

Is WAT® Effective?

Recent research¹ shows that WAT is effective in treating a range of psychological and behavioural problems. The 8-10 weeks of a WAT program appears to be as rapid and as effective in treating serious depression in adolescents as anti-depressant medication is in treating adults with diagnosed clinical depression. Additionally, WAT has been shown to improve coping, social competence and school adjustment, self-esteem and family functioning. These benefits have been found to last up to 2 years following WAT programs.

What do participants think of WAT®

Clients of WAT say they like the program because it allows them to find out how to cope with stressful challenges, feel okay about asking for help and solve problems together with others. Learning social and problem-solving skills with other adolescents as well as learning to form positive relationships with adults is also important to them.

Is WAT® safe?

WAT programs have been run in Australian hospitals, community counselling settings and schools since 1992 with an exceptional record of safety. Careful and thorough medical, psychological and behavioural screening by clinical psychologists occurs before entry to the program. The level of challenge used is graduated slowly as the program progresses. Importantly, only the minimum level of challenge needed to be beneficial is used, and is tailored to each individual.

Do WAT® practitioners have to be accredited?

Yes. The Australian WAT® Accreditation Scheme was established to train qualified therapists (psychologists, social workers, etc.) and adventure facilitators to provide this evidence-based intervention safely and effectively. This training ensures that program staff not only hold industry standard outdoor leadership qualifications, but that they adhere to program procedures and methods that ensure the psychological and behavioural safety of all clients.

Why does WAT® work?

- Adolescents find it an appealing way to become motivated to achieve personalised goals
- Teaches life-long coping and problem solving skills
- Enhances normal development and ensures therapeutic benefits transfer to home or school

How is WAT different to a camp or other outdoor programs?

- WAT is the first program of this type in Australia to show research evidence of sustained therapeutic benefits with a range of problems in both clinical and community settings
- WAT is facilitated by psychologists and was developed in clinical hospital settings as a mainstream treatment for adolescents with serious psychological and behavioural disorders
- Expert screening & pre-program assessment ensures individualised therapeutic goals
- 8-10 weeks long, with carefully integrated small group work (maximum of 8 clients)
- Involving parents ensures lasting change in the client's home & school environment

Who runs WAT® programs?

Neo Psychology is the organisation which has developed the methods of WAT, and trains and accredits professionals in this approach. They offer programs for teenagers, families, couples and corporate groups. These programs can be also be provided within schools, youth agencies or mental health services.

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¹ Crisp & Hinch (2004). Treatment Effectiveness of WAT: Summary Findings. Neo Psychology, Melbourne - <http://www.youthpsych.com.au/research.htm>