



**RISE TOGETHER**

RECONNECTING FAMILIES

POST WAR



International studies highlight the significant mental health impact of war and stressful events, especially on women. Having a partner at war can lead to stress, depression, and anxiety.

A study of American women whose partners served in the war found they faced major challenges, such as taking full responsibility for the household and parenting. The return of their partners was also difficult, with readjustment being as challenging as the separation for many women.

This was further complicated when returning partners showed symptoms of stress, straining the marital relationship and family dynamics.

Given the success of resilience workshops for fighters, the "Couple-Duvdevan - Rise Together" Program, an **eight-month in-depth initiative, aims to address these challenges, strengthen family and marital resilience, and support couples in overcoming these difficulties.**

## THE RETURN BACK HOME POST WAR



## ABOUT DUVDEVAN

The Duvdevan unit is an **elite counter-terrorism force requiring high mental resilience**, with fighters facing particularly complex clinical challenges compared to other units. In recent years, the Duvdevan unit and its association have partnered to create resilience workshops aimed at processing combat experiences, strengthening mental resilience, and easing the transition to civilian life.

These workshops have proven effective in **bolstering resilience and preventing mental health issues**. During the "Swords of Iron" War, the unit's reserve fighters played a major role, facing intense combat and significant casualties. The war's effects have extended to the home front, with spouses struggling due to the prolonged absence of their partners. In response, the Duvdevan Association has created a community for reservists' spouses, now over 500 members strong, addressing the **challenges of transitioning back to normal life and the mental toll on families**.

# THE NEED . . .

***"It's hard to summarize this experience in just a few lines... The war brought enormous challenges to our relationship and family. I've been on continuous reserve duty since October 7th. From fighting in the south to leading operations in the West Bank, I've barely been home. My wife carried the entire burden—raising the kids alone, managing the house, and even finishing the construction of our home during the war. The emotional toll on our children, especially our eldest, has been severe. Even now, reintegrating into family life is complicated. There's a deep gap between us that still lingers." - Yoni***

***" My partner is fully immersed in his work, and even when we tried to take just one night off in a hotel, he couldn't disconnect. The idea of a structured program, with a process leading up to a full 10-day retreat, gives us hope that he might actually be able to let go. Maybe then, we'll be able to see each other again—not just as co-survivors getting through the day, but as a couple. The ad made us realize how badly we need to pause, but also how difficult it is to do so without a structured framework. This isn't just a getaway; we need guidance and support along the way. Right now, we feel like two people who love each other but haven't really 'met' in a long time. And to truly reconnect, we need preparation and the right environment to make it meaningful."- Michal***

# PROGRAM STRUCTURE

This is a **fully structured eight-month program** designed to support couples and families in reconnecting and rebuilding after the challenges of war.

Through a series of **six carefully planned meetings** in Israel and a transformative **10-day retreat abroad**, the program offers couples the tools, resources, and ongoing support necessary to strengthen their relationships, build resilience, and facilitate a healthy reintegration into civilian life. The goal is to help couples process the emotional toll of combat experiences, reconnect with one another, and strengthen their family dynamics post-war.

## **Participation Conditions:**

- **Full Commitment** and attendance of all workshops
- **Eligibility:** Open to alumni of the Duvdevan unit who have served 200+ reserve days or were injured during service, along with their spouses who manage a joint household with children or are planning to expand their family.
- **Interviews:** A professional team of therapists will conduct interviews to collaboratively determine which couples are accepted into the program, ensuring the right fit for this transformative journey.



# STRUCTURE AND DETAILS

Program Meetings in Israel (Throughout the Eight Months):

The program is organized as a cohesive, step-by-step process, with each meeting building on the previous one to offer couples support, healing tools, and strategies for reconnection:

## 1. March 21, 2025 – Opening and Introduction Meeting

This foundational meeting sets the stage for the full eight-month journey, introducing the program's structure, goals, and vision for reconnecting couples and families after war.

## 2. April 4, 2025 – Group Work Session

Couples will engage in group exercises focused on emotional support, relationship building, and developing resilience, with practical tools to strengthen their connection.

## 3. May 12–22, 2025 – Retreat in Ojai, California

A key component of the program, this **immersive 10-day retreat** is a central element of the full eight-month program, providing couples with **transformative experiences** to strengthen their bond and build community.



## 4. June 20, 2025 – Follow-up Meeting

This meeting focuses on integrating the retreat experience, reflecting on the tools learned, and continuing to strengthen relationships with new strategies for resilience.

## 5. September 12, 2025 – Follow-up Meeting

The session will reinforce ongoing relationship tools, address challenges couples face in post-war life, and offer continued guidance on maintaining a deeper connection and emotional support.

## 6. December 4, 2025 – Celebratory Closing Meeting

The final meeting celebrates the couples' progress throughout the full eight-month program, showcasing the journey and achievements with a celebratory exhibition. Couples will reflect on their growth and share their paths forward.

# The therapeutic team

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Dr. Leetal Benzvi

**Expressive Arts Therapist  
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Kathy Alnatan

**Psychotherapist &  
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**Social Worker, Marriage  
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Smadar Ben Ami

**Social Worker  
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# The Advisory Board

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Ronen Sidi, M.A.

**Clinical Psychologist at  
Emek Medical Center**



Dr. Gil Levi

**Clinical Psychologist**



Sara Jacobovici,  
M.C.A.T

**Creative Arts Psychotherapist**

## 10 day Retreat in Ojai, Los Angeles

Full schedule of retreat activities to include:

- Venue and all Catering
- Hotel rooms for participants and staff
- Art Supplies
- Daily Activities of wellness and mindfulness
- Daily therapy workshops
- Daily nature outings
- Daily facilitation of drama, art, sound and movement
- Yoga and sound healing
- Security
- Cleaning
- Insurance
- transportation
- Flights to and from Israel
- Fee's for therapist and clinical director





**עמותת דובדבן**



Leetal Caidar Benzvi, PhD



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