

VA SUCCESS STORIES: ATLANTA



Empower Veterans Program

Atlanta VA Clinic
 250 North Arcadia Avenue
 Decatur, Georgia 30030

404.321.6111
 Extension 1.3344

"Empower Veterans Program"
 on MyHealththeVet

*Your Pain is
 REAL AND COMPLEX*

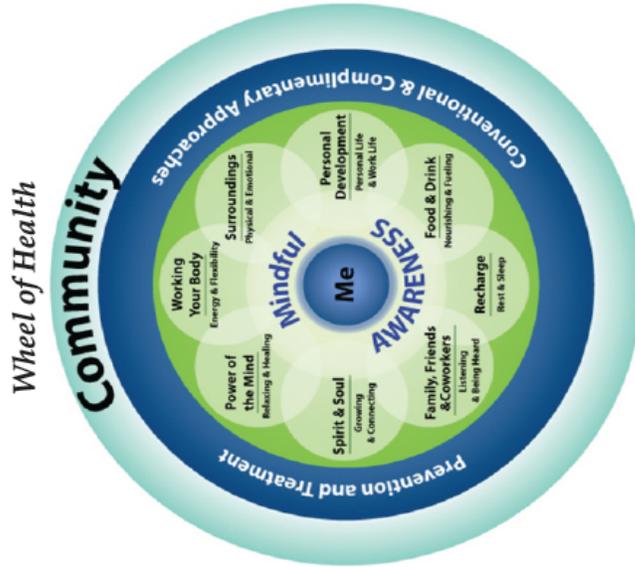
An imbalance in any of these areas will affect your pain:

- Sleep
- Family and Friends
- Spirit and Soul
- Working Your Body
- Surroundings
- Food and Drink
- Personal Development

Therefore, the **Empower Veterans Program** takes a

*Whole Health
 Wellness Approach*

(see the *Wheel of Health* on the right)



VA

Empower Veterans Program

for a fuller life!

*You
 are invited to...
 Training in Self-Care
 for
 Chronic Pain*

Atlanta VA Health System



EVP Goal

Empower Veterans Program coaches Veterans with chronic pain to live a fuller life by moving toward their own Wellness goals.

By participating in **EVP**, several providers/coaches will work with you for maximizing your Whole Health.

The *Wheel of Health* pictured on the back illustrates the various factors that can impact you as a whole person.

What Veteran Alumni are saying:

- "I wish I did this years ago"
- "Pain is no longer in control of my life"
- "I'm not so angry anymore."
- "EVP Staff really cares!"
- "EVP is the best thing the VA has given me"

Veterans in EVP will participate in each of the following group classes:

Whole Health

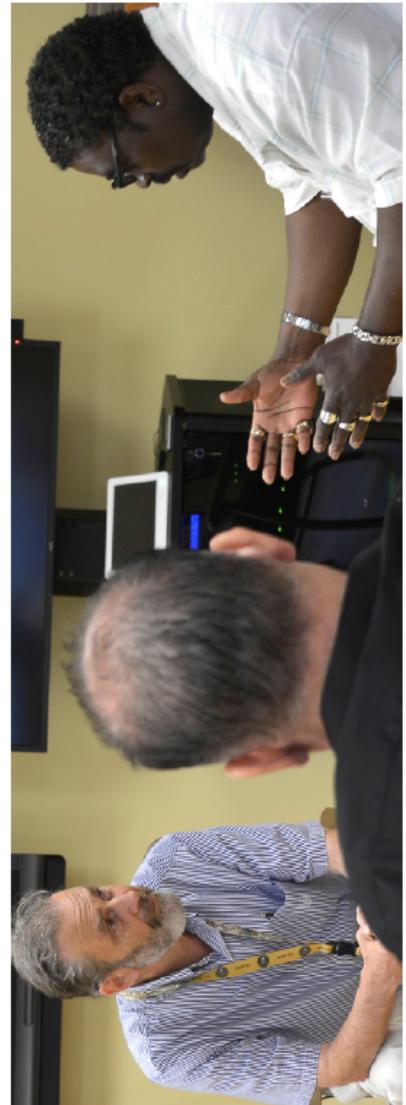
addresses issues which often get neglected with chronic pain but which can greatly affect our wellness. Each session begins with Mindfulness practice.

ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) helps us keep our focus on what is really important to us, and helps us progress towards our values and goals.

Mindful Movement

Led by physical therapists to learn body awareness and feeling safe in movement. Activities fit for all ability levels are designed to enhance movement. Movement is life: Improve the quality of movement and you improve the quality of life.

The three parts are effective when *practiced daily at home* – as each Veteran learns to be the quarterback of his/her own healthcare team and move towards goals for a fuller life.



10 Weeks of Training

Classes will take place nearly every week. Classes meet every week for three hours, at the same time and day of the week for 10 weeks. Check-in is 30 minutes before the class times provided below.

Class Times:

<u>Monday</u>	10:30 am - 1:30 am
<u>Tuesday</u>	8:30 am - 11:30 am
	12:30 pm - 3:30 pm
<u>Wednesday</u>	8:30 am - 11:30 am
	12:30 pm - 3:30 pm
<u>Thursday</u>	8:30 am - 11:30 am
	12:30 pm - 3:30 pm
<u>Friday</u>	10:30 am - 1:30 pm

Don't miss this opportunity!

Check-out EVP



Empower Veterans Program

at a

Meet & Greet

Monday
8:30 am - 9:30 am

250 North Arcadia Avenue
Decatur, GA 30030

Reserve your space now by calling:
404.321.6111, 1-3344

EMPOWER VETERANS PROGRAM LETTER



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Atlanta VA Medical Center
1670 Clairmont Road
Decatur GA 30033

“Empower Veterans Program” (EVP) System Redesign is a Quality Improvement intervention for better and safer chronic pain management. EVP is modeled to be sustained through avoided costs.

EVP goals are Whole Health and Well-Being, the opposite of illness, for each Veteran with chronic pain. EVP is an intensive, integrated self-care training program for functional restoration for Veterans with “high impact” chronic pain. “High impact” chronic pain usually has a bio-medical component, and always has clinically significant dysfunctions in at least one of the following areas of a person’s whole being: psychological; social; and existential/spiritual. These dysfunctions produce real pain through shared Central Nervous System (CNS) pathways.

In healthcare systems throughout the USA, many patients with chronic pain remain dysfunctional on Long Term Opioid Therapy. To meet the needs of thousands of Veterans, EVP integrates adequate doses of evidence informed interventions (Behavioral Health, Physical Therapy, and Whole Health Psycho-Educational Coaching). VISA 7 granted FY14 funds to launch EVP for training in a Fuller Life as well as for beginning a High Risk opioid assessment and tapering clinic. The training portion for EVP allows Atlanta VA Health System to hire over 11 FTEs for investing 30-40 hours of coaching and clinical services for up to 600 Veterans annually. A group of 8-12 Veterans makes up one training cohort; each cohort explores EVP as a group for three hours each week, for 10 total weeks. Additional individualized care is promoted by mid-week calls or 1:1 face to face coaching. One training teamlet can facilitate 8 concurrent weekly cohorts; a teamlet is a Psychologist, a Chaplain or Social Worker, and a Physical Therapist. The current eight EVP training facilitators are:

- 2 Behavioral Health Therapists using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (values based, mindful, behavioral therapy);
- 1 Social Worker and 2 Chaplains using VHA’s Office of Patient Centered Care’s “Wheel of Health” self-care areas and exploring issues of building relationships and of meaning in suffering;
- 3 Physical Therapists with Mindful Movement / Neuro-Plasticity training (to de-sensitize the sensitized nervous system through body awareness, posture and feeling safe in movement);

Remaining staff are 1 each: Pain Specialist-Internist/Director; Social Worker; Program Support Specialist.

Simple business case modeling in FY14 demonstrated cost avoidance in less than three years based on predicted unnecessary: opioids; extra Pharmacy Staff; non-value added Emergency Room visits; and extra Urine Drug Testing. Fuller “Balanced Scorecard” measures include: long term Veteran and staff satisfaction; multiple measures of function, measures of depression and acceptance; utilization of VHA and Choice services; and markers for accidental overdose (such as the Opioid Safety Initiative).

Single site implementation began early 2015. First full time team of facilitators began training in summer of 2015. Manualized training will be available to start intensive mentoring of other VHA facilities to spread EVP by early 2017.

Veterans who completed EVP note how the training continues to help improve their function and quality of life. They are inviting fellow Veterans to come and learn new ways of thinking and living to thrive in spite of chronic pain. Many have stopped using canes and walkers, and most have mindfully started regular fitness routines.

Preliminary analysis of clinical assessments for the first 154 EVP graduates' (which must be viewed cautiously) shows statistically and clinically significant decreases in: pain interference; catastrophizing; depression; and anxiety. Furthermore, statistically significant increases were seen in: physical activity engagement; self-rating of physical health and psychological well-being; and Timed-Up- and-Go-test. Iterative improvement of EVP will continue based on the Model for Improvement.

Common Veteran and spouse feedback includes: "The pain is not in control anymore"; "I'm not angry anymore"; "I no longer think about [ending my life]"; "my husband is getting out with family and friends again"; and "This is the best thing the VA has given me!"

EMPOWER VETERANS PROGRAM TRAINING GRID

EVP 4.6 10 Weeks	EVP Whole Health through Exploration of self-care & Mindfulness Practice	EVP ACT Acceptance & Commitment Therapy	EVP Mindful Movement Aware and feeling safe
Wk 1	Assessment; Orientation (Opioids and procedures have failed many; Well-Being Self-Care discovery and practice can help everyone); Group Formation; Wheel of Health and Personal Health Inventory (PHI) ; and Breathing Practice		
Wk 2	Mindful Breathing & Power of the Mind for a Fuller Life & Mindful Breathing	Exploring Values Orient to ACT Introduction to Values -values card sort	Understanding Pain; Neuro-Muscular Re-Education (NMR): Noticing Differences; Posture & “Reset Button”
Wk 3	Mindful Breathing & Food & Drink and a Fuller Life & Mindful Eating	Values, Goals, and Taking Action Values Clarification & worksheet -Heading west/globe	Motion Is Lotion Exercises (MILEs): MILE 1; NMR: Hands; Posture & Chairs
Wk 4	Mindful Breathing & Recharge (Sleep Cognitive Behavioral Tx tips) & Observer-self practice	Getting Moving Barriers/Flexibility -waves and bubbles Committed Action -post-it note exercise	MILEs 1 & 2; NMR: Head & Eyes; Posture & Pillows
Wk 5	Observer-self practice & Personal Development (Possible decisions toward an increasingly mindful life) & Gratitude Practice	Analyzing Pain Control Strategies Creative Hopelessness -Rings of Suffering	MILEs 1, 2 & 3; NMR: Towels & Feet ; NMR: Rising from a chair Posture & Footwear
Wk 6	Self-Compassion practice & Spirit and Soul (& Act of Conscious Kindness) & Brief Observer Self	Tricks of the Mind Self-as-Context -bus -chess board	MILEs 1, 2, 3 & 4; NMR: Core Posture & Workstations
Wk 7	Self-Compassion practice & Community (Building Relationships via Listening) & Leaves on Stream	Pain, Mood, and Functioning -Pain cycle -jelly donut -polygraph; Pacing	MILEs 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5; NMR: Holding the Ball; Posture & Lifting
Wk 8	Gratitude Practice & Emotional Surroundings (Forgiveness vs Hook) & Mindful Breathing	Acceptance and Willingness -serenity prayer -blinders -unwanted party guest	MILEs 1-5; NMR: Holding the Ball & Mindful Standing; Tai Chi
Wk 9	Self-Compassion practice & Meaning in Suffering & Gratitude Practice	Maintaining Progress Values Declaration Relapse Prevention	MILEs 1-5; NMR: Holding the Ball & Stepping in 3 directions; Yoga
Wk 10	Assessment and Graduation Celebration & 5:3:1 Practice (Compassion, Gratitude, Act of Kindness) and aftercare offerings: iMove then YMCA or ...		