

# 2013

## Meeting of the Minds TBI Couples Retreat Williamsburg, VA March 21-25, 2013

SemperMax Support Fund, supported in large part by the Bob Woodruff Foundation, hosted a Traumatic Brain Injury couples resiliency retreat from March 21-25 at Kingsmill Resort. The retreat combined a host of workshops, presented by Drs Jeff Kreutzer and Emilee Godwin, neuropsychologists from Virginia Commonwealth University, and respite activities to address emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical needs of the participants. While much of the retreat was large group oriented, there were break out sessions separating the spouses and TBI Guys to address the unique needs of these populations. By all accounts, the retreat was a success, with exceptional outcomes.

All four goals of the event were met:

(1) 100% of the participants reported that they meet another couple with whom they can identify and understand that they are not alone.



(2) 87.5% of the spouses and 100% of the TBI Guys reported they learned a resiliency tool they can use to strengthen their relationships, with 100% and 83% respectively reporting a learned resiliency tool they can use to strengthen their spiritual and emotional balance.

(3) 100% of the spouses, having spa treatments and 83% of the TBI Guys who participated in a round of golf, putting, or fishing reported that the respite activity (addressing physical needs through touch or activity) allowed

them to relax, with 100% and 84% respectively satisfied with the respite activity in which they engaged.

(4) In the hopes of replicating a couples retreat model of value that nurtures resiliency of couples whose relationships have evolved or have been strained through trauma, recovery, and role changes, the offerings of Drs. Kreutzer and Godwin were accessed and found viable and effective in meeting the needs of military TBI families at a satisfaction rate of 87.5% and higher based on the presenter's ability to communicate beneficial information,

hold audience attention, and satisfactorily answer audience questions, as well as participants belief that the information was useful and worthy of recommendation to others.

When looking at lessons learned, the themes that stood out were that this population of military TBI couples desire to be heard and understood by those offering care, they overwhelmingly express a much needed benefit of feeling a sense of and having opportunities for connectedness with others of like circumstance, and that bolstering emotional and physical intimacy are two prominent areas of need. It is our recommendation that this type of retreat should be duplicated and offered more often or widely to support TBI couples throughout the nation.