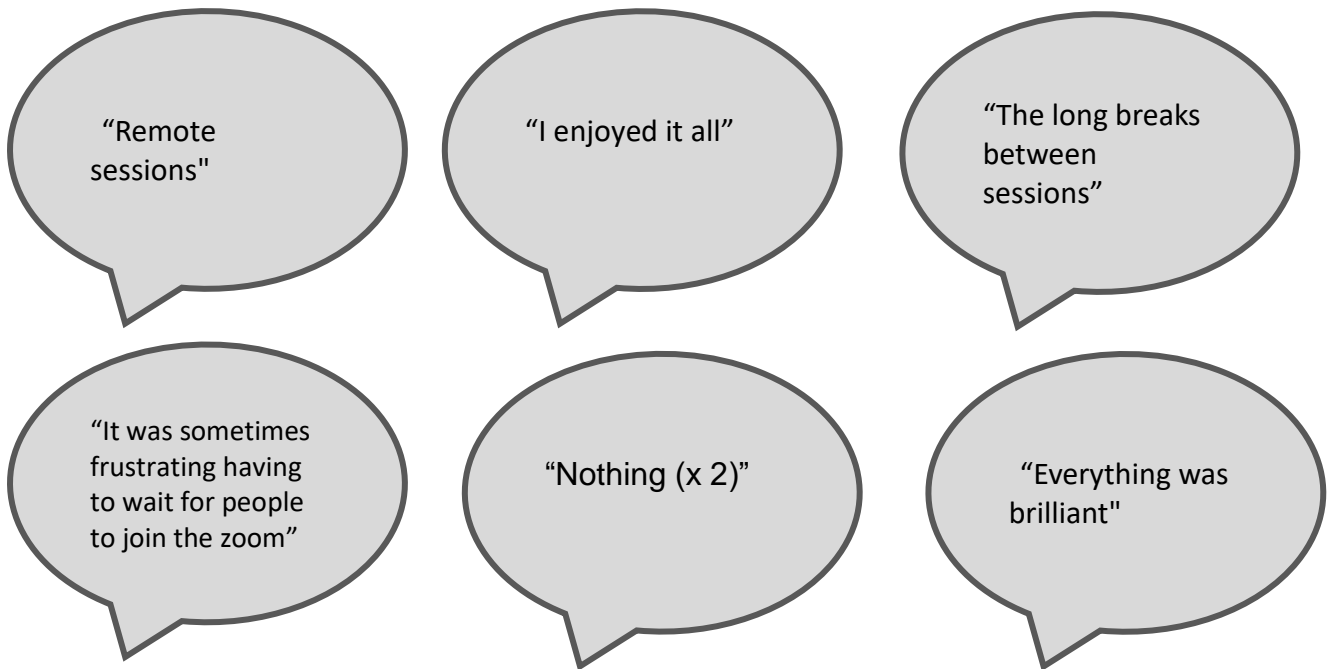
"To continue every week"

"More MODS with Charlie"

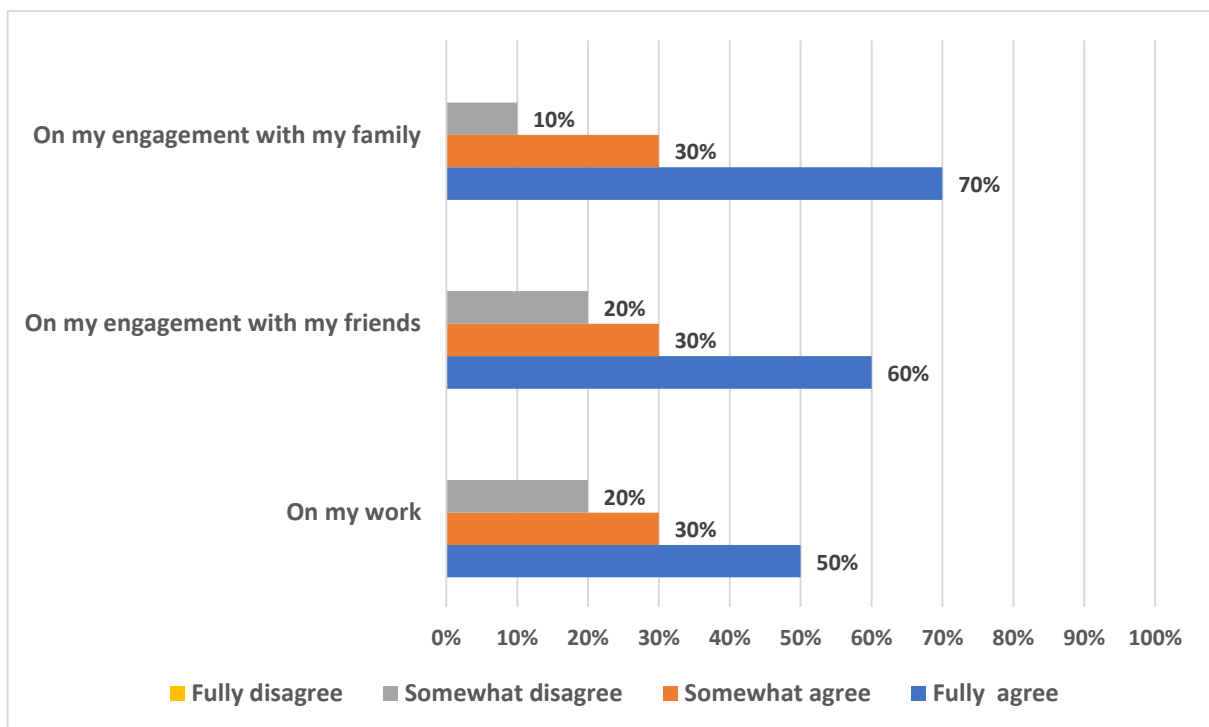
"Informal chatting with the facilitators"

"Dream/sleep education"

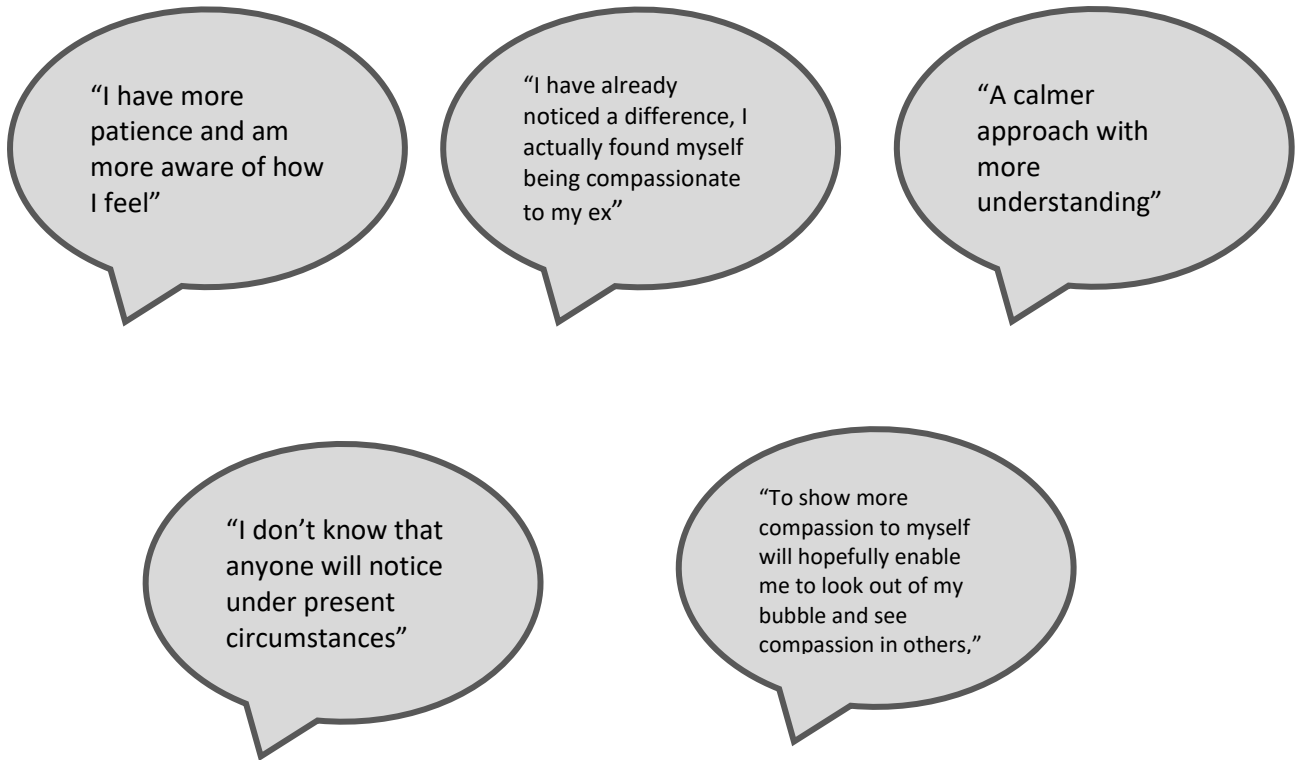
7) What would participants like to have less experience of?



8) How did the virtual retreat impact on participants?



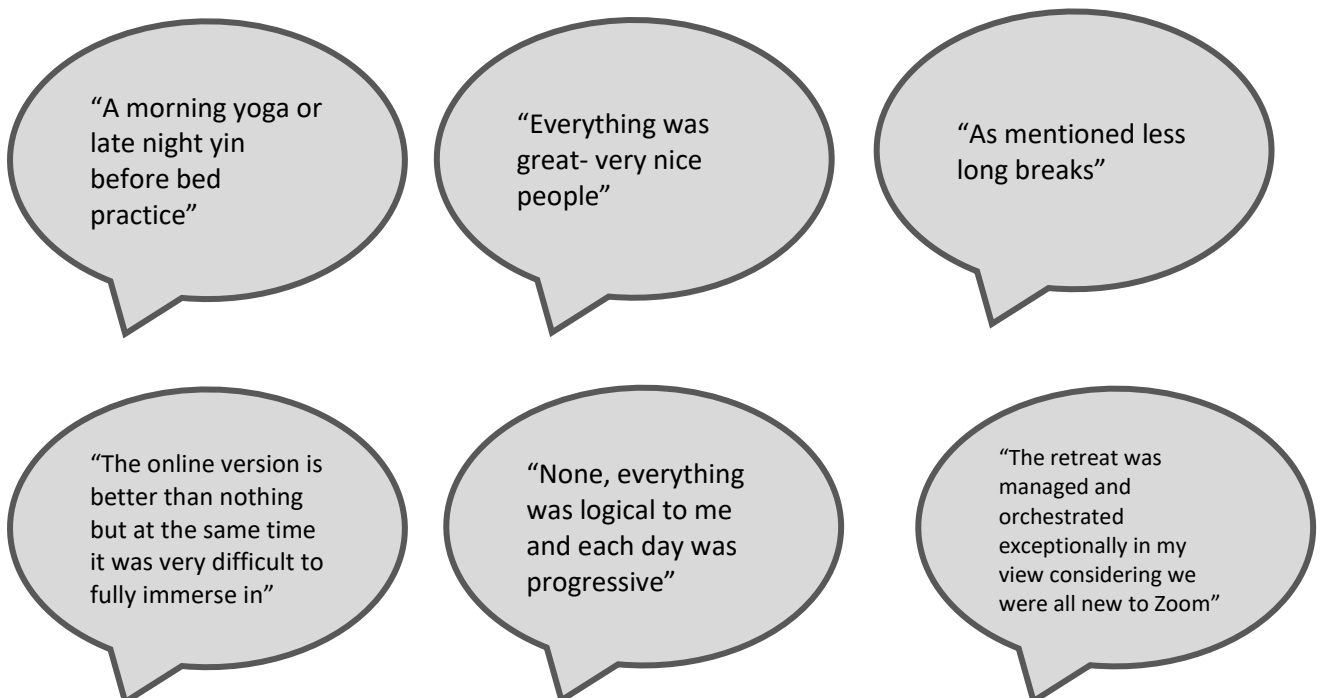
9) If the retreat impacted on participants, how would it be described, what did it mean, and how would others notice this change since completing the course?



10) Would participants recommend the online retreat to other people?

| | Highly recommend it | | Neutral | | Not recommend it |
|--------------|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Scale | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Response | 80% | 20% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

11) Are there any changes that participants would recommend to the online retreat?



12) Would participants be interested in follow up days of practice?

| Yes | No |
|------|----|
| 100% | 0% |

13) Are there any other suggestions by participants to help shape future retreats?

"I would be interested in a bit of Buddhist philosophy as well and how it can be compatible with service life"

"A huge thank you and big toothy grin from me"

"I find the retreats have been organised effectively since day one"

"Amazing experience and can't wait to see everyone in person"

"No thanks – thought the whole this was fabby"

"Just that I am so thankful for being invited to take part"

Conclusion

This first virtual retreat was well received by individuals and had a high participation rate. All participants plan to use the learning from the retreat sessions in their lives which has had an impact on engagement with family & friends. All participants considered the facilitators to be compassionate and motivated with a majority highly recommending the retreat to others. All participants were interested in a follow up day of practice.

Learning

- The feedback from this evaluation has provided reassurance that an online delivery is possible, can be motivating and can deliver value to the participants.
- The open-ended comments will guide future planning of online retreats specifically about the schedule and timing of the individual sessions.
- The diversity of participants from across all three Services and Service families were all at different points in their own life journeys. The Retreat demonstrated that there is a need for such events through the whole Service career, through transition to becoming a veteran and then as a veteran as well as supporting the Service family.

Strengths and Limitations

As the first evaluation of the retreat, this study provides useful feedback to help in future planning and a benchmark for repeated evaluations.

It cannot provide any clinical assessment of the interventions either together or individually as there was neither a 'pre and post' measurement of the participants' mental health symptoms nor was a control group utilised.

The retreat took place in lockdown conditions. It is possible that lack of alternative social activities at the time resulted in greater commitment to and appreciation of the retreat!

Biography of facilitators

Dr Bill Paterson PhD (Philosophy)

Bill has been teaching mindfulness for over 5 years, completed his mindfulness teacher training programme with the Mindfulness Association (MA) and is recognised as a qualified mindfulness teacher by both the MA and the British Association of Mindfulness-based Approaches (BAMBA). He has taught Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) to adults with anxiety and depression and is a Mindfulness in Schools Project (MiSP) accredited teacher. He has completed a number of retreats.

Bill teaches various MA courses to the general public and provides supervision to other MA teachers. His key interests are teaching mindfulness to teachers, NHS staff & paramedics. He has delivered mindfulness and writing workshops to Honours and MA students in Scottish universities and organises and facilitates one day and weekend mindfulness retreats. Whilst on secondment to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHA) Fife, Bill played a key role in creation/management of a mindfulness project teaching teachers, children and parents. He was also instrumental in the creation of Mindful Nation Scotland, and its presentation at the Scottish Parliament in September 2019.

Charlie Morley

Charlie is a bestselling Hay House author and co-creator of Mindfulness of Dream & Sleep: the holistic approach to lucid dreaming within the context of mindfulness meditation and Tibetan Buddhism. In 2018 he was awarded a Churchill Fellowship grant to research “Mindfulness Based PTSD Treatment in Veterans” and continues to teach sleep & dream practices to armed forces veterans and civilians with Stress or Trauma Affected Sleep Patterns.

In 2019 Charlie created the first Lucid Dreaming Training for Therapists which trained a group of hypnotherapists, art therapists, mediation teachers and counsellors to use lucid dreaming with their clients. He now lives in London with his wife, astral projection teacher Jade Shaw. When he’s not teaching, he enjoys martial arts (he has a black belt in Kickboxing), going dancing and pretending to meditate.

Fi Thompson

Fi Thompson has practiced yoga since 2011 and qualified as a Hatha Yoga Teacher with The British School of Yoga in 2015 and as a Hatha Vinyasa and Hot Yoga Teacher (200hrs accredited Yoga Alliance) in 2017. She is a Level 1 Practitioner in Reiki and has completed a CPD in Lucid Dreaming with Charlie Morley.

As a Yoga Teacher she has taken weekly classes for Armed Forces personnel and Civil Servants since 2016. Fi also delivers yoga sessions for the Defence Academy of the UK Senior Leadership courses and for the RAF’s Mental Resilience Eagles Scheme. She also teaches weekly classes in her local community in Bradford on Avon. She is an advocate of Mindfulness for enhancing mental resilience for military personnel both serving and Veterans and wants to improve the lived experiences for all military personnel through mindful based yoga practices

Penny Horner

Penny began practicing yoga many years ago. She has experienced the mind & body benefits yoga can deliver during challenging times in her own life and now hopes to share the magic of yoga with others through her teaching.

In addition to her general yoga training, Penny has continued to focus on more therapeutic approaches. This has included specialist training in yoga nidra (for deep relaxation), women's yoga, yoga for addiction, trauma sensitive yoga and the Warriors at Ease training programme for yoga with military veterans.

Penny is also a psychologist and teaches gentle and therapeutic yoga in Edinburgh and Ardnamurchan and is part of the Edinburgh Community Yoga outreach team. This was her fourth retreat with military veterans.

Appendix 1) Evaluation form

| |
|--|
| <p>Evaluation Form Veterans & Serving Personnel Virtual Retreat 'Lighting the Lamp of Compassion: Living and Dreaming Mindfulness and Compassion'</p> |
|--|

Dates: 8-12 June 2020

Venue: Virtual (Zoom)

Facilitators: Dr Bill Paterson, Charlie Morley, Penny Horner and Fi Thompson.

1. Retreat Session Attendance: _ out of 19 session
2. Please use one or two words that capture your experience of the online retreat

3. What, if anything, were the most important things you learned on the online retreat, and why?
4. Please circle the number that describes how you feel now:

| | Agree | | | Disagree |
|---|-------|---|---|----------|
| I am more confident | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I am aware of my unhelpful thinking | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I am aware of emotions as physical sensations | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I understand the link between my thinking, emotions, sensations and behaviour | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I am developing kindness towards myself | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I am more aware of my sleep patterns | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I am sleeping better than before | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I have used the tools I have learnt to improve my sleep | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I am more aware of how yoga can benefit my body and mind | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I will now practice more yoga | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| I plan to use the learning from the retreat sessions in my life | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

5. Please circle the number that describes your experience:

| | Agree | | | Disagree |
|---|-------|---|---|----------|
| The facilitators related to the sessions effectively | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The facilitators were motivated | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The facilitators were compassionate | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The handouts and additional information were valuable | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The retreat joining instructions and Zoom details were adequate | | | | |

6. What did you enjoy most about the online retreat?
7. What would you have like to have experienced more of:
8. What would you like to have less of?
9. Please circle the number that describes how you feel now:

| The retreat has/will impact: | Agree | | | Disagree |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|---|---|-----------------|
| on my work | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| on my engagement with my family | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| on my engagement with my friends | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

If you have agreed with any of the above, please describe what you mean and how you think others will notice this change since the course

10. Would you recommend the retreat (online) to other people? Please circle one of the numbers below:

| Highly recommend it | | | | | not recommend |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------------------|
| it | | | | | |
| 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |

11. Would you suggest any changes to the online retreat – if so please describe below?
12. Are you interested in follow up days of practice? Yes/No
13. Is there anything else that you would like to mention to help shape future retreats?

Are you happy for comments to be used *anonymously* for advertising the retreat and writing reports for future funding so that more serving personnel and veterans can benefit from the retreat? Yes/No

If Yes – please provide your name and contact details below:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Name | |
| Email | |
| Contact Number | |

Appendix 2) Compilation of participant responses to the evaluation form

1) Retreat Session Attendance

| | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 18 | 12 | 15 | 19 | 15 |
| 17 | 17 | 19 | 11 | |

2) Please use one or two words that capture your experience of the online retreat

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Grateful, emotions | Educational /Enlightening | Peace/ Rest | Rest/Recharge | Captivating/ Educational |
| Friendship /so happy that I went | Awakening/ Enlightening | Insightful/ Enlightening | Lasting (experience) / Gratitude | Enlightened/ grateful |

3) What, if anything, were the most important things you learned on the online retreat, and why?

a *The power of tapping into the breath and using coherent breathing to settle the mind and learning that nightmares are good and learning to work towards these for clarity and healing*

b *Learning about sleep was great, it's amazing to think that in all my years it's never occurred to me that waking in the night etc is normal! I really enjoyed learning the breathing exercises on Wednesday as that was refreshing, and I'm finding each meditation to be slightly easier to do each time. I'm pretty certain I want to keep doing it as I have genuinely felt a little more relaxed in myself and actually even felt compassion for my ex-husband who usually irritates me. It's almost like I've started to be able to connect to compassion a little easier - both for others and myself*

c *Helped to share with people about my depression and gain support.*

d *Self-awareness, being able to tune into my own self, body and mind. _A sense of calm achieved by both movement and stillness. A better understanding of the benefit of compassion for myself and others. Optimism and excitement for the now and future*

e *That I am not alone with the way I feel, and that I am not alone in the battle with my mind*

f *I found the coherent breathing most beneficial as because of the use of the bell it meant I had something to focus on which stopped my mind from wandering*

g *Coherent Breathing*

l *Recognising how important it is to just breathe and be aware of our breath in our everyday routine, which helps to relax the body and mind and also to help us sleep better and be less anxious*

ji *Yoga Nidra – relaxation prior to sleep as I often have trouble and try to force sleep as I am so tired, but my mind is still talking, Yoga Nidra is a great way for me making sleep far more achievable as I suffer bad violent nightmares.*

jii *The Polyvagal tuning was super helpful for me to be more aware of my body's reaction to my mind*

4) Please circle the number that describes how you feel now:

| | Fully agree | Somewhat agree | Somewhat disagree | Fully disagree |
|---|-------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| I am more confident | 4 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| I am aware of my unhelpful thinking | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| I am aware of emotions as physical sensations | 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| I understand the link between my thinking, emotions, sensations and behaviour | 4 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| I am developing kindness towards myself | 6 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| I am more aware of my sleep patterns | 7 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| I am sleeping better than before | 1 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| I have used the tools I have learnt to improve my sleep | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| I am more aware of how yoga can benefit my body and mind | 4 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| I will now practice more yoga | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| I plan to use the learning from the retreat sessions in my life | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

5) Please circle the number that describes your experience

| | Fully agree | Somewhat agree | Somewhat disagree | Fully disagree |
|---|-------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| The facilitators related to the sessions effectively | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The facilitators were motivated | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The facilitators were compassionate | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The handouts and additional information were valuable | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The retreat joining instructions and Zoom details were adequate | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

6) What did you enjoy most about the online retreat?

| | |
|---|---|
| a | <i>The yoga nidra and breath practices</i> |
| b | <i>I loved having a variety of facilitators and having real experts on topics because often in the Forces - everything is taught by someone who isn't an expert and is simply from an Ispec for instance. I loved being able to learn and talk to people about these kinds of topics in the armed forces as its not anywhere close to what we have access to unless we go looking externally. It's a shame that things like this only really surface to people when they are struggling as I think the services would benefit generally from more mindful people walking round in uniform! I loved the yoga classes, I loved learning about meditation and Charlies presentations were brilliant. I enjoyed every single session.</i> |
| c | <i>Seeing people and speaking to them and sharing experiences.</i> |
| d | <i>The compassion and kindness shown and shared by the facilitators and their seemingly effortless living example of 'lighting the lamp of compassion'. I can finally find a place of peace and it is inside of me.</i> |
| e | <i>Meeting like-minded people, and feeling accepted</i> |
| f | <i>The opportunity to be able to practice new techniques</i> |
| g | <i>Yoga Nidra, Coherent Breathing, Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep</i> |
| h | <i>Meeting everyone – learning about sleep / sleep patterns</i> |
| i | <i>To be honest all of it was captivating and really grabbed your attention, but, 'The Mindfulness of dream and sleep / Polyvagal Tuning and Coherent Breathing are what really caught my eye as beneficial to my needs. Also having the nights to reflect on our learnings was most beneficial</i> |
| j | <i>It was the first time in a long time that I felt comfortable around people, even if it was virtually. I do not miss the RAF, but I do miss the like-mindedness of serving personnel and veterans where I find there is an unspoken trust gained almost immediately, an understanding of a lifestyle that only people that have served would ever know of.</i> |

7) What would you have like to have experienced more of?

| | |
|---|---|
| a | <i>More discussion, a morning yoga session/ late evening yin</i> |
| b | <i>I would love to do more about understanding what feelings actually feel like as a physical sensation, particularly good ones as that's where I don't feel them quite as strongly and would love to be more in tune with my positive emotion rather than so focused on the negative. I appreciate that I could have missed more development on Thursday and Friday, and this may have been covered more fully, I just wish i could have been there for the whole week</i> |
| c | <i>To continue every week – it's something to look forward to during lockdown</i> |
| d | <i>Dream/sleep education. Lucid dreaming, sleep paralysis, sleep management, although further information was offered on completion of the retreat so thank you</i> |
| e | <i>Being able to meet the others at the retreat, and to share experiences</i> |

| | |
|---|---|
| f | <i>It would have been good if the sessions could have been at altered times as due to the fact that I was unavailable in the later afternoon each day it meant that I always missed the same thing (yoga) but also fully appreciate that this was a good time for some to do yoga</i> |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|--|
| g | <i>More Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep (MODS) with Charlie</i> |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| h | <i>Informal chatting with the facilitators</i> |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| i | <i>All of the above</i> |
|---|-------------------------|

| | |
|---|---|
| j | <i>I have to be honest I don't think I would change the time spent on any subject it would however be more helpful to spend more time on the lucid dreaming tools</i> |
|---|---|

8) What would you like to have less of?

| | |
|---|---|
| b | <i>Remote sessions, I am so keen to be in person as those interludes between classes to be able to talk to others slightly more informally would have been amazing. I know that this is not a usual retreat however and I absolutely cannot complain about any of the sessions I took part in, simply because I took something away from all of them that I am still thinking about and digesting</i> |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| c | <i>I enjoyed it all.</i> |
|---|--------------------------|

| | |
|---|---|
| d | <i>The long breaks between sessions, it broke the flow up a bit for me.</i> |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| e | <i>Everything was brilliant</i> |
|---|---------------------------------|

| | |
|---|--|
| f | <i>It was sometimes frustrating having to wait for people to join the zoom (up to 10 mins sometimes). It may be useful to get people to sign in 10 mins before the session ready to start at the agreed time</i> |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|----------------|
| h | <i>Nothing</i> |
|---|----------------|

| | |
|---|---|
| i | <i>As I am someone who suffers from PTSD, I did not see anything that wasn't beneficial to anyone with this condition or anything I would like to see less of</i> |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|----------------|
| j | <i>Nothing</i> |
|---|----------------|

9a) Please circle the number that describes how you feel now

| | Fully agree | Somewhat agree | Somewhat disagree | Fully disagree |
|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| On my work | 5 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| On my engagement with my family | 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| On my engagement with my friends | 6 | 3 | 2 | 0 |

9b) If you have agreed with any of the above, please describe what you mean and how you think others will notice this change since the course

a *I have more patience and am more aware of how I feel*

B *I have already noticed a difference, I actually found myself being compassionate to my ex-husband! That has improved communication today. As for my friends and my family, I'm not sure they will initially notice as I'm the kind of person that smiles all the time anyway but learning to engage with positive emotion and actually feel it is likely to make me want to do more nice things for them, just because it is a good thing and will give me a positive feeling. That's bound to improve my relationships with the people i care about. As for my work, I think that meditation and yoga will help me to feel less stressed generally and give me the outlet to relax when I've been busy. It will likely bring more balance to life.*

D *To show more compassion to myself will hopefully enable me to look out of my bubble and see compassion in others, share my compassion and kindness to others, live with compassion and kindness. They will hopefully see a sense of 'me' once more*

e *My family will notice a difference as I feel more awake in myself, I still find it hard to trust but I will work on that*

f *A calmer approach with more understanding*

g *I don't know that anyone will notice under present circumstances*

i *Being able to sleep better should change my moods and make me feel refreshed. This puts me in a better place to show kindness to others as well as myself*

ji *I work with a number of older clients doing gentle movement, whilst I have always used the breath to help with the movement. I have never really asked them where they are feeling it.*

jii *I have started to ask this in my virtual classes with a very positive response from clients. Using the thoughts/emotions/behaviour/sensations*

10) Would you recommend the retreat (online) to other people?

| | Highly recommend it | | | | Not recommend it |
|--------------|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Scale | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Response | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

11) Would you suggest any changes to the online retreat – if so, please describe below?

a *A morning yoga or a late-night yin before bed practise. It would have been good if the online sessions were 2x2 hours or 2hours, 1hour and yoga hour as I found the breaks quite difficult.*

b *None, everything was logical to me and each day was progressive. I just wish i had been present on Thursday and Friday*

c *Everything was great – very nice people*

- d *As mentioned less long breaks. Nominate 1 person to be in charge of tech throughout*
- e *Maybe more on people's stories if they were happy to share as other people's experiences could help others feel that they are not alone*
- f *The online version is better than nothing but at the same time it was very difficult to fully immerse in it as there was also the requirement to get on with 'normal life' in between the sessions because of being in own home. Obviously, this wouldn't be a problem if it took place away from home.*
- g *Scheduled discussion times / more casual chance for participants to get to know each other*
- i *The retreat was managed and orchestrated exceptionally in my view considering we were all new to Zoom*
- j *The only thing I would like to suggest is that following the sessions, perhaps the option to go to another meeting with people to chat about the session. I find that at retreats I have been at when you break from a session you can chat with one of the others that has maybe said something that has resonated with you.*

12) Are you interested in follow up days of practice?

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
| 10 | 0 |

13) Is there anything else that you would like to mention to help shape future retreats?

- b *I would be interested in a bit of Buddhist philosophy as well and how it can be compatible with service life - I think I would love to learn more about it and an introduction lesson I think would be really useful to help me understand it. I appreciate that there is google and stuff, but there is nothing like hearing someone passionate about a topic or belief to talk about it.*
- c *I would go every week if I could*
- d *A huge thank you and big toothy grin from me*
- e *Amazing experience and can't wait to see everyone in person*
- f *I would like to take the opportunity to say thank you very much to all of you for the retreat. Although I wasn't able to join all of the sessions, I could at least join some which had it have taken place in Scotland I would not have been able to take part in any. Your non-judgemental compassion, understanding and kindness to each other and everyone on the course was second to none*
- g *The retreat, though more opportunity for rapport and group support between peers could be considered for the online version of the retreat, I have found it had directly resulted in a reduction in my anxiety levels by the use of techniques guided and taught over the week. I am so grateful for this experience and I highly recommend the retreat, retreat facilitators and the techniques they taught*
- h *No thanks – thought the whole thing was fabby*

| | |
|---|---|
| i | <i>I find the retreats have been organised effectively since day one, all facilitators seem to bring the right things on board which attracts our attention and keeps us interested</i> |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|--|
| j | <i>Just that I am so thankful for being invited to take part. Thank you to the facilitators/leads and of course the other serving personnel/Veterans for sharing their time with me.</i> |
|---|--|

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