

The WELL Program: A Comprehensive Veteran Support Report

Prepared by:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

The WELL Program (Warrior Empowerment, Lifestyle & Leadership) is a structured veteran support initiative designed to bridge the gap between military service and civilian achievement. This report aims to present a comprehensive, research-driven framework for supporting veterans in transition, emphasizing education, mental health, physical well-being, financial literacy, and career development. This report highlights the theoretical foundation, key initiatives, program components, research evidence, and opportunities for collaboration among stakeholders, including universities, veteran organizations, employers, and policymakers.

1.2 About the Founder & Subject Matter Expertise

Tony Carlton, MS, PES, CSNC

Tony Carlton is a combat veteran and a leading subject matter expert (SME) in holistic veteran reintegration, health science, and exercise leadership. As the Founder & CEO of The Mindfully Tactical Foundation (MTF), Tony has dedicated his career to developing evidence-based solutions that address the challenges faced by transitioning veterans. His expertise spans strength and conditioning, nutrition, tactical performance, mental resilience, and policy advocacy for veterans.

Education & Certifications

- Doctor of Health Science & Exercise Leadership (DHSc, Candidate) – PennWest University
- Master of Science in Nutrition – California University of Pennsylvania
- Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science & Health Promotion – California University of Pennsylvania

- Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Tactical Strength and Conditioning (TSAC) – PennWest University
- Certified Sports Nutrition Coach (CSNC), Performance Enhancement Specialist (PES), Corrective Exercise Specialist (CES)
- Specialized Training in Positive Psychology, Cognitive-Based Therapy (CBT), and Strength & Conditioning for Tactical Athletes

Professional Contributions & Publications

Tony has authored multiple books focused on mindfulness, resilience, tactical athlete performance, and holistic health:

- *Mindfully Tactical: Practical Strategies for Thriving in High-Stress Situations*
- *Tactical Resilience: Building Mental Strength Through Mindfulness*
- *Resilience 2.0: Strength & Conditioning Strategies for Tactical Athletes*
- *The WELL Mission: Empowering Veterans for Leadership and Life Beyond the Military*

Additionally, for four years, Tony has been serving as the Strength & Conditioning and Nutrition Coach for the Fayetteville Marksmen, an SPHL hockey team, applying a holistic military-style training approach to coaching and athletic performance. His work combines tactical strength methodologies with high-performance sports training, ensuring that athletes develop both physical resilience and mental toughness.

His work has been crucial in shaping strategies for veteran transitions, emphasizing evidence-based approaches to physical, mental, and academic success. Tony has effectively assisted veterans in securing education benefits, transitioning into academic programs, and developing holistic wellness plans through collaborations with PennWest University, the NC Veterans Council, and USAA's Active&Fit program.

2. The WELL Program Framework

2.1 Theoretical Foundation: The BRAVE Model

The WELL Program is grounded in the BRAVE Theoretical Framework, which is the foundation for all program components. BRAVE emphasizes:

- Behavioral Adaptation: Encouraging healthy decision-making in post-military life.
- Resilience Training: Strengthening coping mechanisms for stress and trauma.

- **Adaptability Development:** Teaching veterans how to navigate new environments.
- **Veteran Identity Reinforcement:** Fostering a positive self-image beyond military service.
- **Empowerment Strategies:** Providing veterans with tools for self-sufficiency and leadership.

Studies indicate that when veterans engage in structured resilience-building activities, they are significantly more likely to succeed academically, socially, and professionally (Frederick et al., 2022).

2.2 Key Initiatives

PATH Initiative (Preparing, Advancing, Transitioning Heroes)

The PATH Initiative is a structured academic and financial empowerment program to help veterans transition into higher education and professional careers. It includes:

✓ **Academic Mentorship & Tutoring:** Providing veterans with structured academic support, study skills, and career-focused learning strategies. ✓ **Financial Literacy Training:** Covering GI Bill benefits, scholarship opportunities, and effective financial planning to reduce economic stress. ✓ **Career Readiness Programs:** Assisting veterans with career placement, job networking, and professional development workshops.

LINK Initiative (Leadership, Integration, Networking, Knowledge)

The LINK Initiative is a peer mentorship program that builds mental resilience, leadership, and networking opportunities. It offers:

✓ **Veteran-Led Discussion Groups:** Fostering peer-to-peer support and leadership development. ✓ **Professional & Social Networking:** Connecting veterans with career mentors, university professionals, and community organizations. ✓ **Social Reintegration Support:** Helping veterans navigate family dynamics, social relationships, and workplace transitions.

3. Evidence-Based Findings

Educational Support Improves Veteran Retention

- Universities that provide structured academic support programs experience higher veteran graduation and retention rates (Osborne, 2014).
- Veteran students with financial literacy training are significantly less likely to drop out due to economic hardship (Bond et al., 2022).

Peer Mentorship and Social Reintegration Are Key

- Veterans who engage in structured peer mentorship programs report higher social engagement and career success (Geraci et al., 2023).
- Isolation and lack of peer support contribute to high dropout rates and mental health deterioration (Walter et al., 2023).

Physical and Mental Health Impact Career Readiness

- Veterans participating in holistic physical fitness programs demonstrate improved mental health and adaptability (Davis et al., 2019).
- PTSD and stress management techniques, including Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), are proven to enhance career adaptability (Kearney et al., 2021).

4. Opportunities for Collaboration

University Partnerships

- Integrate PATH & LINK initiatives into veteran student services to enhance retention.
- Conduct joint research on veteran academic and career success.
- Develop veteran-focused faculty and staff training programs.

Veteran Organizations & Employers

- Sponsor veteran transition programs and workshops.
- Provide job placement and internship opportunities.
- Fund research and community engagement initiatives.

Policy & Advocacy Partnerships

- Use WELL as a scalable model for national veteran transition policy.
- Leverage veteran success metrics for legislative advocacy.
- Expand veteran outreach and community engagement.

5. Conclusion

The WELL Program provides a comprehensive, research-driven, scalable model to address the challenges of veteran transition. Through academic, social, financial, and career support, veterans gain the necessary tools for success in civilian life. By partnering with universities, veteran councils, employers, and policymakers, the WELL Program fosters a sustainable, long-term impact on veteran transition outcomes.

For Further Information, Please Contact:

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