



# DRUMBEAT<sup>®</sup>

## FOR VETERANS

### DRUMBEAT FOR VETERANS PROGRAM OVERVIEW & RESEARCH SUMMARY

*"Drumming changes the rhythm in my subconscious from the hauntings of my past to a new beat of 'self' - allowing me to hear my own beat for the first time ever. Thank you DRUMBEAT."*

*- Participant's quote*

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### HOLYOAKE'S DRUMBEAT PROGRAM

Holyoake is one of Australia's leading alcohol and other drug counselling and support service providers. Holyoake's programs focus strongly on reducing social isolation by increasing the social skills and self-efficacy of people so they can better engage with the world around them. This strategy derives primarily from social learning and family system theories that place the social context as a primary influence on behaviour.

Holyoake's DRUMBEAT program was developed in 2003 and has undergone several formal evaluations, which have consistently shown beneficial outcomes across a range of social measures. The program applies both social learning theory and cognitive behavioural therapy to deliver a range of therapeutic and social emotional learning outcomes, including improved emotional regulation, increased self-esteem and sense of belonging and improved social skills that support healthy relationships. Combining a cognitive process with group drumming, participants explore self and social topics, practising life skills to develop resilience. Participants explore social issues including managing emotions, identity and strengths, tolerance and valuing diversity, risk-taking, bullying and social responsibility.

The original DRUMBEAT program was developed to address risk and protective factors in young people who are at risk of social isolation and harm. Over the years, the program has been shown to be successful in reducing risk factors and promoting protective factors in a range of population groups. DRUMBEAT is a train-the trainer model, and DRUMBEAT Facilitators have delivered the program in a range of settings across Australia and internationally.

In recent years Holyoake has developed DRUMBEAT Online (2020) and the following trauma informed customisations:

- DRUMBEAT for Veterans (2019)
- DRUMBEAT for Adult Justice (2019)
- Indigenous DRUMBEAT (2021)

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### DRUMBEAT FOR VETERANS PROGRAM

Holyoake received a Supporting Young Veterans Grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2018 to develop a trauma informed customisation of DRUMBEAT for delivery to young veterans that may be experiencing challenges transitioning to civilian life, including mental health, addiction, relationship and isolation issues.

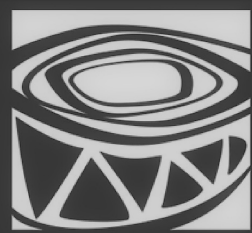
The customisation included a review of the original DRUMBEAT program and consultation with veterans, mental health professionals specialising in PTSD, and DRUMBEAT trainers, to determine changes required to make the content suitable for veterans. This included:

- Adding an introduction to include best practice delivery recommendations in the veteran's context and considerations of working with people that may have experienced trauma.
- Program content – A psychoeducational component on trauma to be included in the first 1-2 sessions developed by psychologists that specialise in working with veterans with trauma/PTSD.
- Program activities – DRUMBEAT master trainers and other trainers that deliver to groups of veterans reviewed drumming and other activities to remove anything that may be unsuitable for use with veterans with potential trauma/PTSD.
- Program content – Discussion topics and questions were reviewed and adapted to be in appropriate language, using military analogy and ensuring they are most relevant to contemporary issues being experienced in the transitioning process.
- Inclusion of meditation and mindfulness techniques at the end of each session. All techniques were vetted by clinical psychologists and mental health professionals specialised in working with people experiencing trauma, to ensure they are safe to use with veterans that may be experiencing PTSD.

***Two pilot programs were delivered and independently evaluated by the University of Western Australia (UWA). Despite the small data collection, the results were impressive and proved positive outcomes for participants as detailed in this brochure.***

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### THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR

"OUR RESEARCH CLEARLY SHOWS THAT DRUMBEAT FOR VETERANS HAS SHOWN THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THE PROGRAM "VETERANS ONLY" DUE TO THE SHARED EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES, ATTITUDES, LANGUAGE AND MUTUAL UNSTATED TRUST BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS."

- Associate Professor Lisa Wood,  
Wood L, Martin L, Chapple N, Ford M (2019) DRUMBEAT for  
Veterans, The University of Western Australia CRAWLEY Western  
Australia



**9.9%**  
Positive  
Impact on  
PTSD

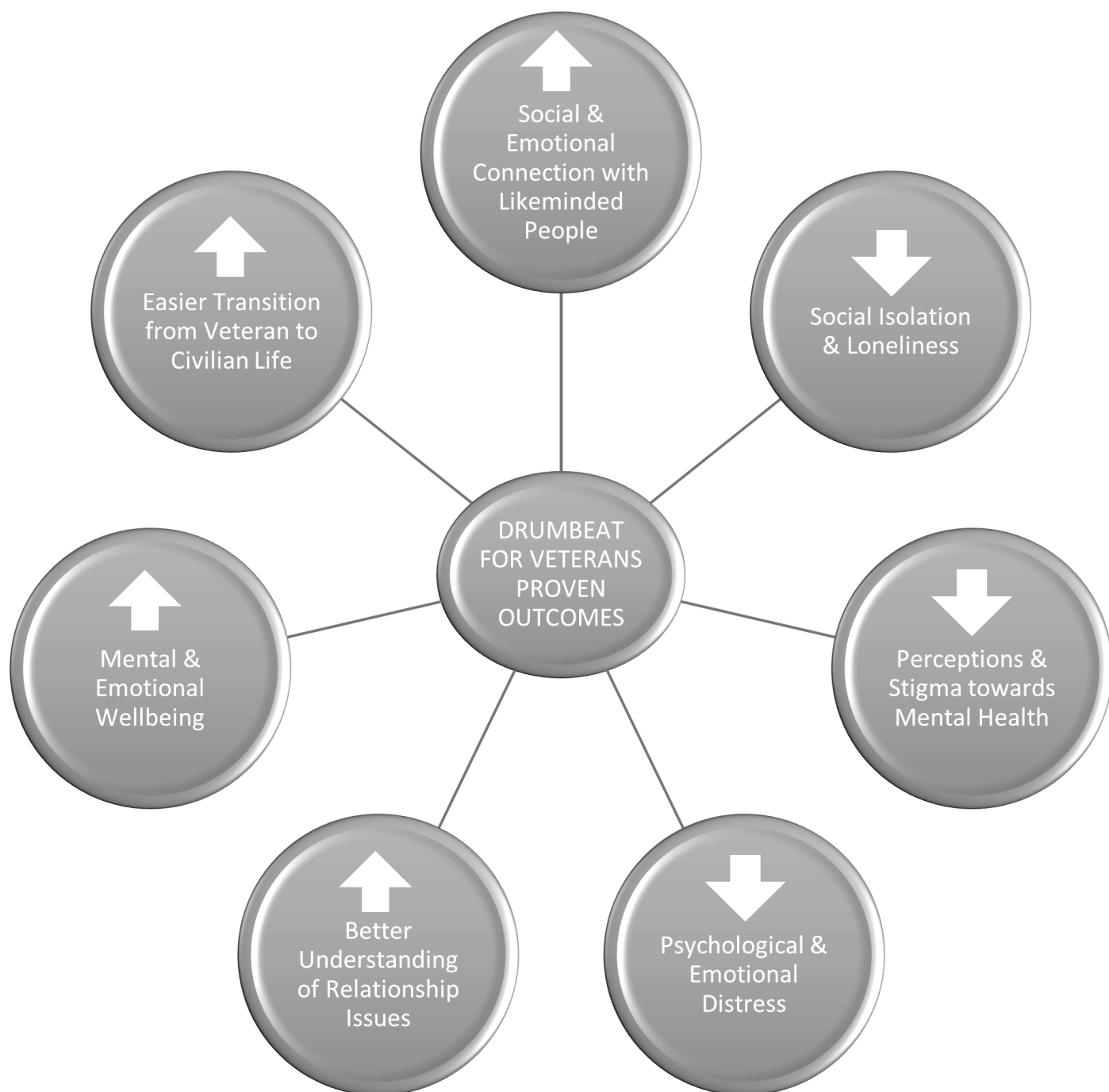
**17.3%**  
Improvement  
in Emotional  
and Mental  
Wellbeing

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### PROVEN EVIDENCE OF POSITIVE IMPACT



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## THE POWER OF DRUMS

### Why the drum?

Ancient cultures have used drums since the beginning of time as a way to communicate, prepare for war, celebrate, and heal from loss. We hear and feel rhythm in our mother's womb - which makes it primal.

Research shows that participating in a drum circle strengthens the immune system, reverses specific neuroendocrine and neuro-immune patterns associated with the stress response, improves mood, decreases burnout, and increases self-esteem and self-confidence.

Neurologically, rhythmic interventions (such as drumming) that require repetitive and increasingly more complex patterns of movement help to stabilise an overactive limbic system which is associated with combat stress, PTSD and other associated conditions. It even increases brain function through creation of new neural pathways.

What may be the most beneficial aspect of drumming is the "here and now" connection that develops within just a few minutes of sharing a drum session. So, the real question is, "Why NOT the drum?"

***From Terrie King's East Texas Circle of Courage DRUMBEAT:  
(based on Bruce Parry's research)***

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### **PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK**

#### **Benefits of being with other Veterans**

*"Not knowing anyone else in the group you can feel that you are a fish out of water, but the beauty of it was we were all in the same situation. Even without knowing each other we felt more at ease... whereas if that was held with civilians - no way!"*

*"Because we are likeminded people in the room, with shared experiences, you can let your guard down fairly quickly because of the people in there. Everyone offers up something, so you don't feel on your own."*

*"From the moment it started it was really good. Watching men from my era open up is, yeah, unheard of, especially those of the ranks, like RSM and things like [warrant] officers, they just don't talk. So, I'm watching them slowly open up. Yet, it was only the first session!"*

*"You can see from a lot of the guys and girls in the group that a lot of the frustration is that sometimes you're expressing these concerns to family or some people that maybe have not shared the same thing. Firefighters are sometimes a bit more comfortable talking with other firefighters. It's not that people don't care; it's just sometimes if you haven't quite seen their perspective, it's a bit hard to relate or provide decent feedback."*

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### TRADITIONAL TALKING THERAPY VS DRUMBEAT FOR VETERANS PROGRAM

Taking therapy has its place, but it is not for everyone, and there are a lot of transitioning veterans who are not engaging in any mental health supports.

It is often difficult for people, especially those with experiences of trauma, to express their feelings with words. It can be overwhelming trying to explore trauma with someone who does not understand the military language, culture, history, people and psyche. Exasperate that with the perceived stigma whilst in the Australian Defence Force around expressing thoughts and feelings or even seeking assistance with their mental health.

Alternatively, the drumming circle is proven to be a safe space, where participants can express themselves in a non-confrontational way through the drums, with people who have served and understand each other.

Participant's quote:

"Using the drums to talk I think it actually felt good, you were able to say some things using the drums that you couldn't verbally say, or couldn't get from here to here. You knew what you wanted to say but couldn't get it out."

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### PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

#### Benefits of drumming

*"Through the DRUMBEAT program I've been able to learn drumming that lets me find some stillness and quiet in my mind in the daytime... and I can get to that other part of my brain".*

*"The other day I was stuck in horrific traffic and my anxiety was growing and so I found myself tapping the steering wheel. The DRUMBEAT songs were going through my head too and I was singing and tapping and able to calm myself down. These small things I have learnt make a big difference to my day."*

*"Using the drums to talk, I think it actually was good because you were able to say some things using the drums that you couldn't verbally say. You knew what you wanted to say but you couldn't get it out, whereby being able to use the drums to give that message, it was actually quite interesting."*

*"The one thing that we were all taught during my era in the military, in particular, was you don't bring your civilian problems to work. So that's it. You don't talk about your problems or responsibilities outside that gate. Being a female in a male environment, we don't talk... that was another thing. So when it started and they asked specific questions and you answered them, we started seeing that there was a familiarity with the issues and the problems, and that mine were not dismissed. You weren't laughed at nor tiffed at. You could speak freely, and you were listened to."*

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Self Expression

Communications

Emotions

Feelings

Self Worth

Problem Solving

Confidence

Team Work

Mateship

DRUMBEAT for Veterans is not a traditional talking therapy, from those who do not know or understand what it is like to be a veteran.

***It is made by Veterans for Veterans.***

Our aim is to...

- See a person as a whole
- Improve all aspects of life
- Assist to reach your full potential
- Work within a safe and familiar environment

DRUMBEAT for Veterans tailors each group by putting the needs and experiences of the group front and centre.

Some key comments from veterans who have completed the course:

*"You do not have to explain yourself, change your language nor be fearful of sharing the darker parts of your service."*

*"It's a shared experience with inherent trust, great comradeship and true mateship."*

[www.holyoake.org.au/drumbeat/](http://www.holyoake.org.au/drumbeat/)







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### THE DRUM AS A HEALING TOOL IN THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE - 1

Our earliest experiences of safety and security are closely connected with rhythmic patterns. Our mother's womb was a place filled with rhythm, from the pulsing heart to the expanding and constricting lungs; we have from our earliest sensory experiences been surrounded by rhythm and continue to live in a world defined by rhythm. We are rhythmic creatures!

More and more people are realising the therapeutic benefits of artistic mediums, including music for optimal psychological development and recovery from trauma. In research projects across the western world, the findings of benefits from music as both a developmental aid and social panacea are reinforcing what traditional cultures have long known.

In traditional societies the drum and other rhythmic instruments have long been connected to healing. The drum provides a channel for communication and connection with others, in a way that avoids the danger of misinterpretation that the use of language often encounters. The drum provides an avenue for creative expression and the release of emotion in a safe and constructive way. The drum connects us to the natural world through our own forgotten, inner rhythms and provides us with an avenue for fun, excitement and joy.

Drumming, and more generally, rhythmic musical play using a range of instruments (as well as the human body) works as a therapeutic modality in numerous, often complimentary ways. Above all else, it is the simplicity and accessibility of the instruments that allow them to be used so widely and effectively. Very few people enter into the group therapeutic process without some degree of fear, whether as individuals, families or groups. The therapeutic process forces us into a situation of vulnerability, where our most intimate sensitivities may be exposed.

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### **THE DRUM AS A HEALING TOOL IN THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE - 2**

Drumming and rhythmic exercises, when pitched at the appropriate developmental level are for most people immediately comforting and thus serve to reduce the tension of a typical therapeutic session.

For some participants it is the chance to put away thoughts of the past or the future and just become absorbed in the present without stress or worry. For others it is a way to release pent up emotion in a safe manner. Drumming offers people a way to connect to others without fear or shame and explore their own creativity and identity. For others it is the physical exertions in drumming that can assist them with sensory processing and motor coordination.

In a world dependent on cognitive processing, today many of us have lost touch with the rhythms that surround us; rhythms that are experienced predominantly intuitively and act as essential guides to understanding the world around us and our own place within it. We look towards technology and artificial constructions to bring us happiness, meaning and peace of mind; yet for all its masterful achievements technology has failed to provide us with any deep fulfilment. Drumming offers a path to our own inner spirit and a connection to the world around us that transcends language.

There is a growing amount of research supporting the theory behind the success of music based therapy interventions and drumming in particular. In the field of music therapy, drumming and percussion are probably the most widely used and researched modalities within the profession (Thaut, 2005). Physiological studies have demonstrated that drumming imposes a neurological pattern on the brain that typifies general altered states of consciousness and meditation (enhanced alpha-wave production and brain wave synchronisation). These physiological changes are associated with healing and psychological and physical well-being. Drumming induces relaxation, reduced tension and anxiety, and facilitates cognitive-emotional integration and social bonding and affiliation (Winkelman, 2003). Multiple studies have demonstrated that participation in music programs are closely identified with improvements in literacy, numeracy, intellectual development and general attainment (Hallam, 2009).

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### THE DRUM AS A HEALING TOOL IN THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE - 3

Recent developments in neuroscience have reinforced these benefits including:

- Young people who have suffered severe emotional trauma at an early age have been shown to suffer brain impairment, and rhythm exercises have been found to be beneficial by acting in support of the regulation of homeostatic states (Perry, 2007)
- Extensive engagement with music induces cortical re-organisation producing changes that assist the brain in processing and storing information (Schlaug et al., 1995)
- Music and speech share some processing systems which can lead to enhanced comprehension and improved auditory systems that impact directly on the take up of a second language and reading skills (Sleve & Miyake, 2006, Anvari et al., 2002)
- Drummers, of all musicians, generate more complex memory traces (Munte et al., 2003)
- Musical training that focused on rhythm was associated with increased reading comprehension for young people experiencing reading difficulties (Long, 2007)
- Rhythmic training is also associated with higher temporal cognition, mathematical ability and improved spelling (Rausher, 2009; Overly, 2003).

Importantly for DRUMBEAT facilitators, one of the outcomes of utilising music is the enjoyment that the facilitator takes away from the session. Working in therapeutic practice can have its ups and downs with responsive and unresponsive clients, cooperative and uncooperative clients and voluntary and mandated clients, all presenting with different dynamics on any given day. Introducing rhythm play into practice can not only serve clients' needs but also have a positive impact on the client-facilitator relationship and the level of satisfaction both parties have with the process.

With over 8,000 trained facilitators now utilising the Holyoake DRUMBEAT program, this theme has become a regular part of the feedback received from facilitators. When you are enjoying your work you improve your disposition towards your client and therefore add to the support you provide for them.

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### PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

#### General comments

*"There's a certain degree of commonality and themes - even though a lot of us have served at different times, and different corps, and even different services. It's nice to just make that connection I think as well."*

*"I would love to continue doing this. Knowing that the program has finished it's like what do we do now. To have it finished now after 10 weeks, what happens then?"*

*"It was too short for our liking; we don't want it to stop."*

*"They've given us a lot of time to talk. We've had session where we've done more drumming and some where we have done a lot of talking and a lot of drumming. So it's been well balanced."*

*"I also mentioned I liked to help people out and stuff because there were maybe ideas when I got more healthy, maybe being able to run or facilitate a group in the future, which sort of lends itself to me in a big way."*

**Four of the Veterans that participated in the DRUMBEAT for Veterans pilot programs subsequently signed up for and participated in the training to become DRUMBEAT for Veterans Facilitators.**

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Holyoake has been awarded another Supporting Young Veterans Grant by the Department of Veterans Affairs for 2021-22. This is to roll out DRUMBEAT for Veterans trainings in partnership with local ex-service organisations and provide mentoring and support for trainee facilitators to deliver their first groups and become accredited DRUMBEAT Facilitators.

Training is free and a series of taster sessions will be held to come and try out the drumming circle experience.

If you would like to be involved  
please visit  
[https://holyoake.org.au/drumbeat/  
drumbeat-for-veterans/](https://holyoake.org.au/drumbeat/drumbeat-for-veterans/)  
or contact:  
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[www.holyoake.org.au/drumbeat/](https://www.holyoake.org.au/drumbeat/)