



YOGASHIELD®

**YOGA FOR FIRST
RESPONDERS®**

FIELD GUIDE

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Published by YogaShield® Yoga For First Responders®

Yoga For First Responders® (YFFR) has a mission to provide first responders and military personnel with traditional yoga training that is culturally informed and job-specific to process stress, build resilience, and enhance performance effectively.

We do this by training instructors on our unique approach and supporting them while initiating yoga programs in training academies, public safety and military departments, and local community settings. Learn more at www.yogaforfirstresponders.org.

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YOGA
FOR FIRST
RESPONDERS

Mission Statement & Organization Description

Mission Statement:

To provide first responders, military personnel, and medical providers with traditional yoga training that is job-specific and culturally informed to effectively process stress, build resilience, and enhancing performance.

Organization Description:

YogaShield® Yoga For First Responders® is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides proactive resiliency training to first responders, military personnel, and medical providers worldwide through a job-specific and culturally informed yoga methodology. YFFR considers “first responders” anyone in public safety or emergency services.

YFFR's unique protocol includes techniques and drills that prepare students to effectively:

- Process stress
- Build Resilience
- Enhance Performance

YFFR programs, classes and curricula may only be taught by trained and licensed YFFR Instructors. This ensures the highest quality of instruction and results.



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How is YFFR Different & Unique?

Due to our Western culture's current trendy yoga marketing, first-responder populations can become isolated from the benefits of traditional yoga training. The YFFR protocol makes it distinct from popularized community yoga or other yoga training styles. The YFFR Protocol offers a consistent, safe, and effective solution to bring yoga training to first responders.

YFFR's training method is **job-specific, culturally informed** for public safety professionals, and operationally sound, leading to successful implementation. YFFR is a system for Warrior Mindset training, providing first responders with a skill set to **process stress, build resilience, and enhance performance.**

The Original Intention of Yoga

A person in a grey t-shirt is performing a yoga pose, possibly a forward bend, in a studio setting. The background shows a brick wall and some equipment.

**Mastery Over the Mind
&
Optimal Functioning of the
Psychophysiological System**

Skillset YFFR Teaches:

**Process Stress
Build Resilience
Enhance Performance**

A group of people are lying on blue mats on a gym floor, practicing yoga. They are in a room with wooden lockers and a red wall with hanging lights.

Benefits of Yoga

- Ability to **Self-Regulate**
- Enhanced **Self-Awareness & Situational Awareness**
- Enhanced **Proprioception & Fine Motor Skills**
- Better **Verbal Expression & Problem Solving**
- Increased **Physical Strength and Mobility**
- Access to **Effective Sleep & Recovery**
- Ability to **Perform Well & Under Pressure**
- Decreased **Impulse Variability**
- More Accurate **Gut Responses**
- Controlled, **Mindful Responses**
- **Less Injury**, Faster Recovery Time
- Increased **Emotional Adaptability**
- **Oxygen** is used more effectively
- Access to **“Flow”**

**Studies with Army soldiers
and Marines have found
that mindfulness
strengthens concentration,
short-term memory, and
emotional regulation -
essential skills under fire.**

Without Regulation What Suffers?

- Accurate **Assessment** and attention to **Detail**
- Ability to **Communicate Effectively**
- **Decision** vs. Survival Brain (Prefrontal Cortex vs. Amygdala)
- Ability to **Recover**
- **Brain to Body** Communication
- **Emotional Intelligence** in Different Circumstances
- Body Stays in **Threat Response**
- Nervous System Stays in Threat Response (**Post-Traumatic Stress**)

“Yoga, zen, and the martial arts may have some mystical connotations, but when you strip away the mysticism, all that is left is a simple process that allows you to gain conscious control over your unconscious nervous system, and then puts it to work for you.”

- Lt. Col. Dave Grossman

Relaxation (Not what YFFR teaches)

- Temporarily calms nervous system
- Free from tension and anxiety
- Stress free
- “Zen out”
- System “off”
- **Coping with stress**

Regulation (What YFFR Teaches)

- Neuroplastic healing
- Effectively activate the nervous system
- Working WITH high stress
- System “on” but in control
- **Processing stress**

**EVIDENCE
BASED
PROTOCOL**

6 Week Online Tactical Resilience Training - Pilot Study

Secondary outcomes showed a significant improvement in the adaptive cognitive strategy of the stress mindset

16 Week Randomized Cluster Study on YFFR Protocol

- Significant improvements for sub-t PTSD
- Target key modifiable risk factors of PTSD
- Benefits retained in those who continue training
- Safe and suitable for public safety
- Standardized approach allows for wide adoption
- Emotional-regulation training IS occupational training
- Regular training for on-going exposure
- Workplace ideal setting for habit formulation

When the stakes are high, operating at peak performance increases positive outcomes for first responders. Incorporating the YFFR protocol into a training regimen gives deputies and officers the tools to constructively process stress in real-time, and positions them to improve their recovery from job-related trauma. The YFFR protocol is practical; it can be used in squad cars, shift briefings, or virtually anywhere peak performance is needed by first responders.

-Dustin Kulling Cpt. Sheriff Dept.

TACTICAL BREATHWORK

Tactical breathwork is critical for first responders as it equips them with a direct tool to gain control of their minds in high-stress situations. This type of breath control helps stabilize their emotions and mental state by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which induces a calming effect essential for clear thinking and effective decision-making. By implementing tactical breathwork, first responders can better manage their physiological and psychological responses to stress, ensuring they remain composed, alert, and capable of performing their duties under intense pressure. This enhances not only their safety but also their ability to provide help efficiently and effectively.

Activating The Calm Button

Use these simple directions to effectively activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps calm the body and mind. This type of breathing increases vagal tone, leading to a reduction in heart rate and promoting regulation. Extended exhales signal the body to enhance the parasympathetic response, aiding in stress management and overall well-being.

- **Breathe through the nose**
- **Into the belly**
- **Extend the exhale longer than the inhale**

Physiological Sigh For Extreme Stress

This specific pattern helps reset the respiratory system and increases lung efficiency by re-inflating collapsed alveoli, which are tiny air sacs in the lungs responsible for gas exchange. By doing so, it enhances the body's ability to intake oxygen and expel carbon dioxide, thereby immediately reducing the physiological symptoms of stress, such as a rapid heart rate and shallow breathing. The increased oxygen levels stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting a state of calm and helping to quickly bring the body back to a more balanced state.

- **Inhale completely through the nose**
- **At the top of the inhale, sniff in hard**
- **Exhale slowly out through the mouth**

Coherency Breath For High Performance

A breathing pattern of 6 breaths per minute, is thought to maximize heart rate variability (HRV) and bring the body into a state of coherence. By synchronizing the heart rate with the breathing pattern, this technique promotes a more efficient physiological state where the body's systems operate in unison, reducing stress, enhancing regulation, and improving overall cardiovascular function. This state of coherence facilitates not only emotional stability but also cognitive clarity and overall health.

- **Inhale 3 counts**
- **Hold 2 counts**
- **Exhale 5 counts**

*Count is approximately one second

CO2 Tolerance Training For Increased Stamina

Holding your breath at the bottom of an exhale, a practice where all air is expelled from the lungs, trains your body to tolerate higher levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂). This tolerance develops because, during the hold, CO₂ builds up in the blood since it isn't being expelled through breathing, allowing the body to adapt to increased levels of this gas. Enhancing CO₂ tolerance can be beneficial as it helps improve respiratory efficiency, delay the onset of breathlessness during physical activities, and enhance overall endurance and performance by allowing more oxygen to be released to muscles and organs under stress.

- **Inhale slowly and completely**
- **Exhale slowly and completely**
- **Hold breath out for 10 counts**
- **Repeat**

*Count is approximately one second

Recovery Breath

Promotes recovery and regulation by engaging the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the body's rest and digest responses. The longer exhale compared to the inhale enhances relaxation and reduces stress by lowering heart rate and blood pressure, signaling the body to calm down. This pattern also helps regulate the balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood, improving overall respiratory efficiency and aiding in physical recovery. Such controlled breathing not only supports mental clarity and emotional stability but also prepares the body to return to a state of balance after physical or psychological stress.

- **Inhale 3 counts**
- **Exhale 5 counts**

*Count is approximately one second

Box Breathing For Anxiety

This technique involves equal parts inhale, hold, exhale, and hold, is a powerful tool for reducing anxiety due to its structured approach to breath control. This method helps stabilize the autonomic nervous system by promoting a balance between the sympathetic (fight or flight) and parasympathetic (rest and digest) responses. By focusing the mind on the rhythm of breathing and creating a sense of predictability, box breathing can significantly lower stress levels, leading to a calmer mental state and reduced anxiety.

- **Inhale 4 counts**
- **Hold 4 counts**
- **Exhale 4 counts**
- **Hold 4 counts**

*Count is approximately one second

For FREE training
videos scan the QR Code:



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