



**DEFENSE CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE**  
For Psychological Health & Traumatic Brain Injury



# **Yoga and Yoga Nidra Meditation at the Deployment Health Clinical Center's Specialized Care Program**

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# Specialized Care Programs (SCP)

- **Three-week, intensive, integrative programs**
  - Focus on strength-based resiliency
  - Therapeutic group process in cohort of 8-10
  - Individual treatment plans
  - CBT structured learning on mind/body reactions to combat
  - Participants taught skills to manage symptoms
- **Track I**
  - For war-related chronic pain and medically unexplained physical symptoms (MUPS)
- **Track II**
  - For PTSD and trauma spectrum symptoms

# Specialized Care Programs (SCP)

## Integrated and Integrative Multidisciplinary Team

- Internal Medicine
- Nursing
- Physical Therapy
- Psychiatry
- Social Work
- Trauma-Sensitive Yoga and Meditation
- Acupuncturist

# **Spouse/Significant Other Program *For those whose loved ones have PTSD***

- **One-week program provides supportive environment including group therapy, meditation, ear acupuncture, and education about loved one's stress symptoms.**
- **Participants share stories and experiences, learn self-care strategies and family communication skills, and receive education on child rearing and family resilience.**

# Yoga and Meditation at DHCC



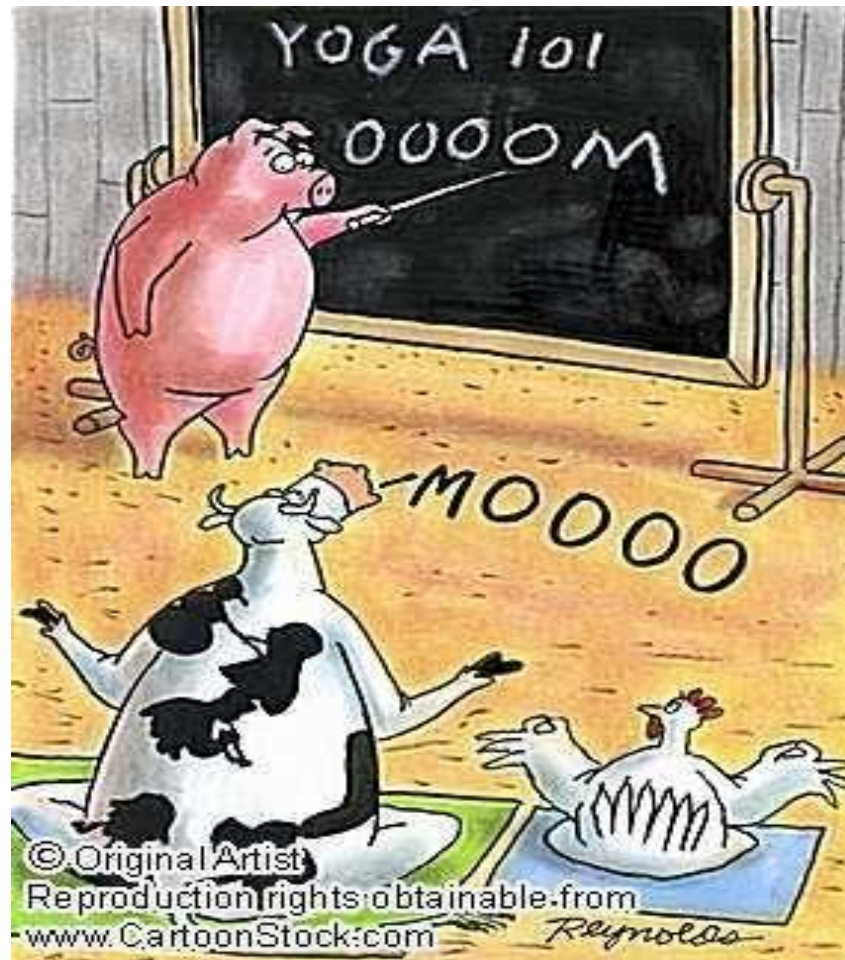
Resilience ★ Recovery ★ Reintegration



  
www.sangrea.net

**YOGA**  
Relaxing pastime,  
spiritual path or  
extreme sport?

# Cultural Sensitivity is Key!





# Yoga is Not ....

- Only for “human pretzels”
- Painful (if you do it mindfully)
- A religion or cult
- Only for women
- A lifestyle
- A one-size-fits-all activity
- Going to change your sexual orientation

# Yoga is...

A set of principles and practices for anyone who wants to learn to be a more flexible human being.



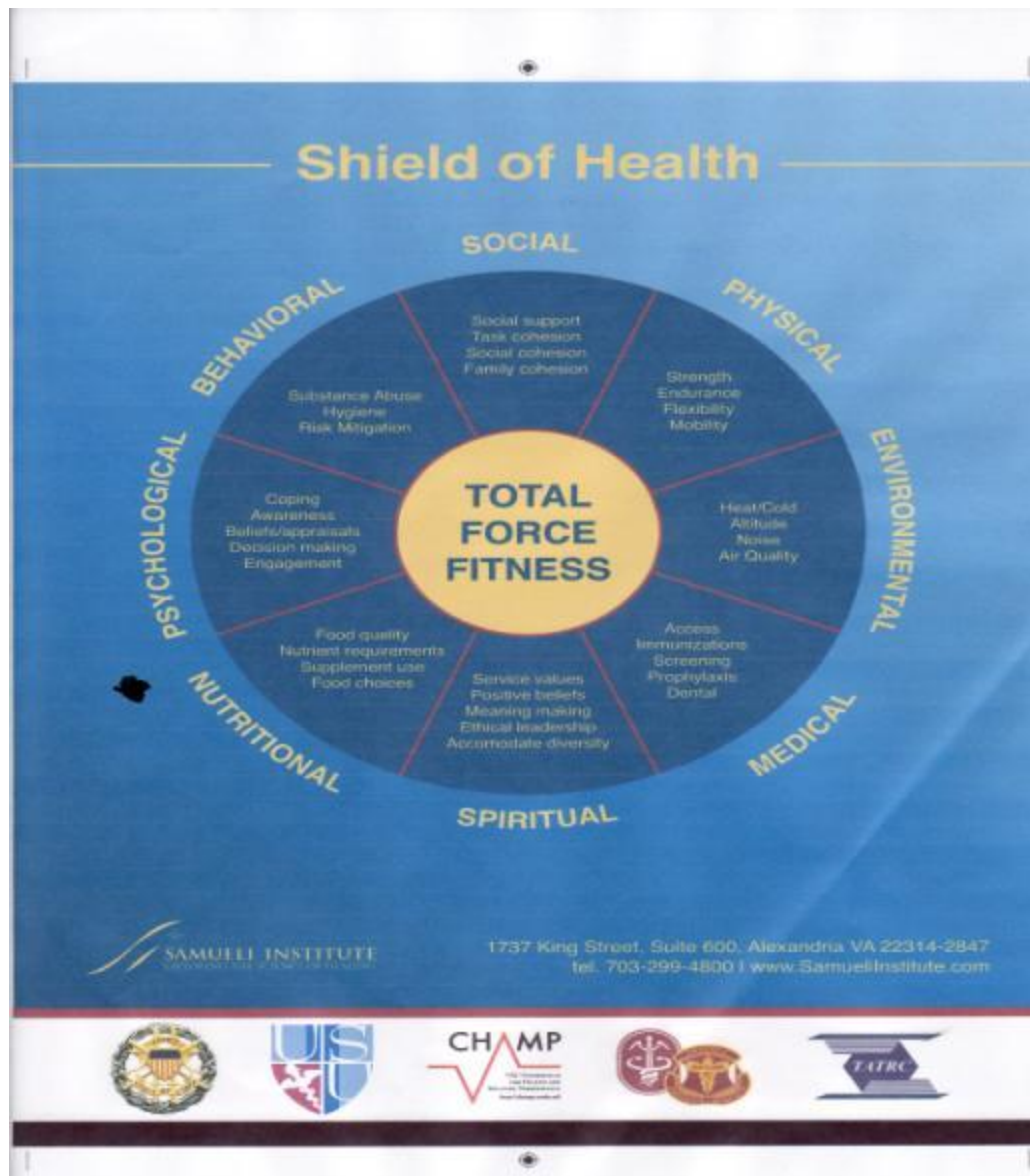
# Yoga is...

The word “Yoga” means



The purpose of yoga is to integrate and make whole

# Total Force Fitness Model



# A Little More Background on Yoga

- About 5000 years old
- Originated in the Indus Valley in India
- Includes many different schools or lineages
- Includes many different practices; from meditation to chants to hot yoga
- Includes a set of moral principles and personal observances

# Yoga and Meditation

## create flexible human beings by...

- Increasing self-awareness –in and out of stress (witnessing thoughts/feelings/sensations)
- Increasing your ability to regulate your autonomic nervous system
- Increasing your ability to respond, rather than react to internal and external stimuli

# Summary of Research on Yoga/Meditation

- lowering blood pressure
- reducing the body's stress response
- increasing strength, flexibility and endurance
- enhancing immune response
- improved ability to learn
- improved memory
- improved concentration/mental focus
- increased self-awareness and introspection

# Yoga 's Three Primary Interventions

- Training the Body
- Training the Breath
- Training the Mind



# The mind is like a dog...a very big dog



The mind makes a terrible  
master, but a wonderful  
servant.

ancient yoga maxim

# What Actually Happens in Yoga & Meditation Class?

- Two hours a week focusing on gentle breathing awareness, stretching, witnessing
- Five hours a week (end of every day)  
iRest yoga nidra meditation

# Practical Benefits of Yoga & Meditation

- Increased mental concentration/focus
- Greater emotional regulation
- Better quality sleep & more able to fall asleep
- More able to problem-solve under stress
- Less perception of pain
- Increased sense of control
- Greater sense of ease

# What Actually Happens in Yoga & Meditation Class?

- Less Pain, More Gain! Less Strain, More Gain!
- What happens if you try less and do less?
- The goal is NOT to make yourself relax
- The goal is to notice what is happening, moment to moment with friendly curiosity

# TAKING IT OFF THE MAT!

- iRest CD for home practice
- Mindfulness homework
- Breathing homework
- Inner Resource homework

# All Yoga is not appropriate for Trauma

## Trauma-Sensitive Yoga

- Instructor specially trained
- Postures, breathing and meditations that create grounding and parasympathetic response, focus on mindfulness
- Prepared for addressing abreactions

# All Yoga is not appropriate for Trauma

## Trauma-Sensitive Meditation

“My mind is like a bad neighborhood.  
I hate to go in there alone.”

Anne Lamott



# All Yoga is not appropriate for Trauma

## Trauma-Sensitive Meditation

- Focus on body sensations & awareness
- Focus on acceptance of what is actually occurring
- Lots of support and verbal anchoring from the instructor

# What is iRest® Meditation?

- Form of ancient Yoga Nidra Guided Meditation
- Specifically developed for war-fighters by psychologist, Dr. Richard Miller
- Renamed iRest® by Request from Military Researchers
- Multi-stage Reproducible Protocol

# Excerpt from DCOE Report *Mind Body Skills for Regulating the ANS*

iRest® may be particularly well-suited for military personnel and families because it:

- Is a **non-pharmaceutical, cost-effective** adjunctive program that **complements any current treatments** they are using for healing
- **Develops mental focus** on the present moment which helps people resist the urge to revisit traumatic life events or worry about possible future ones
- Emphasizes the practice of being aware of and **non-judgmental acceptance** of immediate as well as past experiences, and acceptance of life as it is without excessive tension
- Quickly establishes a **feeling of success** in learning and a means of self-regulation
- Is a **self-administered program** after just a few hours of in-person instruction
- Is a secular program **suitable for all age groups** and needs, families and caregivers

# Research on iRest Yoga Nidra Meditation

## Research Completed:

- Deployment Health Clinical Center (Active duty service members: PTSD)
- Brooke Army Medical Center: (Compassion Fatigue and Insomnia with Health Care Workers )
- COTS (Homelessness: Anxiety, Well-being)
- U of Missouri (College Students: Well-being)
- New York (Chemical Dependency: Relapse Prevention)
- Evergreen College (College Students: Well-Being)
- Boise State University (Multiple Sclerosis)

## Research Underway:

- New York (Chemical Dependency Relapse Prevention)
- University of Missouri (College Students: Well-Being)

## Upcoming Research:

- Brooke Army Medical Center (Couples & Resiliency)
- Brooklyn NY (Chemical Dependency)
- North Chicago VA (Veterans: PTSD)
- Washington, DC VA (Traumatic Brain Injury, Chronic Pain, PTSD)

# What are the Outcomes?

- Consistently rated by patients as very useful
- Opens them to new mind-body options
- Use iRest CD and “in the moment” mindfulness and breath practices to self-regulate
- Ratings indicate ranking of iRest meditation, breathing, physical postures

# In Their Words

“Instead of feeling like there is something wrong with us,  
meditation makes us feel like there is something right with us.”

Gilbert, OIF Combat Vet

# In Their Words

“When I heard we were going to do yoga, I laughed so hard I peed my pants. I thought that soldiers doing yoga was ridiculous.” After two weeks of practice, “Who would have ever thought you could get so chill? I want to find a class to do with my wife, something we could share.”

Joe, 2 Afghanistan deployments

# In Their Words

“This meditation will never work for me. I have been on guard duty for the last 3 years, and for the last 18 months I’ve been home from Iraq.”

After the 5<sup>th</sup> meditation practice....

“I went off guard duty!” “I feel great!”.

Joe, 3 Iraq deployments



# For More Information

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