



FOCUS Marines Foundation

Continuing the Commitment

Spring 2021

Take a Look Behind the Scenes

The question we hear the most is “What happens at FOCUS?”

Now you get to find out! We’re giving you the chance to get an inside look at what happens before, during and after each FOCUS Course. Find out how veterans find our program, how they get here, what they learn, what they do, and what happens when they go back home.

We have to start by saying this program would not be possible without our tireless volunteers and incredible donors. You are truly changing lives!

So, let’s get started...



Up to the Challenge

We work diligently to create and foster collaborative relationships with veteran-serving organizations across the country. They are able to refer veterans they feel would benefit from attending the program. An incredible source of pride for FMF is the fact that, in recent years, the vast majority of referrals come from FOCUS Graduates. These Graduates know the substantial impact FOCUS has had on their lives and they want their peers to find that, as well.

Once a veteran is vetted and registered to attend a FOCUS Course, we handle everything from booking their transportation to providing valuable information and support to their loved ones and families. Incoming participants are contacted by one of our Graduate Mentors in the weeks leading up to attendance to answer any last-minute questions they may have and alleviate any apprehension about attending.

Getting here takes incredible courage and proves to each veteran they are indeed ready to take this next step in their transition.

The Right Frame of Mind

Participants arrive at FOCUS on a Saturday afternoon and will be on property until the following Saturday morning. They spend Sunday getting settled and familiar with their fellow FOCUS participants, staff and volunteers. Monday and Tuesday revolve around taking a look at where they've been and where they are now. World-class instructors, Team Leaders and Graduate Mentors guide participants through thought processes relating to comfort zones, belief systems, and victim versus responsible mindsets. They're asked to take these overreaching concepts and apply them to their current thoughts and behaviors. From there, they decide what they need to reassess and change going forward. The undeniable support they receive from other participants and the FOCUS team plays a crucial role in allowing them to take a look inside themselves and start to take those first few steps in the process.



Different Journeys, Same Classroom

Everyone has a different story but everyone is in the same room for a reason. They're ready to start a new chapter...to create a brighter future. While most participants incurred visible and/or invisible wounds during a deployment, some were injured in training or may even suffer survivor's guilt from providing support to those on the front lines. They tell their stories...they don't compare their stories. What matters is where they go from here. What's changed is now they have an incredible support structure to support them along their new journey.

The instruction and curriculum presented isn't something never before heard. The key is the context in which it's presented. Challenges veterans face are unique to the population but not unique among veterans. This realization somehow makes these challenges manageable and less daunting. The class strengthens and, together, they're ready to tackle what may come.



Digging Deep

After 3 days at FOCUS, participants have formed bonds with each other, staff and volunteers. This leads to the expected, good-natured conversations and ribbing that happens when you put sixty Marines in a room together. Laughter can be heard throughout the buildings and one can imagine the tales that are told.

Participants are given the opportunity to share their stories with their fellow veterans. They are encouraged to look at what might be holding them back...what is keeping them from moving forward and creating that future they want for themselves and their families. Many, for the first time, have found a space free of judgment. Those in the room can relate to their struggles and fear. They are able to lean on each other, "drop their pack," and take those first steps toward what's next.

It's an incredibly emotional day for everyone. The intensity in the room is palpable but so is the love and support. So many leave their past at FOCUS. They finally realize they are not alone and that others in the room that can relate to their words, both spoken and unspoken. Some are able to finally feel the full extent of their emotions and recognize their validity.

The room breathes an audible sigh at the end of the day. But, looking around, new smiles have appeared, eyes are brighter, shoulders are back, and Marines are standing tall once again. It's what they do...they just needed a reminder.



Changing the Narrative

On Thursday of FOCUS Week, the emphasis changes from the past to the future. Participants take their first steps toward meeting the SMART Goal they've set for themselves during the FOCUS journey. The afternoon is spent out fishing on a gorgeous 40-acre lake. They take full advantage of the impact nature can have on a person's overall wellbeing. The fishing provides an automatic reset in the instruction. They have tackled some of their toughest challenges and are ready to march on and build a new story.

Participants spend the week building an incredible network of professionals from every walk of life. They speak with financial advisors, medical professionals, veteran organization representatives and a few true American Heroes. FOCUS proves the classroom can truly change a life.



Deciding What's Next

Friday's instructional topics include resume writing, interviewing skills, continuing education and more. Participants put the finishing touches on their SMART Goals and set their plans in motion. They even spend time alone reflecting on the week.

Graduate Mentors lead a vital conversation about what to expect after the course. Participants share excitement and apprehensions about moving forward. That evening, there's a casual graduation ceremony usually followed by impromptu karaoke. It's ironic how the loudest 'performers' are almost always those veterans who needed the most courage to get on that plane a short six days ago.

Heading Home

Departure day is filled with both sadness and excitement. Participants (now Graduates), staff and volunteers alike have become family. At the same time, however, the new Graduates are ready to get moving on their new journey and filled with motivation. They know there's work ahead but they've rediscovered the camaraderie often lost after service to support them every step of the way.

Throughout the week, FOCUS staff has provided support and information to their loved ones waiting at home. They receive course materials and are connected to resources specifically for caregivers and families. It's a new start for everyone.



Graduate Re-FOCUS Program

Our Graduate Mentors are a vital part of the FOCUS Course. They provide peer support before, during and after each class. Our Mentors are currently enrolled in an intensive, 7-month training program to further enhance their leadership skills. As part of the process, they will lead virtual Re-FOCUS Sessions each month for FOCUS Graduates. Topics covered will build upon tools and instruction presented during the FOCUS Course.

Not only are Graduates reminded of lessons learned, they are encouraged to reevaluate the way they are applying those lessons long after course attendance. And, most importantly, they have the opportunity to connect with other FOCUS Graduates. The sessions are particularly valuable in these days of prolonged isolation.

Our Graduate Mentors are stepping up to lead - it's what they do best.



YOU Make This Possible

Now you know how you are making a difference in the lives of our nation's heroes. The Marines are doing to heavy lifting and you allow FOCUS Marines Foundation to continue to give them the tools to do so.

Follow FOCUS Marines on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn to learn more about upcoming programs and announcements.

This program would not be possible without your commitment and dedication. A mere "Thank You" is insufficient so we'll leave it to a Graduate to say it better.

"FOCUS provided us with tools that are going to help us be at peace with ourselves and our emotions...ultimately letting us to choose how we live from this day forward." – Belter, Washington



CALL SIGN CHAOS



JIM MATTIS
AND
BING WEST

New Feature!

We're excited to add a new element to our quarterly newsletter. Dr. Bill Krissoff, a featured speaker here at FOCUS, will be recommending a series of books from the Commandant of the Marine Corps Professional Reading Program. We hope you enjoy the first selection.

Call Sign Chaos is the account of James Mattis' storied Marine Corps career, from wide-ranging leadership roles in three wars to ultimately commanding a quarter of a million troops across the Middle East. Along the way, Mattis recounts his foundational experiences as a leader, extracting the lessons he has learned about the nature of warfighting and peacemaking, the importance of allies, and the strategic dilemmas -- and short-sighted thinking -- now facing our nation. He makes it clear why America must return to a strategic footing so as not to continue winning battles but fighting inconclusive wars.

REMEMBER to select FOCUS Marines Foundation as your charity of choice on AmazonSmile!

FOCUS Marines Foundation continues to engage both incoming participants and our FOCUS Graduates. We understand these are trying times for everyone and feel it's imperative to continue, and even increase, our support of our Veterans.

Follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter for program updates, resources and fundraising efforts!