



LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY CARNEGIE GREAT OUTDOORS

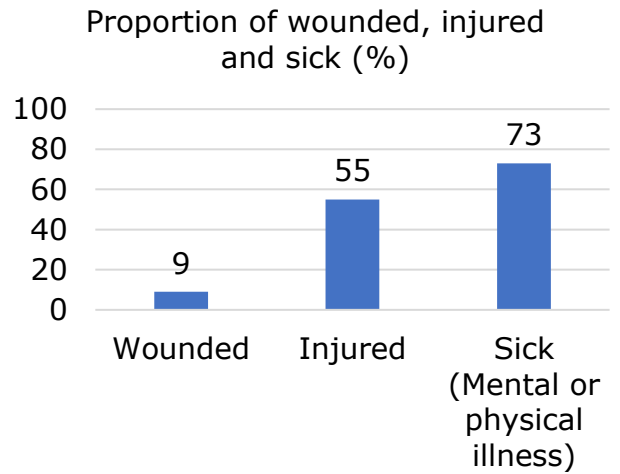
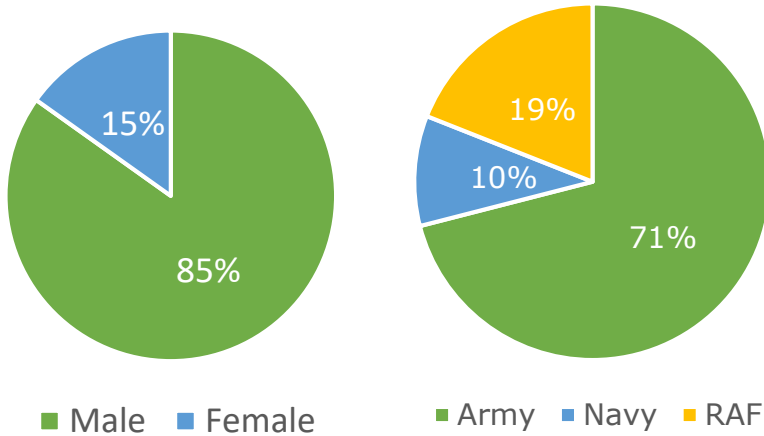


**Research from Reduced numbers
Multi Activity Courses (RMACs)
12 Participants/course**

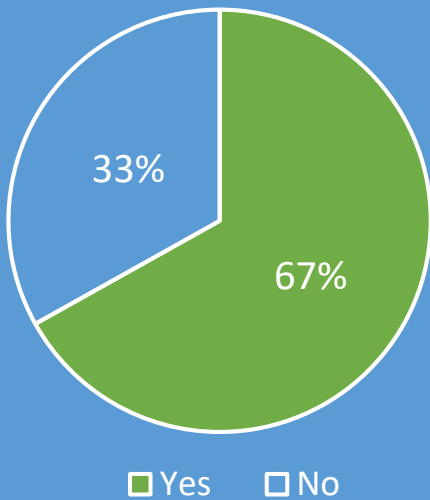
Participant demographics

This report contains research data from 33 participants who attended a 12 person RMAC in October 2020.

Number of courses run to date – 3, Number of participants to date - 33



Were you nervous or apprehensive about coming on the course?



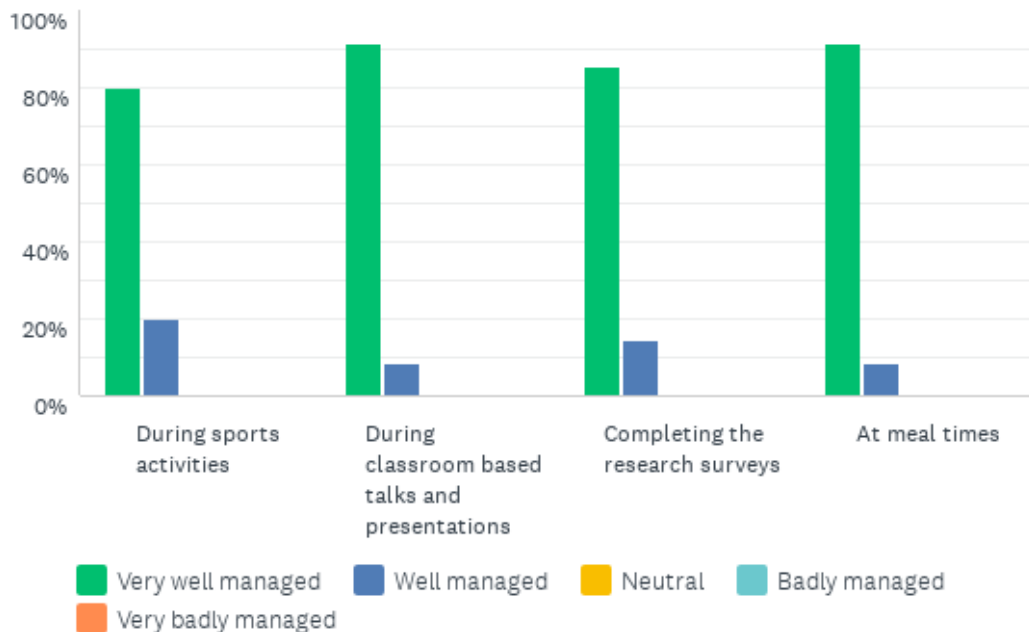
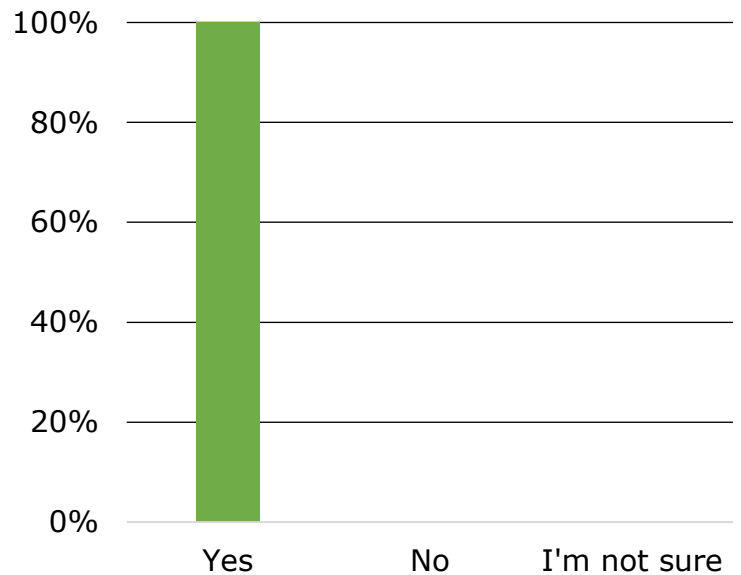
Reasons why participants were nervous to attend:

- "Apprehensive of a new situation"
- "Anxious about whether it would be very military"
- "Unsure what we would be asked to do"
- "Unsure it will help me"
- "Being on sick leave for 10 months it was horrible coming back into a group environment"
- "Couldn't sleep last night, overthinking"
- "The unknown, meeting lot of new people"
- "With my anxiety I do get nervous"



Managing COVID-19 restrictions

Do you feel the precautions put in place to reduce the risk of infection or spread of COVID-19 were satisfactory?



During your time at The Battle Back Centre, to what extent did you feel social distancing was managed?

Participant comments

"Thank you for such an amazing week"

"This course was a game changer for me. I feel more motivated to carry on and be better"

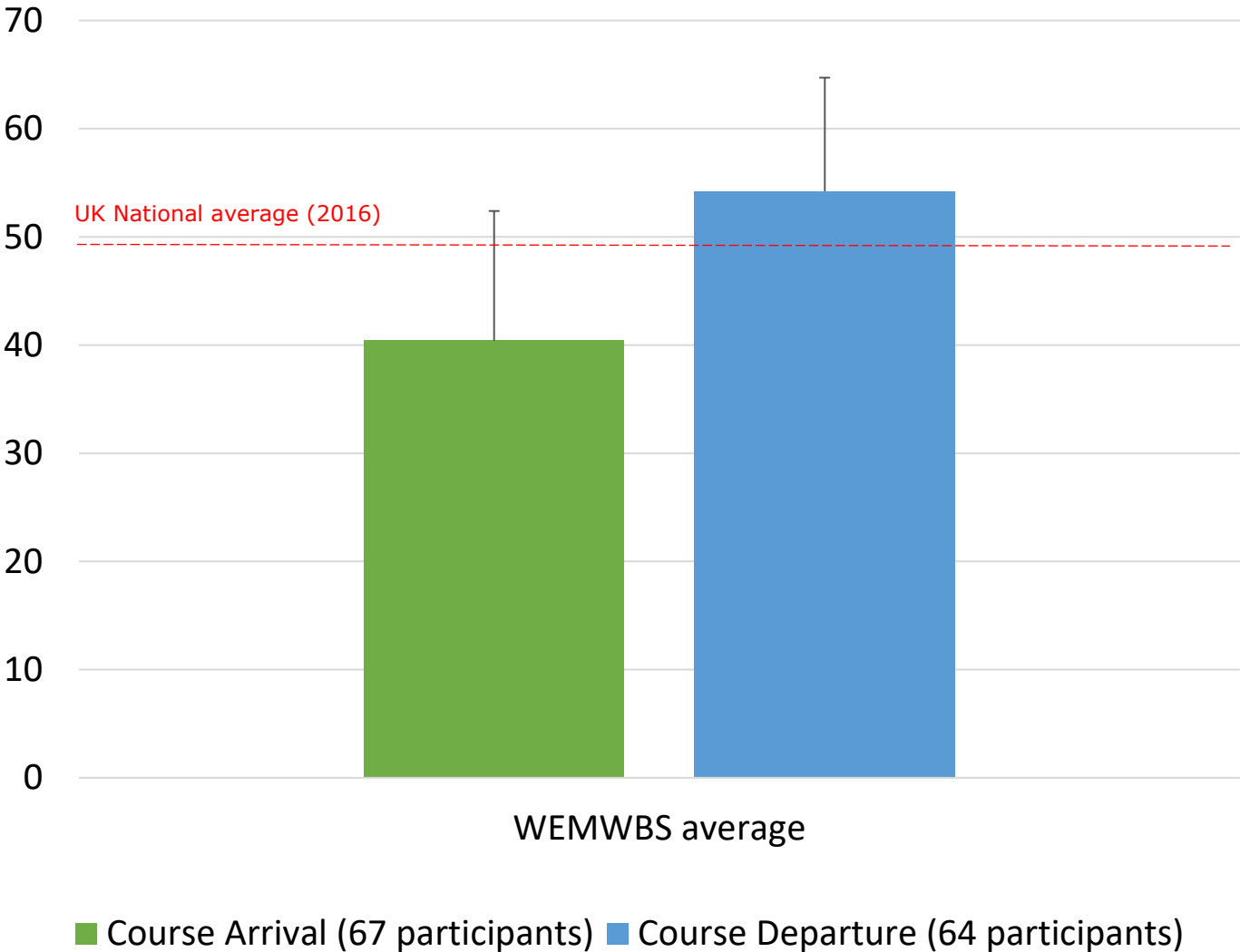
"Brilliant course thank you. It really has helped me to clear my head and for me to get on with "MY LIFE" and makes a change!"

"Thank you for a wonderful course! All members of staff have been great, especially our team leaders!"

How did the course influence participants mental health?

The average mental well-being score of the participants upon arrival was 40.38. This improved by 34% to 54.22 by the end of the courses. The UK National average was identified as 49.85 in the 2016 UK Health Survey. This is the well-being data of every participant since 17 August.

Significant improvements in participant's mental well-being



Day 1

How we begin

At the end of the first afternoon together participants and staff sat down to a circle of picture cards spread out on the floor. Each of us chose a card which represented ourselves in that moment, we began to share what we had chosen. A young man begins 'I've been off sick and away from the closeness of my unit for the last 10 months. I miss the camaraderie and friendships. This image [of a brass band playing together] reminds me of how we were together'. The next man, hunched over in his seat, says 'All I want to do is sleep' and points without much effort to an image of a boy sleeping in a hammock. There is a quietness in the group and then a quiet low trembly voice utters 'I feel sad and empty inside, just how this figure looks' He says holding back the tears and pointing to an image of cardboard box figure with a downcast expression walking in the rain. The last member of the group points to an image of a man balancing on a smooth line of string coming out of a tangle and says 'I am trying to make sense of my life and untangle things...'

Sitting together, sharing the full expression of very real emotions, the brutal honesty of the group and their ability to share deeply without judgement of each other is clear. One of the coaching staff gently leans into the circle and quietly asks 'Does any one want change?'

Everyone looks up from the images on floor. Some faces appear hopeful and some look suspicious, as though they are asking 'What's the catch?'. There is some silence and then the man who is trying to make sense of his tangled life smiles. He smiles so brightly the room almost lights up, he exhales a relieved sigh and firmly says 'I AM READY FOR CHANGE'. The others nod. This is how we begin our week.

The Battlebackers are split into three groups. This period of time is used by all groups to be introduced to the team they will be working with, to discuss their expectations and to reflect on what they would personally like to achieve during that week. One group used the grounds to have an icebreaker game to learn each other's names. This soon put participants at ease with lots of fun and laughter. A couple of participants shared they didn't particularly want to be on the course but they soon felt at ease. The group enjoyed a walk around the gardens with coaches rotating to get to know participants.

At the end of the first day after the evening meal the participants attend a short presentation delivered by one of the coaches on the 'comfort zone' model. This model is used to encourage the students to think about the benefits of getting out of their 'comfort zone' and into the 'stretch zone'. Reflection is used as a tool to highlight the benefits of being in the 'stretch zone', being able to learn about true strengths and capabilities, and how that could be practised through the week.

Most enjoyable part

- Meeting my team, walk around garden.
- Dinner
- Engaging with the group
- Ball name game
- Circles of energy lesson
- Second session. Sharing our experiences. How we feel.
- Discussion session with mentors
- Arrival & walk around site

Least enjoyable part

- Talking about myself
- Sitting in the first brief with pure silence. Could have had a video of the facilities playing in the background just to make people comfortable
- Thought of arriving
- Team building games as it felt a bit like forced fun
- No down time
- Travelling to the centre
- Closing late
- Only that the one way system, just makes it a long to walk whilst using crutches

How could it have been improved?

- On arrival it's a bit fast paced and belt fed. I nearly left, it was refreshing when the coaches took over.
- Awkward moment in the morning when all sat around waiting for instructors. Maybe but a video on in the background.
- A brief on how/where the staff fits in on your recovery plan.
- Not sure as I thought considering COVID was a really nice welcome and really excited about the course

Day 2

The three groups rotated around three sessions;- golf, archery and a 'Chimp Paradox' presentation from their coaches. The coach explains that the basis of the 'Chimp Paradox' theory is to help understand the way our brains process information. It revolves around the concept of three portions of the brain interacting, the chimp, the computer and the human. When questioned what they thought the 'chimp portion' was responsible for they correctly suggested "*survival*", "*food*", "*family*" and "*sex*". The human thinking portion provides a more balanced judgement of situations and relies on an evidence base in its decision-making process. Whereas the Chimp is more black and white, is paranoid and catastrophic and involved in the primitive fight, flight or freeze reflex. The coach explains that although the chimp portion is present from birth it can be managed and maintained. With this plasticity in mind they suggest that being aware of these systems in the brain we may be able to alter aspects of our lives more easily, ultimately working towards making permanent positive changes in their life.

Will the stick change or the change stick?

The accident happened in 2018 and since then he had been told that he couldn't 'do' anything. Two years on and yet another surgery, he explained how he had become less confident in his body, especially not knowing if his knee might give way at an inappropriate time. He sat listening to the introductory briefing in the golf shed not knowing if he would be able to participate but ready to give anything a try because he felt as if he had missed out on so much over the last 26 months.

To his surprise, throughout the session he found that he could move well between the chair and the green and that neither his golf stance or swing caused him any discomfort.

Toward the end of the session he was focussing on how he could get out and play golf with his father-in-law and enjoy the social side of the sport too. Though it wasn't until time spent on the putting green that he realised how limited his beliefs about his ability to recover had become. He walked with his crutch and putter to each new challenge, put down the crutch and stood up to putt. He then followed the ball, putted again if necessary, removed the ball from the hole and walked back to his crutch where he would bend down to retrieve it and walk assisted to the next hole. After seeing this pattern a few times, the coach asked him 'if you have a golf club in your hand do you need your crutch?' and he replied 'no probably not'. Then it happened, 'I hadn't thought about that, I wonder what else I could do without it?' And what followed was a conversation about improving by 1% each day and what little challenges he could give himself to get stronger and keep his mind active too. Starting to see his recovery as a challenge, like sport for his mind *and* body, ruptured his belief that other people were in control of his healing process.



Altering participants perspectives through sport

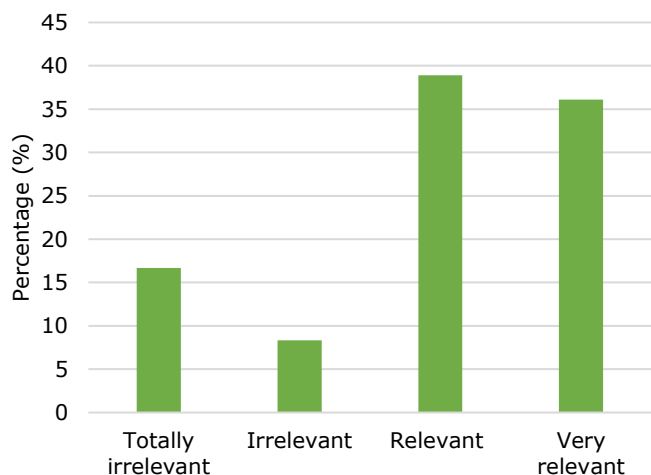
The Battlebackers could take part in archery and golf on day two of the course and cycling on day 3. One participant had thoughts that she would not be able to take part in most of the activities. On reflection she felt she had been made very welcome. The coaching staff, as always on introduction stressed that no judgements are made by anyone at Battle Back. This put her at ease along with coaches encouraging a 'challenge by choice' approach.

Her experiences of not being able to take part in activities over the last couple of years due to her injury had left her accepting what she couldn't do without considering what she could do. Conversations with coaching staff around mindset changes and the opportunities that could provide were helpful.

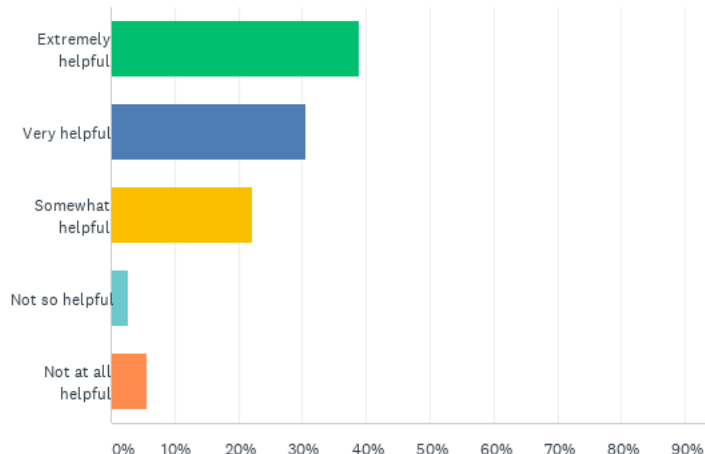
This week she was able to take part in everything at her own pace. During the cycling activity she challenged herself by going further than she expected but with the knowledge that there was support if she couldn't make it.

This has left her willing to experience some pain and discomfort in return of the rewards and feelings of being able to take part. Moving forward she acknowledged now be willing to try new activities rather than watch.

How relevant to your recovery circumstances were the topics you discussed with coaching staff today?



How helpful do you think the coaching support you've had can be for you in your recovery after the course?



How appropriate were today's physical activities to your ability and needs?
(0-10)

7.5/10

How could today be improved?

- We had more outside discussions
- I had a chance to sit down during the golf for a bit
- Today was amazing and fun
- I just wish we could have had a bit more time playing with some of the new equipment. Some of which, I really wish to learn more about
- We had longer on the activities
- There were a variety of activities that we could choose to do.
- Social areas could be available, but understand it is a COVID safety issue.

What was the most rewarding part of today?

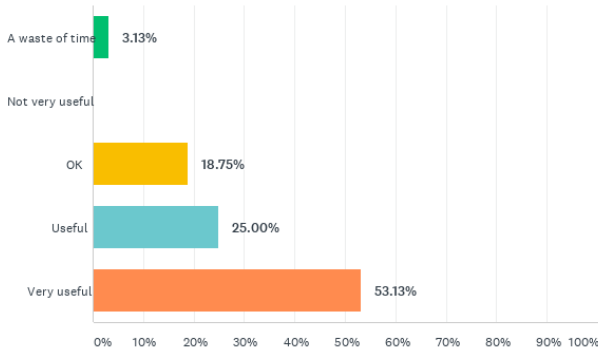
- Learning a variety of new skills, with sports and activities. I certainly hadn't considered myself trying!
- The life lessons throughout the good activities
- Both golf and wheelchair basketball was amazing
- Meeting new people
- Being introduced to the British legion
- Winning competitions
- Learning aspects of the chimp paradox in a new way.
- Learning how to play golf
- I had fun
- I can step forward

Did you learn anything about yourself?

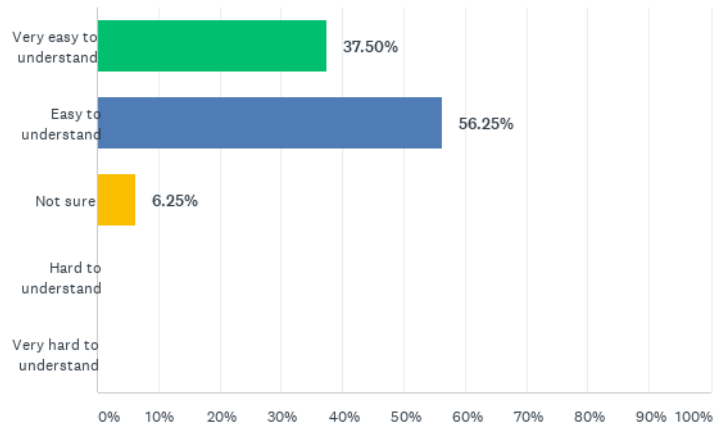
- Anything is possible if you put the mind to it
- Yes, I'm more aware of what goes on in my mind and mood. How to control and adapt in different situations. Chimp paradox was the contributing factor
- How the brain works in a basic way
- I need to exercise and challenge my chimp.
- That using mindfulness is a way to entertain my chimp!
- That I avoid talking about hard topics.
- The chimp paradox talk was very intuitive

Day 3

Looking back over the week, how useful are the coaching morning briefs and daily reviews?

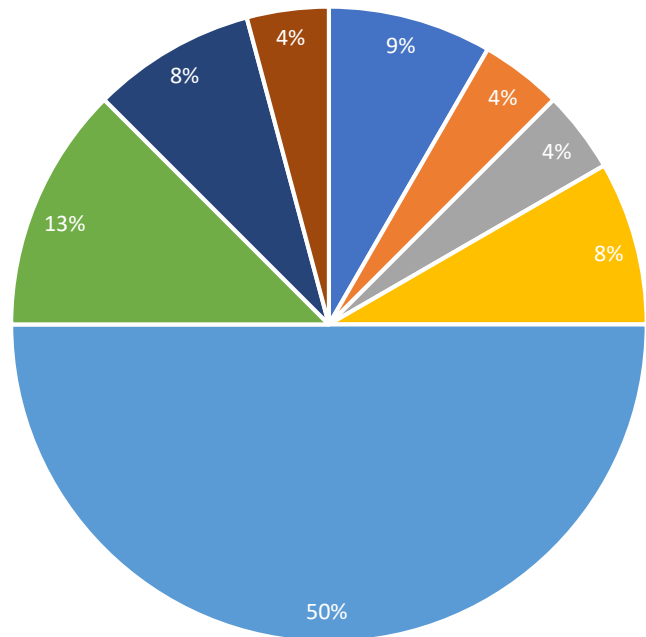


How easy are the coaching morning brief and daily reviews to understand?



What has been the most useful discussion/model/topic during the morning brief and daily review?

- Wheel of life
- Coping strategies
- The Reticular Activating System
- Mindset
- Chimp Paradox
- Hot seat
- Circles of control
- Past, Present,Future.



What is the most valuable thing you have learned?

Degree of change, Positive values, relaying belief systems in my "computer". Helping me move forward with more confidence	I have it in me to change my own life
Have fun, a smile heals	How the chimp paradox made me realise important aspects about myself
Accepting that you have undergone changes which then change your levels of ability. It does not take away ability, it just changes the way you may do things.	To believe in myself a bit more Live for the moment
Let things go and be more open.	I will start thinking the positive outlook of life, stay optimistic and make those adjustments.

An observational review a Reduced Numbers Multi Activity Course

Once we know something we can't not know it...

Tall, athletic and strong in stature he stiffly limps over to the green to take his first swing of the morning. His frame appears wooden and seemingly too tall for the golf club, he leans forward, lifts the club awkwardly, swings and misses the ball. He looks about, chuckles under his breath 'hmm thought so'... Before his injury he was a keen sportsman and had a passion for basketball, which he could now no longer play. Earlier in the morning he had explained golf was certainly not a sport for him but out of politeness he would give it a try. He dutifully followed the instructions provided by the coach and saw a little bit of improvement through practice.

Once the basics had been covered, the coach moved to analysing each individual's posture and range of movement. By focusing in on the body and feeling through the full swing motion, the wooden frame of his body began to melt. The coach asked in confirmation 'so it's your left leg that's injured?', shaking his head he replied 'no it's my right'. So the coach enquired as to why was he was holding his tension and weight through his injured leg? Taking this on board he let go of what he had been doing and feeling. In that moment of letting go he struck the ball to the end of the practice green 'Whoosh click!' two more 'Whoosh click' and he stood up straight, tall, relaxed and smiled at his achievement. 'How did that feel?' asked one of the coaches, he smiled widely and replied 'Swe-e-t'. After a few more adjustments here and there, followed by the coaches encouragement to stop thinking and engage his body's senses, he said 'I didn't ever think there would be another sport for me after my injury and certainly not golf. I had no idea I could feel this good again'.

Since leaving the golf green he is moving with flow in his motion again and now he knows he CAN feel different, he can't not know it...

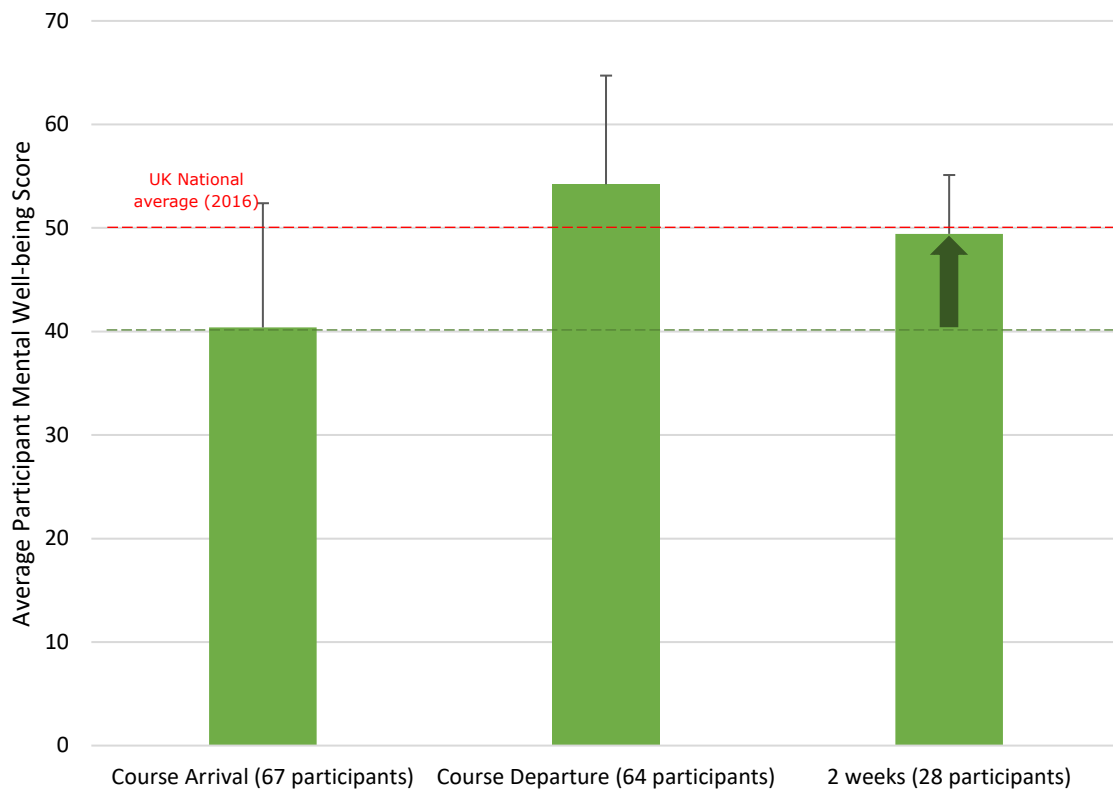
Safe with what I know...

'An eBike? No way! You'll never get me on one of those, it's cheating!'... a familiar statement heard by many coaches when they begin to brief the weekly mountain biking session by asking what type of bike participants would like to try. 'A standard bike for me, that's what I've been using in my recovery, so I'll keep to that' he said. Another participant pipes up 'An eBike, you mean it does the work for you? If that's the case, I'll have one!'

We set off on a bright and crisp October morning, with everyone ready at the beginning of the days ride from the centre and down to the old railway line. Before we arrive onto the canal path the team starts to spread out, with one coach and two participants quite far behind the others who are already at the rendezvous point. The coach and one participant are on eBikes and the other participant is moving slower and slower on his standard bike. Eventually the coach broaches the subject and asks if he would like to give the eBike a try, 'just until we meet the others'? She is greeted by a very definite refusal, he puts in more effort and continues to struggle along. The coach stops and asks to swap bikes 'just for a moment' and she will catch them up at the rendezvous point. Doing her a favour, he obliges and whizzes along the path with his fellow participant. In the kilometre or so he travels, his body has time to rest, he is using his energy more intentionally and the physical exertion subsides.

When the coach catches them up, she asks how the bike was and how he was feeling now? This time he refuses to give the bike back! He is completely converted. It is safe to say that converting someone to choose an eBike was certainly not the point of the day. However, what came from giving something new a try, was an opportunity for a conversation about where else in his life was he avoiding change or not asking for help and suffering along? The eBike experience became a lens for him to start looking for behaviours to update and become curious to find news ways of approaching problems in his life.

Sustainable improvements in participant's mental well-being



What part of the Multi Activity Course had the greatest impact on you?

I enjoyed the interaction and realised I've been missing out on this by hiding myself away

Truly believe without Battleback I may not be here today. The small group of friends I made was wonderful and we are still supporting each other now.

They helped me deal with so much that I have been unable to process for decades.

There are many parts that have influenced how I've been feeling since

The coaching. Pivotal change in my outlook, helped me focus and make practical steps to change

The coaching really encouraged me to think more positive and set goals that are there to help me through the dark times.

Structure, getting back into a routine

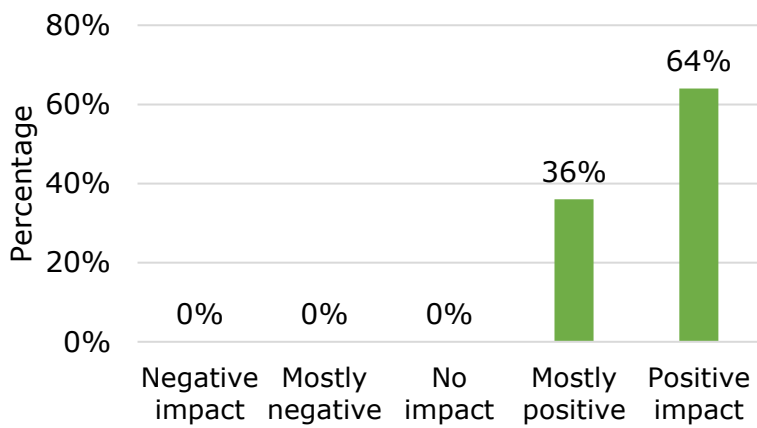
The life coaching and being able to do adaptive activities.

Being able to do new activities

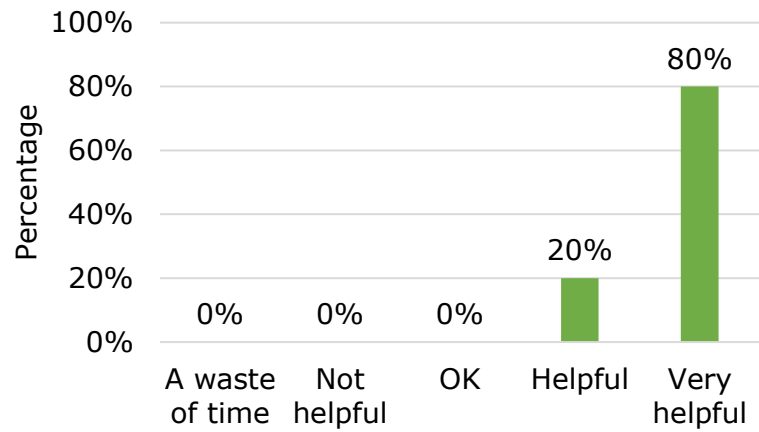
The whole learning experience

Part of a community again

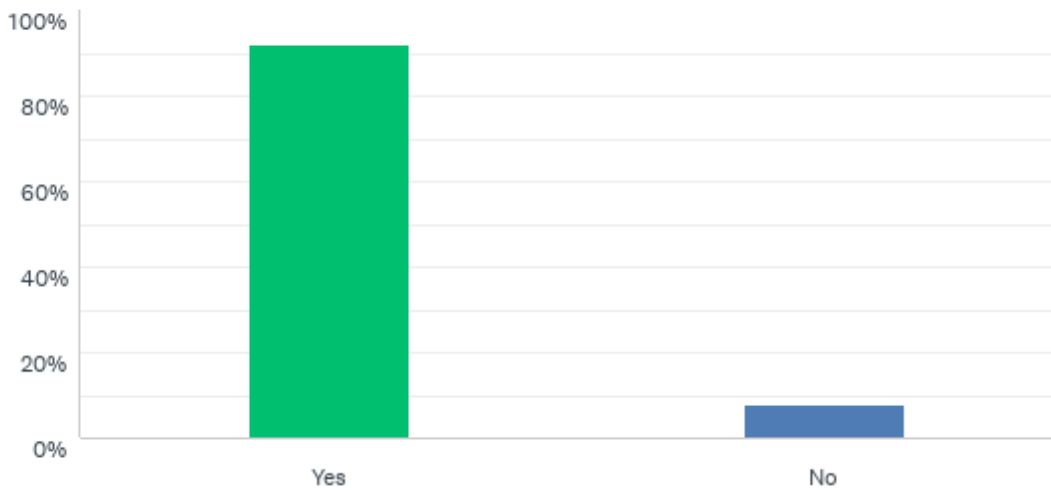
What impact has the Multi Activity Course had on you since the course ended?



In my recovery so far, the Multi Activity Course was...



Since being at the Battle Back Centre have you made any changes in your day-to-day life?



Participants commented they had stopped...

"Isolating myself and bottling it up"

"Hiding and feeling Alone"

"Feeling useless"

"Trying to overthink situations that are out of my control"

"Criticising myself as much as I did"

"using negative language where possible"

"Tried to stop negativity overwhelm me by using positive language, stopped saying no all the time to my kids and stopped worrying about things I cannot control"

"Really trying to stop thinking negative about my job but still finding it very hard to do so"

"Being as hard on myself (work in progress)"

"Jumping the gun"

Participants comments 2 weeks after attending

"What a great opportunity having the chance to attend reduced MAC, I really appreciate it!"

"Thank you RBL - feel like I owe you my life"

"The course was brilliant I even spoken to a few WIS soldiers friends and they're booking the course. It definitely helps the course but I have had a massive anxiety panic attack on Saturday only 6 days after the course so it does help to a point but when you leave BBC you go back home to reality"

"One of the best courses I have done in my military career to date. I have stayed in touch with the people on my syndicate and we regularly support each other. Thanks to the course, we all know each other quite well!"

"keep up the good work. Thank you to the RBL"

"Thank you to the battle back centre for showing me there is nice people left in the world"

"Personally, I think it was helpful to be grouped with other WIS personnel who were experiencing similar medical issues. It provided a further degree of shared experience on top of the military experience"

"Thank you for helping me in my recovery"