



The **Danish Wounded Warriors Project (DWWP)** supports soldiers who have been victims of traumatic multiple injuries and helps them return to a meaningful life by minimizing the impact of their physical and/or mental impairments with the help of highly advanced, specialized Pilates training.

The program is primarily for soldiers who have sustained severe injuries i.e. traumatic amputations, gun shot wounds and explosions during battle or in relation to international deployments regarding armed conflicts. The program has since 2013 extended to also include servicemen/women of the military who suffer from PTSD.

The DWWP project was brought to life by The Royal Danish Ballet Foundation in 2010 and founded by ballet dancers and Pilates instructors JoJo Bowman and Jessie Lee. It was at first met with reluctance by senior staff from the orthopaedic trauma unit for military casualties. Today the DWWP has recognition and support not only from the Danish Armed Forces Medical Services and doctors of the Copenhagen University Hospital, but also from the establishment and from the Danish population in general.

Dancers have been using Pilates as a rehabilitation method for decades. However, Pilates was originally created during World War 1, where the founder of the system, Joseph Pilates, used his method to rehabilitate injured soldiers. Not only were the founders of DWWP able to return the training to its real roots, but also igniting a mutual respect and understanding for highly disciplined training at elite levels. They used the tools and movement sequencing of the Pilates system to address the physical challenges, the ingrained ability of a dancer, to 'feel from the inside out' to fine tune and eliminate dysfunctional compensatory movement patterns- and last but not least - the natural instincts of a human being, to contribute to healthy communication skills, to promote a sense of self-motivation and by working together towards a "common goal."

Recognition:

2011, Awarded the Honory medal from The Danish Society for Military Medicine. 2012, The Anders Lassen Grant*, awarded by the Patron HRH Crown-prince Frederik. 2015, The Arts and health award from The Royal Society of Public Health.

Key issues of success in Denmark :

- 1 Creating and establishing a successful coalition between the Arts/Military/Medicine – a successful structure has been built that can be an example to others, including documented improvement of Quality of Life results (QOL) *
 - 1.1 Good collaboration with the hospital doctors and physiotherapists was established, with free exchange of information in accordance with the patients.
 - 1.2 Denmark's official rehabilitation program for injured soldiers refers their patients to the DWWP when they are admitted into hospital or upon discharge. The effectiveness of the official rehabilitation programme in combination with the parallel Pilates training, has been recognized, as severely wounded soldiers have returned to army duty, to a civilian job or studying for a new career.
 - 1.3 Further focus on this coalition came when the Royal Theatre created a dance-performance "I Føling" ("Contact") on the relation between the ballet and the wounded soldiers - this most spectacular and moving piece included two soldiers with amputations and one with posttraumatic stress disorder, performing alongside the ensemble of The Royal Danish ballet. <http://video.kglteater.dk/in-contact-a-war-ballet-trailer>
- 2 Embracing 'Embodiment' within PTSD.
 - 2.1 Our approach to helping the mentally affected soldiers has been through the common tool of exercise and movement. It is our experience that trauma affects the entire human organism – body, mind and spirit – and therefore, the whole person must be engaged in the healing process.
 - 2.2 Traumatic exposure is also associated with a range of negative sequels affecting both mental and physical health.

Key issues for discussion:

1. Implementing the training in a non-medical, non-military environment – assessing the benefits of crossing the borders into arts and cultural institutions - creating new positive experiences on neutral territory, shifting away from trauma only related /based affiliations.
2. In our experience, a *long-term* structure of rehabilitation for both the physically and mentally wounded soldiers needs to be established. Public Health systems seem to only cater to short-term solutions. These wounds – even if they are invisible – are for life. Results from DWWP Intervention protocol clearly indicate that there was a steady increase in both QOL and contribution to society from baseline to 6 months – 1 year. We are now testing the continued effects of training into our 2nd year for further improvements.
- 3 Despite the growing recognition of the obvious connections between the body and mind in traumatic stress disorders, few treatments attempt to address both somatic and psychological symptoms. Many trauma survivors require incorporation of some form of somatically oriented therapy to attain a sense of safety and mastery over bodies that have become highly deregulated as a result of chronic trauma exposure and adaption.

*(44.95% using monitoring patient related outcome measurements/ PROM)

*(named after Danish WWII hero, major Anders Lassen, VC, serving with the SAS)

FURTHER REFERENCES –www.danishwoundedwarriors.com, <https://vimeo.com/126789175>,

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