

## Odyssey – the Long-term Benefits



*“Without the Odyssey course and subsequent fundraising adventures I undertook (Sahara & Canoe treks) I would never have unlocked the strength of spirit that made me go on to volunteer for a disaster relief charity. I have been deployed to Malawi and Fiji with them, having never travelled outside of Europe previously. I have undertaken other adventures that I would never have dreamed of and live life to the full - all because of the self-confidence & belief that Odyssey returned to me after my cancer experience. The lessons learned from the course regarding the importance of teamwork and compassion have made me a better manager, evidenced by two subsequent promotions. I can't thank Odyssey enough for the friends I made, the confidence it gave me to put my cancer firmly in the past, look forward to what lies ahead and make the most of the life I have.” (100)\**

### Our programme takes just 5 days, but the difference lasts a lifetime

The positive impact of Odyssey on its participants has been known for many years as recorded and measured by its pre- and post-course assessments. Typically, these demonstrate a significantly positive impact eight weeks after completing a programme. But now we have evidence of how long-lasting these benefits are. In 2019 we collected survey responses (anonymously) from more than a hundred participants who had attended courses between 2005-2017. These show that wide-ranging, life-affirming and life-changing consequences are felt many years after attending a programme: over 90% reported a positive impact on their confidence, activity, sociability and enjoyment of life, backed up by heartfelt, inspiring and detailed descriptions of the Odyssey experience and its consequences for their individual lives.

### Experience of the Odyssey course

Participants were asked what three words they would use to describe their experience of the programme. The word cloud reflects their choices, with the size of the word shown in proportion to the number of times it was chosen.

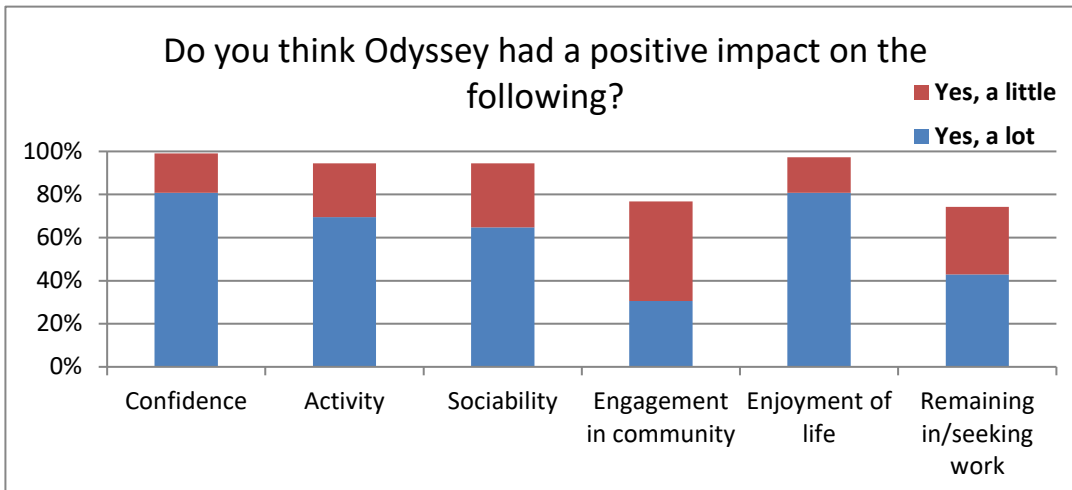


'Fun' and 'Challenging' are the words used most to describe people's experience of an Odyssey programme - a **very powerful combination for effecting change in individuals**. Inspiring, Friendly, Empowering, Exciting and Life-changing were also popular adjectives.

### Quantitative Feedback: Positive Impact

Participants were asked if they thought Odyssey had had a positive impact on various aspects of themselves and their lives. The responses were unequivocal: well over 90% of participants said that Odyssey had had a positive impact on their confidence (99%), activity (94%), sociability (94%) and enjoyment of life (97%). In addition, around 75% of participants reported a positive impact on their engagement with their community and their participation in work.

\*The numbers at the end of all quotes refer to the respondent number from the anonymous survey



**This is a phenomenal result and testimony to the amazing work of our specialist staff who make this positive difference in just five days.**

### Qualitative Feedback: Description of Impact

Participants were also given an open invitation to describe the impact, if any, that Odyssey had had on their lives, for example, in relation to personal, work or social life and any changes made in their outlook or attitude. After anywhere between 2 and 14 years, it is obvious that their Odyssey experience has been life affirming and long lasting. Participants reported how they felt empowered, invincible and had greater resilience after Odyssey. The overwhelmingly positive descriptions of how Odyssey touched so many aspects of the respondents' lives are too numerous to include here, but recurrent themes were:

- **New confidence to face challenges of life** - *"...I could face the future whatever challenges I might have and move forward with confidence."* (34)
- **Finding 'me' again** - *"Odyssey put me back together again and gave me back my sparkle."* (4)
- **Living life in the moment** - *"It taught me to live each day and maximise my life."* (55)
- **Being more socially and physically active** - *"My social life changed. I play more sports now, meeting people more. I feel Odyssey has made a great difference for me."* (82)
- **Making lasting friendships that provide on-going support** - *"I have a strong group of friends who I support and feel supported by."* (24) *"I made a really good and inspiring friend who I still see regularly and we have supported each other over the years since and had lots of fun together."* (7)
- **Improved work situation** - *"I have been more likely to try something new ever since..., in fact I went back to college and retrained as a counsellor and am now helping other people with their own journeys!"* (71)

*"Odyssey helped me to deal with uncertainty and change, but, most importantly, helped me see the benefit of seizing the moment and pushing myself beyond the boundaries. In the 13 years since my Odyssey journey I moved to the USA (and back!), had a wonderful daughter, started running, was diagnosed with cancer a second time and, last week, completed my first half-marathon three months after my last chemo treatment. Some of the friends I made through Odyssey have been friends for life and it's been wonderful to see how they've changed their lives in the intervening years. Life is short, we never know what is going to happen next, but, thanks to Odyssey, I can cope with that uncertainty, I can be strong and face the future, and I can enjoy every single moment with the people I love. Words are not sufficient to explain the real impact - all I can say is thank you."* (39)