

Huffington Post

Job Stress? How This Active-Duty Pilot Beats It

By Ana Forrest

Posted: 6/25/11 12:39 PM ET

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ana-forrest/job-stress-yoga_b_878803.html

This past January, I talked to a young woman who has an amazing job. Captain Dawson -- let's call her by her call-sign, "Ditch" -- is a U.S. Air Force Captain and a fighter pilot who has served in Afghanistan and over Libya and is now getting ready to deploy again. I met her when I visited her overseas Air Force base. It is a rare privilege to have this sort of open interview with Captain Dawson, because her experiences with Forrest Yoga apply to everyone with a stressful job, or facing an intense time in their life.

The military personnel that I've worked with are very mission-driven. They are working for something bigger than their own life; they are working for the well-being of our people. I am very much in alignment with that, although I go about it much differently.

Anyone, including all our warriors, who has an incredibly challenging job needs all the internal resources they can get. Forrest Yoga gives you the resources you need to perform

your job as effectively as possible and to be able to get re-centered on who you are and what needs to be done when you are knocked off-center. Another vital aspect of Forrest Yoga is learning how to disperse your own fatigue and exhaustion, and to instead amp up your energy with very specific breathing techniques. This helps you remain high-functioning when you are in a crisis and cannot take time to rest, in order to meet the challenge of whatever is going on with integrity.

Forrest Yoga teaches all people, including our military personnel, how to stop the violence within themselves. This violence wastes our energy terribly. The Forrest Yoga process strips away a lot of the judgments and confusion that we all carry so that we can find a place of honor for what we do in the world. Or if something needs to be honestly changed, Forrest Yoga clears the fog away so that we can make better decisions.

Here is what Ditch had to say about how Forrest yoga has helped her beat the stress of her job.

Ana Forrest: What are the major challenges/stressors from your job?

Ditch: One major challenge is the work tempo. I usually work 12 hours a day, five days a week, which means during the week I have very little time to either relax or get anything else done (like masters degree classes, or even just going to the grocery store). In addition to the fatiguing pace is the demanding nature of flying a fighter aircraft. After a busy two-hour flight, I feel as drained as if I'd lifted weights and then taken the SAT, due to the combination of physical and mental requirements.

AF: How did you get introduced to Forrest Yoga?

Ditch: I, as you know, actually had the fortune to be chosen as liaison for your visit to our base, so I had the opportunity to learn about your work, while showing you something of mine.

AF: What was surprising about Forrest Yoga to you?

Ditch: After your visit to the base, I appreciate how you designed some yoga sequences specifically focused on easing the physical and mental stresses of my job. What surprised me about them was what could be accomplished with just a few minutes a day. This is particularly important to me during the work week, when stress and fatigue are highest, and time is shortest!

AF: How can Forrest Yoga support you and your squadron while you are deployed? Specifically, what tools can we offer?

Ditch: I expect the sequences mentioned will be helpful while deployed, as stress is usually higher, and time still at a premium. Another possibility would be to give us something to look forward to. Deployments are often monotonous, what we jokingly refer to as "Groundhog Day," like the movie. So some kind of class or seminar or session could give us something different, providing both entertainment and real benefit and relief from stress.

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I had the great gift of having Ditch in two of my workshops during my visit. When I put my hands on Ditch, it was like plucking a very tight guitar string. People have their own resonance, and I can hear it and feel it sometimes. I put my

hands on a number of Air Force personnel during that trip, and they all are tightly strung, like the bowstring pulled taut ready to loose an arrow. They are ready to go, to fly, to fight at any moment.

Everyone encounters high-stress situations in their life. Some people have jobs that require fast reflexes and cool nerves in high-stress situations. Whenever things get hot, whoever you are, whatever you do, deepen your breath, relax your eyes in whatever moments you can so that your hand/eye decision-making bridges are functioning optimally, and keep breathing deeply so that the brain, nervous system and muscle tissues can function at the highest peak, quickly, and from a wise place.

I am thrilled to bring Forrest Yoga to the military. I know the military will benefit greatly from working with Forrest Yoga, and I will greatly benefit from working with them. I invite the yoga population to get as flexible as the yoga discipline demands, and open you hearts to the military population, and honor the military's contribution to all our lives.