

Hello Ms Loretta and Amy,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the Aspire program. It is an honor to do so. I would first like to congratulate you both on your well deserved nomination.

You are inspiring personalities and I get a sincere feeling not only do you truly enjoy what you do but equally important, you care about the Veterans you serve.

I was very reluctant to participate in the Aspire program but decided to move forward after your loving nudge. I was encouraged to simply “give it a couple of weeks” and if I still felt it wasn’t a good fit I could then discontinue without penalty should I later decide to restart the program. I couldn't argue with that and decided to give it a try. I am so glad I did.

My initial interaction with the group was minimal at best. I mostly listened as you taught the class and occasionally brought on other specialist in their respective fields to speak on matters relevant to the group. I have since learned to set realistic health goals as well as proper breathing techniques for core strengthening. I have learned what to eat and not to eat as well as when, for best weight loss results.

The program has been one that is easy to follow, with support and guidance along the way. It has its restrictions but is not so rigid that one would feel compelled to give up but rather get back on track.

Individuals are encouraged to exercise within the scope of their individual ability. Those that are immobile, have restrictions or limitations, still benefit from this program by learning to eat healthier, breathe properly and through modified movement tailored to the individual. Exercise can be personalized, depending on the situation and or ability of the participant.

Lite equipment such as resistance bands that can be utilized from the sitting position are issued along with a stationary foot pedal device (for those with specific limitations).

From the onset, group members were required to have bloodwork done to determine their health status, ability to participate and to obtain a baseline reading of vitals such as weight, blood pressure, A1C, etc.

These levels are periodically reviewed (either by facilitator or self-reported) along the way. Medications can then be adjusted accordingly. Participants often, eagerly report victories. In addition to weight loss, I have personally experienced a significant reduction in my A1C.

The manual & workbook we utilize each week will continue to be a valuable resource beyond this course. Goal(s) reviewed weekly at check-in may call attention to any healthcare concern(s) thereby, providing the opportunity to address them either openly or individually depending on the situation.

All met goals are celebrated and setbacks are never frowned upon. Instead more support and encouragement is provided to the individual.

I like this program and continue to benefit from it. I would definitely recommend it to other veterans seeking to not only improve their health but also quality of life. Since joining, I have been both encouraged and challenged (not pushed) to move, get and stay healthy as a lifestyle. It hasn't been, nor is it, a competition. It's you-improving-you, with help and camaraderie along the way. Each person is on their own individual journey to personal success.

Aspire is a program that has awakened my mind to conscious healthy decision making. It has provided tools, resources and education, as well as support and guidance, in a friendly, non judgmental virtual setting conducive to success. As a result, I have begun regularly walking which, I believe, has not only attributed to my weight loss but also my overall well being.

The facilitators of the program (Ms. Amy Thompto & Ms Loretta Ward) are simply wonderful. They are knowledgeable, caring and very patient yet keep the group on track. They express sincere concern for each participants success. To date, each member has either met or succeeded their individual goals.

In summary, my experience has been positive and again, I would recommend the Aspire program to anyone who desires to get healthy, feel better and improve their quality of life. I'm not sure if there is an acronym

for “Aspire” but what it speaks to me is, **A**-Accountability (to stay on track to reach the goal), (to) **S**-Strive for Success (with), **P**-Passion, **I**-Integrity (& **R**-Respect (for facilitators and other program participants, while building) **E**-Esprit De Corps.

The Aspire program is the perfect vehicle to inspire, motivate, educate and improve ones health & well being while possibly garnering lasting friendships along the way.

If there is one quote I’d like to lend to this effort it would be that ***“We’re in this fight together but there is no competition, it’s literally You vs You. Aspire, creating the best version of yourself while improving your overall health”***

Much Blessing to the entire Aspire team and its participants!!!

Sincerely,
Anne Ragland
U.S. Army Veteran