



## Happy's Support of INvets' Members: Prepared for INvets

### Overview

Happy is pleased to provide INvets with this report summarizing the results of our two-month pilot, which established a new and trusted source of care for INvets's members by:

- Providing peer-based mental health support to **hundreds of Veterans** with significant unmet mental health needs;
- **Directly targeting isolation, anxiety and depression** experienced by Veterans;
- **Saving the lives** of multiple Veterans;
- Establishing a new, empirically effective engagement model focused on **proactive** support;
- **Reducing the access barriers and stigma** that prevent most people who need mental health care from receiving it;
- Countering and mitigating the **significant impact of COVID-19** on the lives of Veterans and their families; and
- Reinforcing INvets's commitment to the **mental health of its members**

Key outcomes are described in greater detail below:

#### I. HAPPY ACHIEVES INDUSTRY-LEADING ADOPTION RATES

Over the months of November and December, Happy recorded **1,378** engagements with **297** Veterans, some of whom connected with Happy over **30** times. Two-thirds of these Veterans served in the Army, and discovered Happy through INvets's and Happy's marketing efforts.

**71%** of the Veterans Happy connected with expressed interest in engaging with Happy.

- Our adoption rate among male Veterans was **67%**
- Our adoption rate among female Veterans was **80%**

**These adoption rates are higher than any other mental health service in the United States.**

## II. THE VETERANS HAPPY REACHED ARE ISOLATED, ANXIOUS AND DEPRESSED

Veterans suffer from high rates of isolation, anxiety and depression (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34283458/>). Happy's engagements with Veterans illuminate the human side of these statistics. Among the Veterans Happy engaged through its partnership with INvets:

- **47%** of male Veterans exhibited signs of moderate/severe social isolation
- **45%** of female Veterans exhibited signs of moderate/severe social isolation
- **46%** of male Veterans exhibited signs of moderate/severe anxiety
- **59%** of female Veterans exhibited signs of moderate/severe anxiety
- **42%** of male Veterans exhibited signs of moderate/severe depression
- **41%** of female Veterans exhibited signs of moderate/severe depression

## III. HAPPY'S SERVICE EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSED VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Happy's core offering is **emotional support**, the essential ingredient of almost every therapeutic modality.<sup>1</sup> Happy provides emotional support **proactively** from the highest quality peer network in the country.

The combination of Happy's industry-leading peer network and proactive engagement model leads to **clinical-level outcomes** – there is no statistical difference between the ability of Happy's Support Givers and the ability of traditional therapists to reduce symptoms of isolation, anxiety and depression, as evidenced by the abbreviated outcomes below:

- Happy reduced callers' anxiety in **65%** of its engagements

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/carers-hub/suicidal-thoughts-how-to-support-someone/>; <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/helping-someone-who-is-grieving.htm>; <https://www.belongto.org/youngpeople/advice/supporting-someone-coming-out/>; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/just-by-listening-civilians-can-help-veterans-heal/2011/11/01/gIQA7YYamM\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/just-by-listening-civilians-can-help-veterans-heal/2011/11/01/gIQA7YYamM_story.html)

- Happy reduced callers' depression in **63%** of its engagements
- Happy improved callers' mood in **85%** of its engagements
- Happy reduced callers' isolation/loneliness in **89%** of its engagements

#### **IV. VETERANS VALUED HAPPY'S SERVICE: QUANTITATIVE + QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE**

In addition to the abovementioned metrics, Happy uses a 5-star rating system to allow callers to rate their experience. Happy's engagements with INvets customers overwhelmingly received 5-star ratings. Indeed, nearly every engagement between one of INvets's customers and Happy went "very well" or "excellent." Specifically:

- **83%** of Happy's engagements with INvets Veterans led to a **5-star** rating.
- **17%** of Happy's engagements led to a **4-star** rating.

While these numbers reflect successful outcomes across INvets's member base, an equally important measure of efficacy is the magnitude of Happy's impact on specific individuals, as reflected in the following testimonials that Veterans shared with Happy's Support Givers:

*"Hey, it's Charley, I'm just calling you to let you know how good things are man. I got a full time job now, I'm living in a beautiful three-bedroom house. It wasn't just three weeks ago I was sleeping with ants crawling on me and getting wet, hopeless. You saved me. Out of a cold dark night you came - you just called me out of the bleu and told me you cared and told me you'd sit on the phone and talk to me. I appreciate you man and what all you do. God bless you. Just know there's a lot of other things about "Charley" than what I just went through. I'm also a wounded decorated combat Veteran, I'm a Christian, I have a college degree - but none of that mattered to you. You just seen just a guy that was in a bad spot who needed help, who needed someone to talk to you. I appreciate you. love you. I'm down for you, and I appreciate that [INvets] is sharing Happy with us."*

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*"Mr. Fischbach, it is a pleasure to meet you indirectly in this letter but I do so hope we meet together someday. I don't know exactly what your vision was when creating this company but it has far exceeded my expectations a multitude of time. I can honestly tell you, business professional to business professional, your team has saved my life on at least two separate occasions that I know didn't want to wake up the next day. On top of that, my relationship with my significant other is being repaired from a down to earth perspective. I'm humbly blessed to have been partnered with Melinda (one of Happy's Support Givers). She has painstakingly listened to all my fears, my worries, but she's also made me realize I'm not alone in this fight.*

*I'm 70% disabled due to a military sexual trauma where I was raped. Sadly, I have had to carry this burden in everything I do, but even with a strong work ethic and a hope to survive, there are still those down moments. And when they have happened, recently, Melinda has always been there. Please know I think a CEO's greatest asset are the people on the frontline. Melinda has battled with me almost on an everyday basis - she's an incredible woman, but remarkably I can't remember hearing her voice before I could feel her heart.*

*Thank you for allowing me to share with you what "Happy" has done for me and Mr. Fischbach ... you may not have been on the frontline for our country like I was, but you ARE helping straighten out the bent people that have come from that situation. I hope you and Melinda are blessed beyond belief!*

*Thank you for your all your help and dedication to excellence!"*

## **V. INvets AND HAPPY SAVED LIVES**

For us, the most gratifying outcome of Happy's partnership with INvets partnership was the opportunity to save the lives of multiple Veterans we connected with over the last few months. With their encouragement, we're honored to share their stories.

One a late night in December 2021, one of Happy's Support Givers reached an Army Veteran who had been laid off just before Thanksgiving and could not bring himself to tell his wife and children. At the very moment we reached the Veteran in question, he was pointing a loaded gun at his head "asking God for a reason to live." For a few moments, there was no answer, and the Veteran placed his hand on the trigger of his gun. Then his phone began to ring, and it was one of Happy's Support Givers. Within an hour, the Veteran had collected himself and was taking steps to reclaim his life, empowered by a devoted advocate in his corner committed to being a persistent, proactive, supportive presence in his life.

A few weeks later, just after Christmas, we received the following audio message from one of INvets's Veteran customers:

*"Hey - just a short message to let you know that I really appreciate your organization. I was in a really bad spot in my life living outside, in bad relationships, coming off drugs. I'm an ex-heroin addict. I've been clean for a while, but you go through bad points in your life, and you think about going back to the bad things . . . I'm a wounded combat Veteran and I've been through some things in my life. During this dark time in my life, a member of your organization reached out to me and talked to me. If it weren't for her, I'd probably be dead today – overdosed or back in jail. But you guys saved me, just by talking and showing that somebody gave a shit. You showed me a little bit of light. Now I've got a brand new job, and everything's good now. God bless you and God's blessing other people through you."*

## VI. THE PARTNERSHIP IN SUMMARY

Beginning with National Veterans and Military Families Month in November, Happy has made a concerted effort through its partnership with INvets to offer support and outreach to the United States Veteran community and their families. This is a population who in large numbers suffer in silence. Taught by their training and experience to project toughness, to not complain, to never let their guard down, to always be prepared for the next emergency, they pay a heavy emotional and mental toll.

Having lived through an intensely unique set of circumstances, these men and women now live with not only depression, anxiety, PTSD and substance issues, but a hopeless feeling that nobody understands the ways in which they suffer.

Faced with friends and families who lack understanding and patience, they are often told, in the words of one caller, "It's time to get over it."

We've found that by volunteering to *listen, comfort and encourage* Veterans and their families, Happy's Support Givers have been able to offer a safe space for Veterans to process their traumas, vent their frustrations, and know they are not alone on their long journey of healing.

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There is an aspect of shame which keeps many Veterans from sharing their struggles – it can feel extremely isolating to live with PTSD so severe that being wished “Happy Veterans Day” is a trigger, as one young man reported. *“Trying to explain to the nice person that it’s a trigger involves talking about PTSD which then triggers more PTSD, and by that point I feel like I’m stuck in a cycle I’ll never get out of.”* Fortunately, by being able to voice this to one of Happy's Support Givers, brought a deep sense of relief. He had been *“stuffing it down for years,”* and to say it out loud, was a breakthrough.

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Another Veteran was extremely depressed and barely speaking above a whisper on her first call. She had been in the Army for six years and loved that there was always someone to tell her what to do and when to do it. A civilian now, she feels alone, with no motivation or purpose. Again, simply allowing herself to say this out loud was something she'd *“hadn't let her guard down enough to do.”* The longer she stayed on the line, she opened up about fears of failure and re-affirmed her goal of taking cyber-security classes in the pursuit of finding a good job. She looked forward to the next Happy call.

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“Irell” was grateful to hear from his Happy provider. A 75-year-old veteran of Vietnam and Thailand, he has blood cancer from exposure to Agent Orange. He admitted to being very lonely and struggling with his alcohol intake. Enjoying the opportunity to simply have a

conversation with someone, Irell related, with considerable good humor, how he recently got *“catfished”* on a dating site. He talked about his volunteer work and the greatest joy in his life – gardening. He spoke of his flowers with a palpable sense of pride and delighted in explaining to his California based Support Giver how winter works, and Spring brings rebirth. He later texted a dozen photos of his lovely garden and promised to call again soon.

A younger Veteran, Carl, placed a call to his Support Giver while walking through his neighborhood, trying to calm down after an argument with his father. After four years in the military, he ended up with severe PTSD which has caused him major depression and a sense of anger that consumes him. He had been home a couple of months and was not coping well. His Support Giver listened to the horrors Carl had witnessed, including the loss (from suicide) of his bunkmate. They discussed strategies for coping with intrusive thoughts and practiced ways he could ease tensions with his father. *“It’s a miracle,”* he said before hanging up, *“that someone could see what I was going through. Thank you.”*

As scientists have come to learn, the brain continues to develop well into a person's 20s. Given that most Veterans began their service at the age of eighteen, this is a community of men and women who endured heavy emotional damage at a time of their lives when they had yet to come of age, mentally and emotionally. Because of this, and countless other factors, our Veterans are in desperate need of resources. For someone to give them the gift of their time, empathy, encouragement and support.

At Happy we feel a call to action to provide **that** support. To listen without judgement. To facilitate an environment where there is room for feelings. To allow "selfishness" as we encourage self-care among those who have dedicated a large piece of their lives to service. We are here to assist Veterans in their challenges and celebrate them in their triumphs. Whether it's an hour-long scheduled phone call or a quick five-minute check-in, Happy is always there.

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Life is sometimes stranger and more powerful than fiction. When Frank answered his phone, he was sitting in his car, parked by a river with a gun on the seat next to him. **"I'm thinking about drinking some whiskey and putting a bullet through my head,"** he said matter-of-factly. After a long pause, his voice softened, **"I asked God for reason not to do it,"** he said. **"That's when my phone rang."**