

Farm work may improve veterans' mental health

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Growing veterans farm. Credit: Care farming by Josef Kalinko/Seattle University

Care farming—using working farms and agricultural landscapes to promote mental and physical health—helped improve veterans' well-being in a recent study.

With care farming, individuals participate in various horticultural activities and learn useful skills within a safe community and a green environment, a setting shown to improve mental and social well-being.

In the study of 5 veterans of foreign wars (4 men, 1 woman), care farming improved [life](#) satisfaction in 3 participants and optimism about future life satisfaction in 2 of the participants. Also, perceived loneliness decreased in 2 participants.

The findings support the use of care farming as a treatment for languishing veterans and for helping individuals with mental struggles.

"Farming acts as a kind of loose group therapy—the veterans are working with people who have had similar experiences that only those who have served in combat truly understand," said Dr. Arie Greenleaf, co-author of the *Journal of Humanistic Counseling* study. "The [farm](#) provides a space they need to heal, a space where they can grow life rather than destroy it—not a small factor for many veterans trying to come to grips with the death and misery they witnessed in war, at times inflicted by their own hands."

More information: ARIE T. GREENLEAF et al, Effectiveness of

Care Farming on Veterans' Life Satisfaction, Optimism, and Perceived Loneliness, *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling* (2017). DOI: [10.1002/johc.12046](https://doi.org/10.1002/johc.12046)

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