

## yin&yang

### Grant Westthorp & Alex Arnold

Building an app to equip men with life skills united Grant, 63, and Alex, 23, in a common goal.

#### Grant

I moved to Albany from Adelaide when I was 12 because Dad got a job as the first resident golf professional there. It was a difficult age to move and I felt like an outsider for several years. I copped a fair bit of bullying at school but I've got a good sense of humour and I managed to muddle my way through.

Golf was my passion and I was the only one out of five kids that inherited Dad's love for the game. I was his last great hope. When I finished school I started working with him and then moved to London to finish my apprenticeship. Golf took me all around the world, mainly teaching and club-fitting, and gave me a relatively privileged life.

Then in 2008 I came off my mountain bike at high speed and that was the end of golf. I was nearly decapitated in the accident and it wiped out my right side. I'm still numb in my right foot and can't stand for more than 20 minutes. I spent two months on my back — a good time to reflect on everything. I figured I'd been a total tosser for years, driven by money, leading a fake life, always taking. I suddenly realised we're all here for a short time and it was time to change my values and give something back.

A part-time admin job came up at Albany's Men's Resource Centre and even though I knew very little about the centre, the concept appealed. Men are fixers but if they don't have the tools or a plan, they run into trouble. The centre helps men to live longer, healthier, more fulfilling lives through practical tips and skills. Lift the cloud, get the solutions.

I became manager in 2010 and helped develop a series of resources, including a Men's Survival Handbook that we've distributed all around Australia and overseas. Pages and pages of material. In recent years I'd started to think about putting it all into an app but had no idea where to start.

Alex came on board through an internship with the McCusker Centre for Citizenship at UWA. He had 150 hours of his software expertise to donate to us but I think he gave well more than 400 hours! He's a very impressive young man.

One of the great things about life is the opportunity to meet a like-minded soul. Alex and I connected right from the beginning. He was eager to get in and get his hands dirty and I hadn't expected that. He came out on a bike ride with three guys who were struggling. He listened to men in distress and he was OK with that. He just had a sincere passion to put his hand up and immerse himself in the project.

Together we started with a blank canvas and created an app that can supply information to all men wherever they are, whether it's in a paddock in Wellstead or the highlands of Scotland. Last week I spoke to 50 farmers, who all downloaded it right away. No matter how isolated you are, the information is right there.

Initially we were going to charge a small fee for the app but it was Alex who said "No, you don't want to do that". And he was right. He's a smart boy with excellent scruples.

#### Alex

I finished a bachelor of science in 2016 through UWA and am now completing my Masters specialising in software engineering. Last year I started looking at ways to build up my practical experience and I discovered the McCusker Centre for Citizenship. I looked through their list of internships and the Men's Resource Centre in Albany jumped out at me.

Besides the fact they needed someone with software knowledge, I liked that it was in the field of mental health. I think most families have some exposure to mental health issues these days and mine's no different but it's still not something we look at square on as a society. Someone will have an episode on a train and everyone still looks the other way. Especially when it comes to men's mental health, there's still an attitude of "toughen up and get over it". I thought it would be good to be part of a project that helps change stereotypes and breaks down barriers.

I knew from the beginning the project would probably involve more than 150 hours of donated time and I was up for that. I stayed down in Albany for a month and then continued to work on the project back in Perth over the next year.

I liked Grant right from the start — he's bright and bubbly and positive. He's also got a good sense of humour so there was always lots of fun banter in the office.

We're both fairly motivated people, although I'm probably a little more cautious in my approach than Grant.

Enthusiasm can be hard to rein in when it comes to software. It's easy to change software at the beginning of a project but much harder towards the end. If you keep making major changes, there's a flow-on effect and you risk introducing bugs. But being able to translate that technical knowledge into accessible terms, which is what I was doing with Grant, was a huge learning experience for me and one that I know will benefit me in my future career.

You meet lots of different people from all over the world at uni but they're mostly aged 20-25. Getting to spend time with someone like Grant, who has a lot of life experience, introduces you to new perspectives on things.

That's been good for me and I know we'll continue to stay in touch with each other. I think we're both really proud that we made this thing together. ■

Carrie Cox

*I liked Grant right from the start ...'*



PICTURE IAIN GILLESPIE

The Well Man app is downloadable on iPhone and Android. [mensresourcecentre.org.au](http://mensresourcecentre.org.au)