

Penn Resilience Program Army Participant Testimonials

Following are testimonials from U.S. Army Soldiers who participated in the Penn Resilience Program. This program is called Master Resilience Training (MRT) in the Army. As of January 2016, more than 30,000 Soldiers have participated in this program. The following quotes are from feedback forms completed by participants at the end of the course.

Following are quotes about the program:

“This was the best training I have ever received in my 20-year military career. I feel blessed to have had this opportunity and I know I am a better person, father, Soldier, and leader because of it.”

“This is by far the most amazing course I have ever attended. The staff was amazing and I know I have learned valuable skills thanks to this course.”

“This was an excellent course that changed my life and the way I will lead my Soldiers in the future. My ‘old school’ way of thinking was ingrained through years of experience, but this course has changed my thoughts in less than two weeks. I am a true believer in this course and I will do all I can to change Soldiers’ lives.”

“At first I didn’t subscribe to the whole resilience concept. Now having gone through the course, I feel that it would be a disservice if every Soldier in the Army isn’t exposed to this great set of tools in one form or another.”

“I was somewhat skeptical when we first started but after this class I see great benefit in this program as well as the benefit of spreading the knowledge. It is an incredible program that will, without a doubt, have far-reaching positive impact on the personal and professional lives of Soldiers, leaders, and families. By far the best class I have attended in my career.”

“I fully believe I learned some very valuable skills in this course that I can take back to my unit and assist my Soldiers to become more resilient, better equipped, well-trained Soldiers capable of leading tomorrow’s Army.”

“I wholeheartedly believe that this is the best training that I have ever received in my Army career. The applications are limitless.”

“I honestly feel that this training has been the best in my 17 years in the military. I feel that I can go back to my Unit and actually apply these skills at work and home. Well done.”

“This was the best training I have ever received in my 20-year military career. I feel blessed to have had this opportunity and I know I am a better person, father, Soldier, and leader because of it.”

“This is an amazing course and over the past 10 days there haven’t been enough people to tell this to. Thank you for finally bringing us the skills to not only train us physically, but finally bringing the skills to address our mental side.”

“This is the best course I have attended in 10 years of military service. I enjoyed unplugging from work and family and focusing all my energy on this significant skill set. I didn’t realize it was so significant until now. I’m all in.”

“I am thrilled that I had the opportunity to go through this course. I will most definitely teach this stuff to everyone I possibly can. Also, this has changed the way I perceive life in general and I plan to practice these skills and incorporate them into who I am.”

“This is the best opportunity I have had in the military, or life in general. I believe I will be presented with more opportunities for education and career enhancement because of this. I have been given a new set of eyes and cannot wait to live this and give this to the world. The course has given me insight to know where I want my life to go in the future. Thank you.”

“This training was way more than I could ever imagine. The usefulness of these skills is life changing and will remain with me forever.”

“I believe that MRT has made me understand why I have acted the way I have in my past. MRT has given me the skills I need to improve and excel at my personal and professional life. I feel stronger and more confident leaving here knowing that the MRT skills that were given to me have made me a better leader, Soldier, friend, father, brother, and person. Thank you!!”

“This was a great course and I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to be here and to study/learn with and from such great people. It was a joy to be there every day. There was so much fun and joy in the course you could just see in your mind’s eye that it will be well-received because it’s not a ‘you have to do this to be happy’ type course; it is a self-discovery course where each person can and will take away the best for themselves.”

“This is a great course and should be taught to everyone, from the highest General to the lowest Private. Every Soldier in our Army can learn something that will be useful in their lives. I came as a non-believer but now I am sold on the benefits of these skills. MRT and the instructors who taught this training have greatly impacted my life and have truly changed me into a better person.”

“Great class. Gave me a greater depth of understanding about myself and forced me to use critical thinking that I don’t normally use to look at my life in a different perspective.”

“I can’t speak highly enough about the entire MRT program and the work that has gone into it. The hard work showed and I want to thank everyone. This was a great class. This class has not only made a difference in my personal life but also in my professional life as well.”

“It is great to see that after 20 years of being in the military, this course is actually teaching others what we all can use more of, and that’s compassion.”

“This course was an extreme eye opener for me from day one. I am very grateful to have these tools to put in my tool box.”

“This class had changed my perspective on myself. Skills can and will be implemented immediately.”

“The course did provide insight that otherwise would have been unknown. It is a ‘right now’ tool. As you soak it up, you can, in turn, squeeze it out. Excellent course.”

“Excellent training. By making our minds stronger, we’re making our bodies stronger and able to face any challenge with an open mind, optimism, and resilience!”

“I loved this course. I learned so much about myself, and I was able to get my thoughts and emotions in check.”

“This course was very professional. The relaxed nature of the course allowed the students to come out of their shells and fully engage.”

“I am overwhelmed with appreciation for this class. I know that distributing this information will be beneficial to us as an Army family. I learned a lot and I will apply this in my personal and professional life daily.”

“Excellent course and wide applicability. Pace kept it interesting and engaged the audience. Breakouts were a great opportunity to expand skills and increase understanding of the applicability. Kudos to all involved.”

“In general, I think that the course takes some fairly complex concepts and breaks them into easily ‘digestible’ pieces – easy to understand and apply without feeling ‘dumbed down.’ Breakout exercises were great and facilitators brought a lot of enthusiasm and energy to the groups.”

“This program is very beneficial and I believe that this should become a part of the Army language. Soldiers can benefit from this in all areas of their life.”

“Attending this MRT course has truly been life changing and has brought a lot to the light. It makes you want to be a better person and pass that feeling on to someone else.”

“I think this class is just as important as learning how to fire my weapon!”

“Great course overall! I have learned many things that will help me at home and work. These skills will be taught to all Soldiers in my unit!”

“The course was very good at preparing me to take these skills back and educate my fellow Soldiers on what I was taught.”

“This is a fantastic course and I am very glad to have been a part of it. I will definitely take this back with me and champion the program within my unit and as high above that as I can. Good job!”

“Very good course that has the potential to build Soldiers who are mentally strong and who are capable of operating more efficiently (with better focus) during austere conditions and times of hardship.”

“This has been a great learning experience for me. I love the Soldiers and want to do what I can to keep them Army Strong! Thanks for all you do.”

“This class was outstanding! I am so glad I was invited to attend. This information is going to make a difference.”

“The course was very helpful, well prepared, and taught with knowledgeable and engaging facilitators.”

“This is by far the best class associated with the Army that I have ever attended. The reason it’s so great is because of the professionalism of the UPenn staff as well as the Army facilitators. The material is very logically ordered and very helpful.”

“This was the best taught class I have ever been to. Not only was everything put out, but it was put out in a way that I could relate to.”

“Life-changing course. I can’t believe I’ve gone this long without these skills on the forefront of all my interactions with people.”

“I feel as though I gained a wealth of knowledge, and I can arm leaders and Soldiers with these tools to help them help themselves and improve their ability to become the best that they can be.”

“I arrived expecting a touchy, feely course. Obviously, the course proved otherwise, and I walked away with some lifelong skills.”

“Best instruction I’ve received in the military.”

“This will not only change our work environment, but our personal lives as well. It will make us better people.”

“I am very glad I came to the MRT course. It made me better understand myself as a leader, Soldier, father, and husband. MRT all the way!”

“I definitely enjoyed the course and I feel honored that the Army recognizes a need for these skills. I am further honored that I was chosen as a change agent to help teach this important information to others.”

“Overall it was a huge eye opener for me and made me look deep within myself. I will make several personal and professional changes immediately.”

“MRT is a life-changing program. I was very pleased with the whole experience and will highly recommend that senior Soldiers, airmen, and marines attend the course.”

“The course was excellent! The materials presented were life-changing and eye-opening, especially for my self-awareness. This course has prepared me to apply my newly acquired skills, and I so look forward to ‘paying it forward.’”

“Learning these new skills helps me become more aware about my thoughts and reactions. I feel I’m more resilient and ready to face any challenges that may come in my life.”

“This is by far the best course that I have attended in my 18 years of service.”

“Very proactive approach to help Soldiers deal with obstacles before they get too big.”

“This course was a blessing in disguise. It helped snap me out of a rough point in my life.”

“This course was an eye opener. This material needs to be in schools all across the world.”

“I feel the resources students were given will be the greatest asset when returning to their unit.”

“It will help Soldiers stay focused and to build a great team and relationship with those they interact with.”

“Great course that I think will help keep our force ready to bounce back from deployments as well as everyday life.”

“Overall, this training was phenomenal! Because of the inspiration, passion, dedication, and knowledge of facilitators, they made learning fun, entertaining, and interesting.”

“An amazing, life-changing experience that I will always be grateful for.”

“I am leaving this course feeling empowered and ready to take on our immense challenge of implementing this program in my unit.”

“Awesome course. I feel so much more prepared as a leader. Thank you all.”

“The best, most professional, and well executed training that I have ever attended!”

“Very necessary course. Invaluable life lessons and skills to be learned.”

“Very well-rounded course.”

“It can save lives!”

Following are comments about Dr. Karen Reivich, a lead instructor and the program developer:

“Karen was by far the best educator I have ever had. Through more than 70 military courses and more than 220 college credit hours, I have never experienced a learning environment that comes remotely close to that which Karen presented.”

“Best instructor/teacher I have ever met. Amazing enthusiasm, excellent mastery of Army language and culture. Possibly the only person that could make a room full of hardened skeptics into believers in a system that appears contrary to our unique sub-culture. Would very gladly work for her.”

“The absolute best! #1 trainer I’ve had in 20 years of active military service and now 3 years as a DA civilian! The Army got this one right!”

“Anything I could say about Karen would be an understatement. I’m not sure I have ever come across a more effective teacher. Her mix of technical knowledge, humor, materials, and skill at managing a large and challenging group were truly effective and made the 8 days a pleasure.”

“Where was this woman my whole life? Dr. Karen is one of the most influential and motivational speakers that I have had the pleasure to meet (right there with President Obama). I am so proud of her accomplishments and I am so grateful that she has the dedication to share her expertise with the Army.”

“There are no words that could describe what a professional Dr. Reivich is. It was my pleasure to listen to her speak every day. Truly humbled by her and what she is doing for us as Soldiers! Great.”

“I have two master’s degrees and spent 22 years in the Army. Karen is the most effective trainer I’ve seen. Her knowledge of this material and her ability to convey that message and relate it to Army experience is awesome.”

“Words cannot describe what we owe this professional. She was always available and authentic. I consider the fact that I was able to attend this training under her guidance one of the, if not the highlight of my life! She is a woman of valor, wisdom and integrity and a very funny person on top of it. Sterling leadership!”

“In a range of 1-5, Karen was a 6. She was extremely engaging, enthusiastic, and encouraging. She consistently used active-constructive responding and praise in providing feedback to her students. She is believable, convincing, and most knowledgeable.”

“By far the best trainer I have had over my 27 years with the Army. I can’t tell you enough how much I appreciate the fact that she learned Army language and concepts. I love how she makes time for people. I noticed that there was never a bad or wrong answer, she redirected and turned it into an example we understood.”

“Dr. Reivich: what a dynamic speaker. She is obviously an expert in her field and it shows; the material pours out of her effortlessly! She’s easy to connect with; personable, funny, engaging, and wholeheartedly invested in her true passion.”

“She is an outstanding trainer. Her passion and experience combined catches the attention of the audience and keeps everyone awake and with the desire to participate and interact with the class. There is a lot to say about Dr. Reivich (everything positive). With eight days of training, it’s amazing the amount of information she was able to teach and the number of hearts and families she is going to make impact on. Amazing and great teacher. Haven’t had an instructor or teacher like her since my days in college.”

“Dr. Reivich’s knowledge of the material was evident. Her enthusiasm was contagious. Her knowledge of Army culture was also surprising and refreshing and genuine. It is an honor to work alongside someone who truly has the well-being of our soldiers as a priority.”

“I have never met anyone with this much passion and love of teaching. She is very knowledgeable and I am glad that I was in her audience receiving this training. The message she brought was really productive. I will take everything taught back for my personal life as well as my professional life.”

“Dr. Reivich is an excellent professor. She’s very passionate about this program. We’re very lucky to have Dr. Reivich teaching this outstanding program.”

“Karen was awesome! I believe her genuine enthusiasm for this program is the reason so many in this class has felt a change during our time here. If every instructor was like her, education in this country and our Army would thrive!”

“Subject matter expert, extremely intelligent. Wonderful, motivated trainer who lives what she teaches. She went above and beyond to ensure the class was grasping the material. She was patient at listening and understanding, and excited me to want to learn. She has put together a great team.”

“I could really see and feel the love that Karen has for this program. She has a way of teaching that keeps you upbeat and makes a person want to learn and pay attention. Thanks Karen, I really enjoyed your instruction.”

“Not only was this the best class I’ve ever been a part of, but Karen was able to grasp the attention of the entire audience. Best instructor I’ve seen and learned from yet.”

“Outstanding, motivated, inspiring, inspirational, dedicated, truly effective leader, coach, trainer, mentor, and instructor. Top notch, right person for the right job.

“Karen was incredible, very engaging, and electric. Capable of communicating on a doctorate level and flexible enough to deliver on a Soldier level.”

“There are few other people who can present as well. She is probably the best instructor I have had in 19 years.”

“Awesome instructor. Very relatable. I want to be just like her as an instructor. Thank you for your time, blood, and sweat you put into this program. We all appreciate your hard work. Thank you!”

“She is by far the best instructor I have ever had at a military course in my 26 years. I could write a book on her character and enthusiasm.”

“Karen was an awesome instructor. She displayed a personal interest in the material, which made it far more interesting.”

“She makes taking the UPenn MRT class worth it. She makes the material jump out of the book.”

“She is motivation at its core. Unbelievable to learn from. She has the gift of observation that is key in my learning ability. Absolutely a thrill to have been a part of.”

“Karen is truly a master of her craft. She engages all students and truly believes in her system. She is the perfect teacher for the subject material.”

“Karen Reivich is real, fun, and funny, brilliant, motivational, sincere, and amazing. I’m definitely a fan!”

“Embodies the character strength of modesty and humility. She is super relatable, engaging and motivational. Awesome!”

“She really cares, and I feel like she does this from the heart!”

“You could see that she is very passionate about it and very knowledgeable. Outstanding instructor.”

“Dr. Reivich is phenomenal. She is articulate, engaging, and the perfect person to bring this program to Soldiers and leaders. Awesome instructor with a great personality.”

“Fully engaged the audience – rare when civilians are training the military. Great ability to relate and connect. Kept it very interesting.”

“Some words to describe Karen and how she impacted me: memorable, passionate, knowledgeable, personable.”

“Always inspiring to see a successful, strong, intelligent woman that is both passionate and professional in every move she makes.”

“A life changer, an angel to Soldiers.”

“Karen spread positive energy throughout her entire segment.”

“Karen exudes resilience and she is very genuine.”

“Awesome, authentic, and passionate Master Trainer.”

Quotes about other lead instructors:

“Bob was amazing. Best instructor I have ever had the opportunity to learn from. His enthusiasm, passion, and optimism made me a believer. I never learned so much from a military course. I not only want to share with my Unit, but my family.”

“Bob kept the class wanting more every day. He made me glad that I volunteered for this course. He set a great standard for me to reach and follow. He motivated me to keep learning so I can one day be lucky and join the MRT team.”

“In my 14 years in the military, I have been through a lot of schools and courses and I have never seen an individual be so prepared, knowledgeable, professional, who could keep a class so enthusiastic.”

“This man was the single best instructor I have ever witnessed in the military or civilian side. He has a certain skill and ability that cannot be taught. That and his pure devotion and belief in this material allows him to really break through some barriers in many students.”

“Bob makes the material easy and fun to learn. I can only hope to be fortunate enough to attend a level II or level III with him as Primary Instructor.”

“Bob made every day fun and made it a completely rewarding experience! He is one of the best, if not the best, trainers I have ever had the pleasure of training under! He is a dynamic trainer and speaker.”

“This instructor was simply the best I have ever seen. His ability to relate to soldiers, his knowledge of the program, and the dedicated passion in which he taught was just what we needed. He helped to changed my unproductive thinking patterns.”

“I don’t know the other P.I.s for this program, but if they have even half the skills that Bob has this will continue to be the best presented course the Army has ever seen.”

“Bob has to be one if not the best civilian instructor I ever had the privilege of being taught by. He knows and understands the material like no other. Great guy and instructor.”

“In my 19 year career, Bob is the most authentic, genuine, knowledgeable, and entertaining instructor I have had the honor to work with.”

“Bob was an amazing force in the successfulness of this training for me. He is completely real, genuine, authentic, and top notch. Thank you for getting the right person in the right job.”

“They couldn’t have picked a better person. He was motivating, knowledgeable, and funny. Great job Bob.”

“Bob was one of the best trainers I have had in my 24 year military career. He knew the material through and through.”

“Master Trainer Bob made it personal and it helped us get a more powerful understanding of MRT.”

“Bob was awesome! The energy and passion he brought to the MRT was outstanding. It is essential that the instructors and facilitators believe in the information and use it.”

“Bob’s instruction made me want to learn and use the information and skills.”

“Bob has passion for MRT. He lives and breathes resilience.”

“Bob brought fire and enthusiasm to the course, his insight opened my eyes to the training.”

“Bob puts you at ease; he is very engaging and masterful in his delivery.”

“Wonderfully engaging and a great speaker.”

“Great personality, very captivating.”

“Very knowledgeable and subject matter expert.”

“Shannon is absolutely awesome. I am very proud to say that she has taken the time to get to know a lot about Soldiers, the Army, our “lingo,” our language, and she has embraced our culture (Army culture). She is energetic, dynamic, real. I couldn’t wait each day to see what she had in store for us. I came here with an open mind and she did not disappoint. Thank you, Shannon. Thank you for the passion and for teaching, training, and changing our minds to be Army strong.”

“Shannon was a breath of fresh air. Very engaged and professional and kept the entire class engaged in a positive learning environment. Listens to and highlights students’ input. She demonstrates good leadership by learning about each student and shares her time equally with them all.”

“Shannon, WOW!!! What an amazing instructor. She was so knowledgeable on ALL the material covered. Honestly, the best choice as far as an instructor.

“Shannon, in less than a week, made a lasting imprint on my life. She was hands down the best instructor I have had over 10 years of my military career. I can write for days on how powerful her methods of engagement were, but I will just say SIMPLY THE BEST.”

“I have never had an instructor as awesome as Shannon. She was the best! She was full of energy and knowledge that was contagious to the rest of the class. There was never a dull moment.”

“In my more than 18 years of service, I have never had an instructor as enthusiastic or knowledgeable as her. She engaged the audience without pressure or criticism of personal input. She drew the best out of most students.”

“By far the best instructor I have ever had. She captured my attention the entire time. She always kept me interested in the topic at hand and eager to learn more. I was very impressed with her willingness to learn Army terms and language. She made me feel that she was genuine about teaching the program and most of all, teaching the skills to Soldiers.”

“Of all the classes I have attended in my career, she was by far the best instructor. She was great at generating interest in material that could have easily been dry and monotonous. She made class fun, educational, and easy to relate to. She kept the environment relaxing. In a class where the delivery or instruction method can make or break the success of the training, she enabled it to be a complete success. An absolutely incredible trainer.”

“Amazing!! She’s definitely the right person, at the right place and the right time. She’s full of zest and really keeps your attention throughout the class.”

“I thought Shannon was focused, energized, and was herself while teaching MRT. She used her own experiences which made the course feel authentic. I believe this is a passion she has and that she lives this MRT and believes it will only help a person to become a more resilient individual. We need more instructors with her passion.”

“Her knowledge, expertise, high energy level, and dedication to the Soldiers made the class enjoyable. Her daily behavior shows that she practices what she preaches.”

“Wonderful person. Showed passion for teaching the course. Full of energy and humor. Kept the class engaged and was very optimistic. Kept the classroom environment at a relaxed and positive tone. Awesome instructor.”

“Shannon is the best instructor I have ever come across. Her zest and love for this craft is the very thing that caught and kept my attention.”

“I have never seen an instructor more passionate about what she was instructing. Her enthusiasm drove the entire class to excel and get the most out of the 8 days with her.”

“Shannon has an incredible gift to instruct and connect with others. If I can be even half as effective when I instruct MRT, I’ll feel like I’ve succeeded. I hung on to every word she said because she was always so interesting and relatable. She’s awesome!”

“She made training fun and kept everyone engaged. She was professional and showed all students respect. I will use a few of her techniques when I teach. Great instructor.”

“Was a breath of fresh air. Her passion and energy should be bottled so that others can emulate her teaching styles. Shannon has motivated me to want to be selected for a Facilitator at the next available time.”

“Shannon’s instruction, energy, and enthusiasm about the material made me a believer in the resiliency skills. I was an initial non-believer but the level of detail, examples provided, and instruction quickly changed my opinion and made me open my mind and heart.”

“Shannon was great and extremely professional at all times. She is extremely dedicated to the objectives of this program and displayed a lot of energy and enthusiasm working with us. Her positive attitude was contagious. It was great having her as a trainer!”

“Enthusiastic, totally genuine, an absolutely well-rounded trainer. Her sole presence made a difference. Immaculate training techniques. A life-changer.”

“Shannon was the best trainer I have ever seen both personally and professionally. Her attitude and demeanor added so much to this course. She was absolutely phenomenal.”

“Was the best and I am sure by far the greatest instructor in the program and the zestiest. Very much to be admired.”

“Shannon is an exceptional instructor. She used her knowledge and awesome sense of humor to grasp my attention.”

“Shannon went far and beyond the call of duty, by listing military jargon to drive her points home. Which made it relatable and motivating. Thank you Shannon.”

“Shannon was personable, very articulate, and taught in a matter that grabbed my attention. She is an excellent educator.”

“Shannon was an exceptional trainer and is passionate about what she does for us Soldiers. Great job!”

“Shannon is truly the zest and heart of the course. Her zest and knowledge was outstanding.”

“In 26 years of experience, Shannon is the best instructor I have encountered.”

“Best instructor I’ve had in my 13 years in the military.”

“Shannon was very knowledgeable, passionate, and full of zest. We could not have had a better instructor.”

“Shannon is one of a kind. She was energetic, approachable and just a fabulous person.”

“Most motivating instructor I have ever been taught by with 100% dedication and passion.”

“Shannon is the best public speaker I have ever seen in my 20 years in the Army.”

“Was an outstanding instructor and very authentic person.”

“Her zest was infectious.”

“A ‘fireball’ instructor – set the bar!”

“Dave was probably the best class instructor I have had while I’ve been in the Army. He was passionate about the subject and was able to spread that to the students. His sharing personal experiences really helped us understand the material. His sharing how he has made progress has given me optimism.”

“Dave was excellent! Personable and approachable. His life experiences were a good mixture and he connected well with all of us.”

“Dave was awesome. He truly broke it down to where you could apply your training right away. Thank you.”

“The way Dave interacted with the students was spot-on. The preparation and effort that was made by the staff paid off. Great job.”

“Dave was an awesome Master Trainer. He was very knowledgeable. He shows that he lives by these principles. He has changed my life forever. I know that I will never be the same.”

“Was very likable and good to talk to. Held everyone’s attention. Knew the material and felt very strongly in what he was teaching.”

“Dave was so prepared and he believed in the material. If the trainer believes in it, soldiers will listen to him at all times. Dave was a great instructor.”

“Dave’s passion for the program is contagious! He is a great asset to the MRT program.”

“Dave was one of the best instructors I have ever had. He is so charismatic and energized. Very knowledgeable.”

“Made learning easy because of personal stories and experience. Very knowledgeable and easy-going.”

“Dave is energetic and highly skilled. He is a dynamic speaker. I appreciate his passion to teach others.”

“Dave was a very knowledgeable instructor. He brought a lot of energy to his instruction.”

“Dave was both interesting and outstanding. His personal stories brought the material to life.”

“Dave gave the material life.”

“Perfect man for the job!”

“Very informative, precise, and detailed while teaching.”

“Intelligent, approachable, helpful, courteous.”

“Judy was absolutely fantastic!”

“Judy connects very well with senior NCOs and officers as well as civilians. Very good presentations and interpersonal interactions.”

“She knows what she is teaching and we are all lucky her character strength is humor – she made each day fun so we would all learn.”

“Absolutely great! She was “real.” I think she made the course fun and entertaining.”

“Very knowledgeable! I can tell she loves what she does and is so natural at teaching MRT; funny and enjoyable.”

“It was a true benefit for me to meet Judy. I would recommend her portion of the class to all platoon sergeants. Truly a caring and terrific person.”

“One word: AWESOME!!! Very authentic and great delivery. Plus she is from Philly, even better. A+++.”

“Enjoyed her teaching style. Infectious enthusiasm.”