

# A drop in the ocean





# Acknowledgements

A drop in the Ocean has been forged and built by thousands of hours in the water, hundreds of hours of academic study and practice and honed by a team of dedicated volunteers who passionately believe that Blue Space, the ocean and surfing has the ability to empower individuals and transform lives.

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For the sharing of their experience, knowledge and continued giving to create a program that has the true capacity to make the difference.



# Welcome

Welcome to Liquid Therapy's A Drop in the Ocean (ADITO) program. ADITO is an innovative Blue Space Mental Health and Wellbeing Program. It is based on theories and practice derived from both sport psychology and surfing coupled with deep immersion in the Blue Space environment. This Mental Health and Wellbeing program, will introduce participants to a range of workshops and ocean based sessions, that will empower and support them to develop a Mental Health Toolkit that will serve them not only on the Wild Atlantic shoreline but also on their everyday journey!

We present to you ADITO

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# About ADITO

## The What, the How and the Why

### THE WHAT

ADITO is an innovative Blue Space Mental Health and Wellbeing Program. It is based on theories and practice derived from both sport psychology and the sport of surfing, coupled with immersion in the Ocean or Blue Space environment.

An evidence based program, developed by surfing practitioners, psychologists and psychotherapists, our primary focus is to support participants to improve their mental health and wellbeing. This is achieved through the medium of surfing, ocean based activities and social connection. The program combines workshops that will benefit the physical, social and mental wellbeing of an individual, whilst being delivered in the Blue Space environment.

ADITO is a versatile eight session program designed to be delivered through a variety of timeframes and formats. The flexible nature of ADITO means it can be adapted to meet the needs of a specific group and can be delivered as either a Spring (April/ May), Summer (July/ August) or Autumn (September/ October) program. Originally piloted at Rossnowlagh Beach, Donegal, the program can be delivered from any suitable beach or shoreline.

### THE WHY

The ADITO program is partly based on theoretical approaches from the field of sport psychology, social psychology as well as surfing theory and practice. Sport psychology uses psychological principles to enhance performance, personal satisfaction, enjoyment and personal and social development through participation in sport. The main theoretical frameworks that underpin the program, are as follows:

The program draws on techniques from Self-Determination Theory from the field of psychology (Deci & Ryan, 2012), to support the development of feelings of competence, autonomy and belonging in participants during the program. The instructors aim to promote intrinsic or internal motivation by focusing on an individual's situation, motivations and traits during the sessions. This is in order to foster life long skills and a connection with the ocean, which we hope they can continue to apply beyond the blue space.

In addition, the surfers are immersed in a task-oriented environment, which aims to minimise comparison between individuals. Goals are set based on performance as result of task mastery, which surfers are encouraged to develop through effort and concentration. All of these skills are honed and refined through the medium of practicing surf skills.

The program also draws on elements from Acceptance and Commitment therapy (Harris, 2006) which support the development of resilience and psychological flexibility. This action oriented therapy, draws on a range of principles based on mindfulness behaviour, attention to personal values and commitment to action. These are incorporated throughout the program to help the surfers change their behaviour, overcome fears and ultimately lead to a more positive attitude and emotional state. Liquid Therapy has long been aware of the benefits our ocean programs provide to an individual's mental wellbeing. This has been extensively researched throughout the world and Blue Space has been reported to affect our mental health and wellbeing in three ways: boosting us when we're OK; helping to prevent mental distress, and finally restoring wellbeing when we're having problems (The Wave, 2020).

During this program each surfer will enjoy their own ocean adventure and also see the social benefits as they develop relationships with their pod and instructor and learn key skills that can be taken away and practiced in all aspects of their life.

## THE HOW

ADITO is delivered in pods with one instructor and up to four surfers. This high ratio of instructor to surfer, enables a high level of support for each participant and provides a strong platform for social interaction.

In addition to the Pod instructor there is also another team member on the shore or in the water to provide support wherever that may be required. Each session is 90 minutes long. These are divided into two sections, a 30 minute workshop on the shore and a 60 minute water session.

The flexible nature of the program means it can be adapted to suit the needs of a participating group or individuals. For example, as a concentrated one week program or once or twice a week over a series of weeks. In addition, this flexibility means a program can be adapted to our rather unreliable climate!



# Session 1

# SURFING

## Overview

The purpose of Session 1 is to lay a strong foundation for the rest of the program, in terms of both safety, ground rules and expectations. The beach session outlines the program's objectives and sets ground rules in terms of safety and expectations for the rest of the program.

In week one they will also receive their first Surf lesson.



### Aims

- To empower each individual with a basic knowledge of surfing
- To normalise the conversation around mental health and wellbeing and how this program can positively impact it
- To ensure an understanding of the do's and don'ts of the ADITO program



### Tools

- Ice breaker activity
- Beginners surf lesson



### Take Away

At the end of Session 1 the surfer, away from the beach, will be able to:

- Practice their warm up routine.
- Work on their pop up (in front of a mirror.)



### Benefits

Social connectivity and engagement within each pod

Improved self confidence as a result of taking on a new challenge

Intrinsic reward and sense of achievement in completing Session 1



# Sessions 2+3

## Overview

Sessions 2 and 3 introduce the importance of breathing through stretching routines and body surfing. Controlling our breathing helps to calm and focus our thoughts and actions.

Body surfing helps us improve our:

- Wave knowledge (types of wave)
- Timing and finding the power of the wave
- Posture
- Breath control
- Water confidence and ocean awareness

# BODY SURFING / BREATHING



### Aims

- To impart the guiding principles of body surfing and to enable an individual to attempt it
- To build on our understanding of waves from Session 1
- To build on each individual's ocean confidence from Session 1



### Tools

- Body Surfing Activity
- Stretching Routine



### Take Away

At the end of Sessions 2 and 3 the surfer, away from the beach, will be able to:

- Visualise the sequencing of events and techniques involved in body surfing
- Learn a stretching routine that can be practised independently
- Think about their breathing and the benefits of breathing exercises



### Benefits

Increased Attentional Control (being able to focus your attention on one thing)

Increased ability to persevere in developing a new skill

Increased mastery of a new skill

# Sessions 4+5

## Overview

During Sessions 4 and 5 the ADITO program focuses on balance:

- Life Balance
- Physical Balance
- Conceptual Balance

This element of the program incorporates one art-focused session and one surf-focused session.

# BALANCE

(BOARD + STONE)



## Aims

- To understand the importance of having a focal point during an activity
- To improve self-awareness (hand/ eye coordination, breathing, focus)
- To be able to reflect on and identify immersion in a task



## Tools

- Balance Stones Activity
- Balance Board Activity



## Take Away

At the end of Sessions 4 and 5 the surfer, away from the beach, will be able to:

- Practice and enjoy stone stacking at any suitable location
- Visualise and practice their surfing exercises with a deeper understanding



## Benefits

An increased ability to tolerate frustration

An increased sense of self-efficacy (trust in your own ability to do something)

Increased group bonding and inter- reliance through group work and shared goals



# Sessions 6+7

## Overview

Sessions 6 and 7 put the focus on the beach environment and understanding:

- How our actions can have an impact on it.
- Risk assessing during our activities.

# BEACH ENVIRONMENT

(BEACH CLEAN/ RISK ASSESSING)



### Aims

- To understand the concept of risk assessment
- To challenge oneself successfully in a new environment
- To have an awareness of the beach environment and the impact we have on it



### Tools

- Risk Assessment Activity
- Beach Clean Activity



### Take Away

At the end of Sessions 6 and 7 the surfer, away from the beach, will be able to:

- Understand the concept of a risk assessment
- Reflect on the environmental impacts of their actions
- Participate in and/or conduct their own beach cleans



### Benefits

Increased experience and understanding of altruism (the sense of giving something back)

Increased development of group reliance/support and teamwork during the beach clean

An understanding of their ability to affect change and create a positive outcome

# Session 8

## CONCLUSION

### Overview

Session 8 sees the conclusion of the ADITO program which includes the post course survey for both parents/carers and surfers. The session reflects on the journey of the group and reviews the learning and achievements of each individual surfer during the course of the program.



#### Aims

- To have FUN FUN FUN for the final surf!
- To review and reflect on the journey thus far
- To conduct all end of program surveys



#### Tools

- Reflection Activity
- Programme Surveys



#### Take Away

At the end of session 8 each surfer will be able to:

- Reflect on the journey ADITO has taken them on
- Know how/where their next surfing opportunity will be



#### Benefits

A sense of satisfaction and accomplishment on completing the program

An understanding of the process of change and each individual's journey throughout the program

A sense of group solidarity and the potential for lasting social connections



The background is a deep blue with intricate, swirling, and textured patterns that resemble water or a marbled surface. The patterns are more pronounced in the lower half of the image, creating a sense of movement and depth.

# PARENTS + CARERS

# Introduction

There is a common statement from primary carers that; “If my children are happy, I’m happy” that however is a two way street of emotion; If a parent is happy then the chances of a child’s happiness are also increased.

The ADITO program offers a unique opportunity to engage with a second audience; those that bring the surfer to the sessions. With the understanding and mindset that the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the carer is as important as that of the surfer, both groups therefore have an opportunity to benefit from this program.

Using a more relaxed, informal and non compulsory approach this section offers three workshop lesson plans that ease a group of potential strangers into coming together, sharing the same experiences as the surfers and developing their own Mental Health and Wellbeing toolkit!



# PARENTS + CARERS

## Overview

Looking after yourself (parents and carers) is just as important as looking after your surfer. By participating in these sessions you have an opportunity to:

- increase your bond with your surfer
- increase your understanding of your surfer's journey
- discover something new about yourself and learn new skills
- build positive social relationships with other parents and carers



### Aims

- To experience a session their surfer has participated in
- To provide a platform for social interaction



### Take Away

At the end of these Sessions the parent/carer will be able to:

- Be able to practice and enjoy stone stacking/ beach art at any suitable location
- Be able to practice a warm up routine
- Have an understanding of the basics of surfing
- Have a greater level of awareness of our environmental actions and impacts
- Be able to participate in and/or conduct their own beach cleans



### Benefits

An increased ability to tolerate frustration

Increased experience and understanding of Alternism (the sense of giving something back)

Increased social cohesion and teamwork during the beach clean and group activities

An increased understanding of their ability to affect change and create a positive outcome

Improved self confidence by taking on a new challenge

Intrinsic reward and sense of achievement in participating in and completing sessions

# REFERENCES

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2012). Self-determination theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (p. 416–436). Sage Publications Ltd.

Harris, Russ (August 2006). “Embracing your demons: an overview of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy” (PDF). *Psychotherapy in Australia*. 12 (4): 2–8.

The Wave (August 2020). “Into the Blue: Blue Health and Surfing in the 21st Century” (PDF) (p.16)

# USEFUL RESOURCES

Britton, E (2019) NEAR Health Tool kit  
<http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/research/health/JS%20-%20NEAR%20Toolkit%20FINAL%20V1.6%201Oct20.pdf>

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