

Beyond the Barracks: Structuring Wellness in Civilian Life



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Community: **Pillars**



COMMUNITY



ACTIVITY



MENTAL HEALTH



RECOVERY & SLEEP



NUTRITION

Introducing Yoga: A Path to Recovery for Transitioning Veterans

Holistic Health Through Flexibility, Resilience, and Mindful Movement

When we are in our 20s and 30s, those of us who are athletes are focused on continuing to do what we love at a high level. In our 40s and beyond, our priorities often shift—we simply want to keep doing what we love at any capacity, and flexibility and core strength becomes a huge part of that. For many transitioning Veterans, yoga might sound like a daunting term. Perhaps it evokes images of chanting, incense, or singing bowls. But beneath the surface, yoga offers very real, practical health value for those who choose to invest in the practice. This month's newsletter will give you a quick introduction to yoga, discuss considerations for beginners, highlight a few important dos and don'ts, and explain the different types of yoga practices available.



CONT. INSIDE ➡

MilitaryConnected.org is a nonprofit organization improving the military-connected community's transition experience through employer education, data driven research, and access to a network of job opportunities with military-ready employers.

The Vegetus Foundation is dedicated to helping Americans improve their quality of life through education on healthy living and has published the Nutrition Health Review since 1979. Learn more at nutritionhealthreview.com



LEARN MORE AT [MILITARYCONNECTED.ORG](https://militaryconnected.org)



Why Yoga for Veterans? The Value of Recovery

Transitioning from military service to civilian life is a journey marked by shifts—physical, emotional, and psychological. While nutrition, activity, and community are all pillars of holistic health, recovery is often the thread that ties them together. Recovery is about giving your body and mind the space to heal, adapt, and grow stronger.

Yoga is a proven tool for recovery. It offers a unique blend of movement, breathwork, and mindfulness that can help reduce stress, improve flexibility, enhance mobility, and restore balance—both physically and mentally. For Veterans, who may carry the weight of physical injuries, operational stress, or emotional trauma, yoga can even become a crucial aspect of self-care.

Debunking Yoga Myths

Yoga is not about twisting yourself into a pretzel, nor is it about adopting a new spiritual identity. At its core, yoga is simply a practice—a set of movements and breathing techniques designed to connect your body and mind. You don't need to be flexible to start; in fact, many people begin yoga *because* they want to become more flexible. You don't need fancy equipment or expensive clothes. You don't need to chant or sing (unless you want to). What you do need is curiosity, a willingness to try something new, and patience with yourself as you learn.

Getting Started: Considerations for Beginners

If you're new to yoga, here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Start Slow:** Yoga is not a competition. Listen to your body and progress at your own pace.
- **Choose the Right Style:** There are many styles of yoga. Some are physically demanding, while others focus on relaxation and gentle stretching. Read the descriptions below to find what feels right for you.
- **Find an instructor that resonates with you:** Every teacher is different – some are more athletic, some prefer music, some don't – find the right person for you.

- **Honor Your Limitations:** If you have injuries or chronic pain, let your instructor know. Don't push through pain—modify poses as needed.
- **Consistency Matters:** Like any skill, yoga takes practice. Even a short, regular practice can yield significant benefits over time.

Benefits of Yoga for Transitioning Veterans

Research has shown that yoga can offer a multitude of benefits especially relevant for transitioning Veterans, including:

- **Improved Range of Motion and Flexibility:** Essential for healthy aging and continuing your favorite activities.
- **Pain Relief:** Gentle movement and stretching can reduce chronic pain and stiffness.
- **Stress Reduction:** Mindful breathing and movement help calm the nervous system and manage anxiety.
- **Better Sleep:** Yoga and breathwork can improve sleep quality—a critical component of recovery and healing.
- **Mental Resilience:** The meditative aspects of yoga help build emotional awareness and resilience.
- **Community Connection:** Group yoga classes can foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Practical Tips for Veterans New to Yoga

If you're ready to try yoga, here are some practical steps to get started:

- **Check local Veterans organizations or community centers—**many offer free or discounted yoga classes specifically for Veterans.





- Look for beginner-friendly classes—don't be afraid to start with the basics.
- Try online resources—there are numerous free videos and apps designed for every level and schedule.
- Invite a friend or fellow Veteran to join you; practicing with others can keep you motivated and make the experience more enjoyable.
- Set realistic expectations—remember, progress takes time and every step forward is a victory.

Types of Yoga Practices

Yoga is a diverse discipline, and each type offers unique benefits. Here are a few styles you might encounter:

- Hatha Yoga – A gentle introduction to the most basic yoga postures. Hatha classes move at a slow pace and focus on breathing and alignment, making them perfect for beginners.
- Vinyasa Yoga – Sometimes called “flow yoga,” Vinyasa strings postures together so you move from one to another seamlessly, using breath. It can be more physically challenging but is adaptable to all levels.
- Restorative Yoga – Focuses on relaxation and recovery, using props to support the body in restful postures for extended periods. It's an excellent practice for stress relief and deep recovery.

- Yin Yoga – Involves holding passive stretches for several minutes, targeting deep connective tissues and improving joint mobility. Yin is calming but can be intense for those who are not used to stillness.
- Chair Yoga – Perfect for individuals with limited mobility or balance issues. Poses are adapted to be performed while sitting or using a chair for support.
- Yoga Nidra – Also known as yogic sleep, this guided meditation practice is designed to induce deep relaxation and can be particularly beneficial for those dealing with insomnia, anxiety, or PTSD.



Maple Cranberry Brussels Sprouts



Serves 8

- 3lbs Brussels sprouts
- 3 Tbsp avocado oil
- 1 Tbsp 100% maple syrup
- 1/2 Tbsp dried thyme
- 1/2 Tbsp dried basil
- 2 tsp dried rosemary
- 2 tsp dried tarragon
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 2/3 cup pecans, chopped
- 2/3 cup dried cranberries

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400F. Place cranberries in a bowl of water to rehydrate them.
2. Trim the stems of the Brussels sprouts and remove the outer leaves, then halve them.
3. Toss Brussels sprouts with oil, maple syrup, herbs, salt, and pepper.
4. Spread Brussels sprouts on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake for 30 to 35 minutes.
5. With 5 minutes left, sprinkle the pecans on top of the Brussels sprouts and return to the oven.
6. Once the Brussels sprouts are cooked, drain and add the cranberries.

Nutrition Information

Approximate Nutrition Information: Calories: 251; total fat: 14.5g; saturated fat: 1.5g; cholesterol: 0mg; sodium: 117mg; total carbohydrate: 29.2g; dietary fiber: 8.9g; total sugars: 13.4g; protein: 7.6g; calcium: 98mg; iron: 3mg; potassium: 781mg

