Evaluation Report: Veterans Meditation Retreat

Hosted by Life Transition Meditation Center

September 2025

Abstract: The 2025 Veterans Meditation Retreat was a highly successful event, providing veterans with practical tools to deepen their mindfulness practices, build peer connections, and address symptoms of distress. Pre- and post-test surveys demonstrate both strong satisfaction with the retreat and measurable improvements in self-regulation skills, while also highlighting areas for future enhancement.

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NOTE A detailed report with additional information will be provided after the delayed posttest is conducted in January 2025.

Veterans Meditation Retreat (VMR)

In September 2025, a total of about 40 veterans attended Life Transition Meditation Center's (LTMC) Veteran Meditation Retreat (VMR). Of those who participated in Life Transition Meditation Center's (LTMC), a total of 34 (85%) participants took the pre-test and 33 (83%) took the post-test. SBS Evaluation & Program Development Specialists (SBS Evaluation) reviewed and analyzed pre- and post-event surveys from the retreat, and the results are summarized herein.

Participation

In 2025, there was a similar number of participants in the VMR. Due to the nature, complexities, and barriers encountered by veterans, recruitment included a variety of methods from ads in the paper to phone calls and mailings. It is impressive that LTMC was able to serve a similar number of veterans, considering funding constraints, especially for private foundations, of the current national economic landscape. Sindy Sacoman, of SBS Evaluation, attended the first day of the retreat to meet and build relationships with the veterans who attended.

Participant Needs

Similar to 2024, most participants (85-90%) had been previously exposed to meditation and/or mindfulness; although, largely their engagement was limited to "a little bit." The overwhelming majority of individuals reported difficulty managing their emotions and other significant behavioral health challenges (i.e., strong negative emotions – 88%, loss of interest in activities – 82%, feeling distant/cut off from others – 85%, difficulty concentrating – 91%, and trouble sleeping – 82%). SBS Evaluation will conduct a delayed posttest in January, after the holidays, where more data will be obtained on continued meditation practices post retreat.

Retreat Experience

Almost all participants reported great satisfaction with the event – most participants were satisfied with the event's location (97%), duration (90%), flow (85%), instructor (94%), and relevance to managing their well-being (94%). These numbers are generally slightly lower than

2024 satisfaction ratings, although still very high. Veteran's favorite aspects of the retreat included meeting and connecting with fellow veterans, knowledge and guidance of instructors, structured meditation instruction, food, location, and the supportive environment. Challenges overcome included: social anxiety, stress regulation, detaching from rigid schedules, sleeping away from home, and reducing hypervigilance. All participants both felt confident in using and planned on practicing walking/moving (100%) and sitting/standing meditation (100%). Similar to 2024, most participants felt comfortable applying their newly refreshed knowledge of walking and moving meditation, sitting and standing meditation, and yoga and stretching. Also similarly to the previous year, sound and lying meditation proved somewhat more difficult to practice outside of the retreat (80-85%). Positively, all participants rated the retreat "good" or "very good" and all would recommend the VMR to other veterans in their respective circles. Nearly all of the participants reported an improved perceived ability to manage mental challenges and most reported improved ability to manage physical pain.

Suggestions for Improvement

Overall, veterans reported high levels of satisfaction with the event. Some participant suggestions for improvement included more physical activities (potentially aquatics or outdoor movement), added structured time for gratitude practices, increased variety of meals, and inclusion of sound-based meditation tools (gong baths, singing bowls, etc.).

Conclusion

The 2025 retreat replicated and strengthened the success of 2024: participants reported high satisfaction, improved coping skills, and strong intent to continue mindfulness practices. Veterans emphasized the value of camaraderie, structured learning, and safe healing spaces.

Future retreats may expand offerings in sound meditation, gratitude practices, and outdoor/nature-based activities. Continued collection of delayed post-test data will help assess long-term impact on mental health symptoms and meditation adherence.