



Anchored in the Earth

Therapeutic Farming for IDF Reservists Living with PTSD Symptoms

A Joint Project of Amutat Kaima & Bein Hatlamim

Review of Cohort III / Summation of Pilot

August 2025

Dear Anchored in the Earth Supporter and Friend,

Thank you for supporting us during the first year's launch of [Anchored in the Earth](#), [Kaima's](#) initiative for IDF reservists struggling with PTSD symptoms and other forms of emotional distress. To date, we have worked with 46 participants and their families, providing a **passageway from darkness to functionality and, for some, positivity**. To say we are pleased with the outcomes feels complicated given the constant reminder of why the program is necessary.

Despite the program's impact, we are deeply troubled by the rising rate of suicide among IDF soldiers. According to a recent Channel 12 broadcast, in 2025, 17 soldiers have died by suicide—a figure that doesn't include reservists not on active duty at the time of their deaths. Adding her own insights in a recent Ma'ariv podcast, Sigal Regev, chairwoman of the Danel Group, a prominent human resource company, has spoken harshly of the serious failure of the country to address the mental health of our soldiers and their families, specifically about the lack of communication between health funds and Israel's National Insurance Institute. "Tens of thousands are falling through the cracks".

Indeed, the inability to identify those most at risk for emotional collapse, combined with delays in providing treatment, is contributing to this phenomenon. We are speaking of people who served prolonged deployments, in some cases lasting months at a time. Some have been involved in brutal military action, rescued the wounded/retrieved the dead from combat zones, and/or witnessed the death/maiming of friends and comrades. Reorienting to work and family life is nearly impossible for most. Now, following the spate of suicides, urgent discussions are focusing on post-service stress and its devastating impact without timely treatment. **This was one of the reasons Anchored in the Earth is offered, to those in need, without a diagnosis from the Ministry of Defense and without charge! Moreover, the program can be extended for those who feel the need to continue.**

Hands deep in rich soil and in the company of others who have been through the same trauma, some participants describe the program with words like **'lifeline,' 'transformative,' 'hope,'** and **'softening the pain.'** For others, when language fails them, the quiet work of cultivation offers another way forward. Whether tending the farm's fields alone or alongside others, participants find space to breathe differently, to process what weighs on them. Through this gentle, grounding work, they gradually discover new ways to express their pain and begin the slow work of healing.

While the challenges we face are immense, we remain steadfastly committed to resuming the program for these brave reservists who have given so much. Below is an update on where things stand and how we hope to move. Thank you for your unwavering care and support of our mission.

Yoni Yefet Reich

Amutat Kaima, CEO

Guy Bar Navon

Anchored in the Earth, Director

Yaniv Bocian

Bein Hatlamim, CEO

Review of Cohort 3



In the fields



Discussion group

Overview

The program's third and final cohort of the year launched on June 28 with strong initial participation—17 people enrolled, including 14 newcomers and 3 returning veterans. However, the cohort faced unprecedented challenges when a new war with Iran started on June 13, resulting in half of our participants and two staff members being called to reserve duty before the program even got underway. Despite this disruption, we proceeded as planned and kept spaces available for participants to engage as their military service permitted.

Select observations

- **Resilience under pressure**

This cohort proved to be our most challenging yet also most inspiring. Participants demonstrated remarkable motivation to continue their involvement despite military obligations and the psychological stress of yet another unfolding conflict. Our primary focus shifted to maintaining stability with reduced staffing while supporting participants experiencing renewed trauma-related distress. The chaotic circumstances unexpectedly strengthened participant bonds. Even those with limited availability during military service made efforts to return during brief breaks, showing the depth of connections formed within the group.

- **Mental health considerations**

This cohort included a higher number of participants with formal PTSD diagnoses compared to our previous two. One individual, who we recognized required more intensive care than our program could provide, was referred to appropriate services.

- **Uncovering the power of “unit cohesion”**

A particularly noteworthy case involved a participant struggling with severe PTSD-related insomnia—experiencing complete sleeplessness the night before each session. Despite this debilitating symptom, he consistently arrived at the farm on time, every week. His commitment to showing up became his primary therapeutic goal. This participant's dedication exemplified a common military motivation: being there for others. We observed how the concept of “unit cohesion”—critical for battlefield survival—significantly aided in post-deployment adjustment and recovery. The farm environment provided a space where participants could channel their service-oriented mindset toward mutual support and healing.

Select Quotes

- "Every time I go to the farm, I come out better than I came in."
- "I appreciated the balance between our work in the fields and our time to speak with others who have experienced what went through."
- "I learned that this is going to be a process and that I won't feel better all at once. However, meeting others who know what I'm going through is making all the difference."



Building protective shade netting



Break time

Summary of the Three Cohorts

Information	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3
Dates	1.12.24-5.2.25	23.2.25-7.5.25	28.6.25-30.7.25
Recruitment Target	15	15	15
# of participants who started the program	13	16	17
# of new participants	N/A	13	14
# of continuing participants from a previous cohort	N/A	3	3
# of participants who dropped out	1	3	4
Reasons for dropping out of the program	Work related	Called up for reserve duty	- 3 were called up for reserve duty - 1 required more serious treatment
# of participants who completed the program *	12	13	13

* Ranging from ages 25 to 53.

Operations

• What are the criteria for participation?

The program is open for both male and female reservists. Potential participants do not have to be identified as "disabled" by the Ministry of Defense or through Israel's National Insurance Institute; they need only feel a sense of distress/challenge re-entering society/their families/the workforce. While we accept participants experiencing varying degrees of PTSD symptoms (depression, anxiety, mild to moderate preoccupation with past events experienced during service), anyone displaying more serious symptomatology (suicidal ideation, violence/aggression toward others, etc.) will be referred for psychiatric care.

- **How does recruitment work?**

As participation does not require a psychiatric diagnosis, we are not able to rely on government offices for referrals. Recruitment is done by word of mouth, through past participants, social media, and traditional media. We receive around 50 inquiries per cycle. Of this number, some 35 fill out an application; around 25 come for an interview, and up to 15 are new participants are accepted into the program. We always hold space for past participants wishing to continue.

- **Where do participants come from?**

The program is located in Pardes Hanna located in the north of the country in the Haifa District. While most participants live within a 40-mile radius, some travel up to 100 miles to take part in the twice-weekly program from as far away as Jerusalem. This further demonstrates the appeal of our approach and challenges us in the future to establish other venues.

- **How do you connect with participant families?**

Around six weeks into the program, we organize a “family day” – a tradition we will continue to honor. From the perspective of the participant, their loved ones and our staff, this has shown itself to be an important step along the way. Some participants initially expressed worry that bringing family members to the farm would be awkward but were satisfied at the end. In addition to group activities, also organized a special sharing circle for parents and other for spouses/life partners. These sessions were very important and enlightening for our professionals. While enjoyed hearing from parents about child’s life from a different perspective, we also found it eye-opening that most know little of how their children are coping.



Family Day on the Farm

Evaluation and the Program’s Future

The program is being evaluated by an external team of researchers. They include: Dr. Gila Amitay, a senior lecturer in Criminology and Social Work at Jezreel Valley Academic College; Dr. Dor Danan, a palliative care physician with Sabar Health; and Dr. Moshe Farchi, the founder and the Head of the School of Social Work at Tel-Hai College. While their report and recommendations will follow in the months, we are already focused on:

- **Program scaling**

The program was envisioned as a two-year pilot. In 2022/23, the second year of the pilot, we will facilitate four cohorts instead of three. While this will require an increase in our budget, interest in the program has grown to the point that we must scale our efforts.

- **Securing additional resources**

To facilitate the 2025/26 program, we need to raise ~NIS 820,000 (~\$240,000) a portion of which we hope to secure through government sources.

- **Expanded measurement**

Next year, under Dr. Dor Danaan's supervision, a select group of participants will help us learn more by wearing a watch-like device, which can help monitor stress levels by tracking physiological data and providing insights into stress responses. The device can detect changes in heart rate, heart rate variability, and other metrics that correlate with stress. This data, combined with user input and contextual information, can help individuals identify patterns, understand their stress triggers, and adopt appropriate coping strategies.

- **Partnership development**

We aim to collaborate with additional nonprofit organizations, especially those working in the field of vocational integration for individuals with mental health challenges.

- **Geographic expansion**

We will also consider replicating the model in other regions across the country in alignment with the overwhelmingly positive feedback about the program's effectiveness around matters of mental health stabilization and reduced anxiety, and community building.

Select Hebrew Media:

- 1.15 Video (English): [HERE](#)
- The Bridge Podcast: [HERE](#)
- Galei Tzahal (Israel Army Radio): [HERE](#)

“Anchored in the Earth” helps soften a person’s pain in ways that traditional therapy cannot.

Thank you again for being a part of this vital initiative.

Your support has made a difference in the lives of our returning soldiers who deserve our care.

