



YOGA AS PRIMARY CARE

A Guide to Stress, Recovery, and the
Nervous System for Yoga Professionals

Presented by THE FACILITY FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE
thefacilitydenver.com

Educational resource • not individualized medical advice



YOGA IS PRIMARY CARE

Denver Yoga Summit
Keynote - September 2026



Dr. Mitchell Rasmussen, DC, CFMP



Missed the talk live? -
Watch it on Youtube [HERE](#)



Use this guide as a beginning.

Education supports good questions. It does not replace personal care.

Educational use

This guide is for general education only. It is not medical advice, diagnosis, treatment, or a promise of outcome. Yoga, breath practices, cold exposure, fasting, supplements, and other interventions are not appropriate for every person. Work with a qualified clinician when symptoms, diagnoses, medications, pregnancy, injury, fainting, cardiovascular concerns, breathing difficulty, or significant mental-health symptoms are present.

Source note

Selected research links appear in the evidence section. Facility educational resources are linked throughout. Claims should be interpreted within the limits of each source and the individual context of the reader.

**Your nervous system needs repeated evidence
that you are safe.**

Build moments your body can remember.

[THEFACILITYDENVER.COM](https://thefacilitydenver.com) ↗

EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

One body. Many systems. Constant conversation.

Symptoms rarely live in isolation. The clinical task is to find the relationships that matter most right now.

BRAIN

Attention • mood •
learning

GUT

Digestion • motility •
microbiome

IMMUNE

Defense • tolerance •
repair

METABOLISM

Fuel • blood sugar •
signaling

SLEEP

Restoration •
coordination

STRESS

Demand • adaptation •
recovery

OUR CLINICAL COMPASS

Everything is connected. Everybody is different. Everything matters

....but not everything is important right now.

STRESS + INFLAMMATION

Acute responses protect us.
Chronic activation changes the terrain.

ACUTE • ADAPTIVE

A short-lived response designed to help you meet a demand.

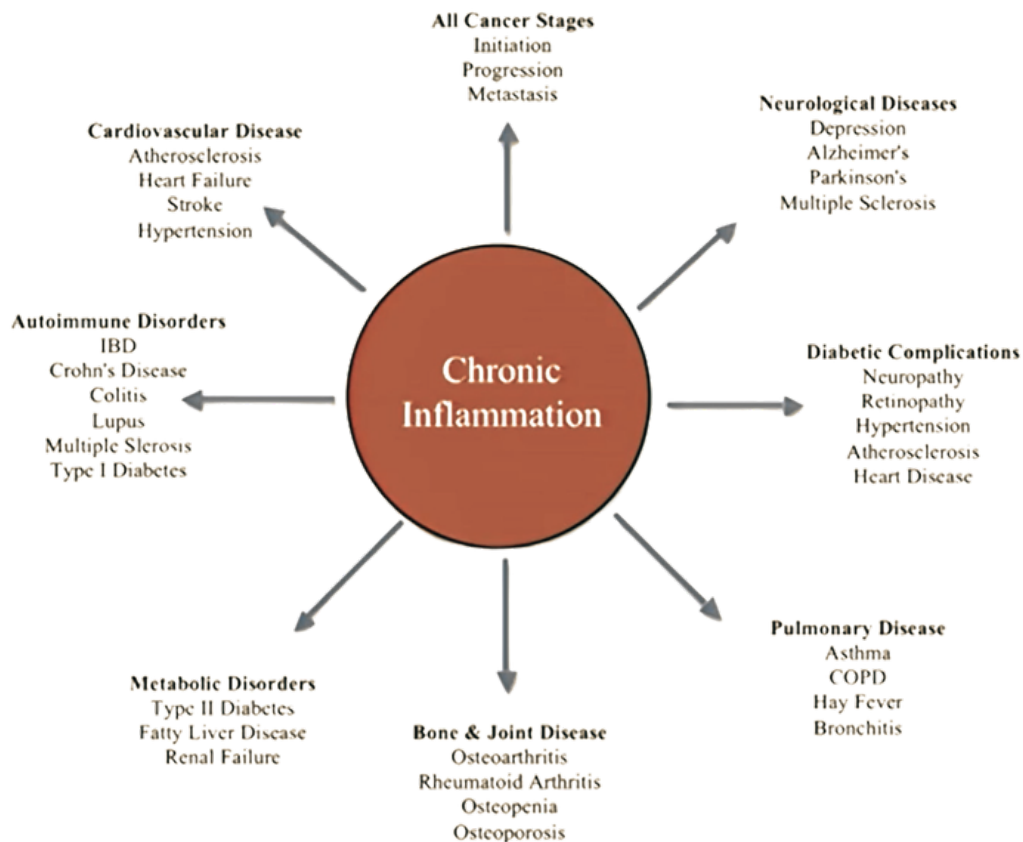
- Faster heart rate
- Sharper attention
- Fuel mobilized
- Inflammation for repair
- Return toward baseline

CHRONIC • UNRESOLVED

The same chemistry, repeated without adequate recovery.

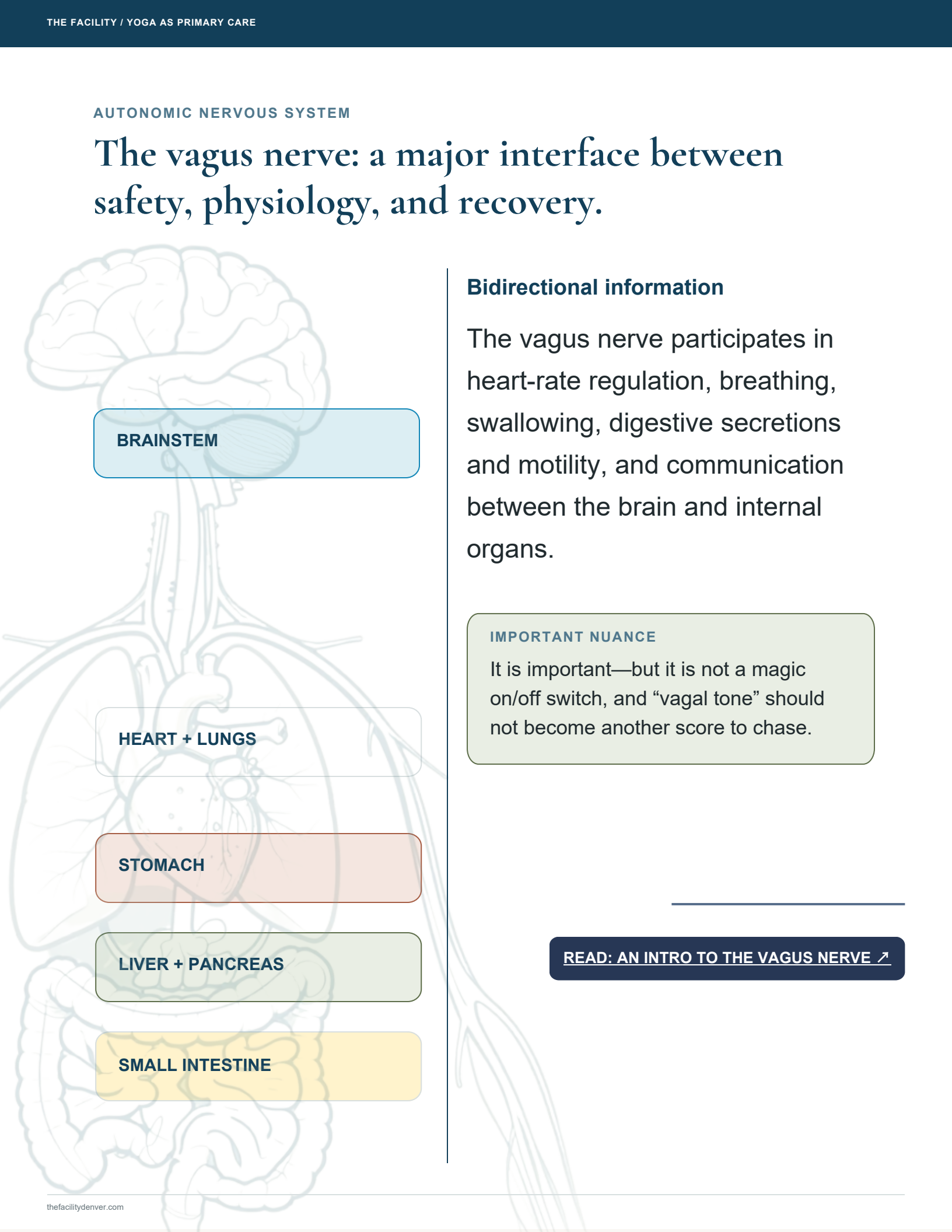
- Poor sleep
- Deadline load
- Dysglycemia
- Environmental burden
- Never switching off

Nothing is chasing us.
Everything is activating us.



AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

The vagus nerve: a major interface between safety, physiology, and recovery.



BRAINSTEM

HEART + LUNGS

STOMACH

LIVER + PANCREAS

SMALL INTESTINE

Bidirectional information

The vagus nerve participates in heart-rate regulation, breathing, swallowing, digestive secretions and motility, and communication between the brain and internal organs.

IMPORTANT NUANCE

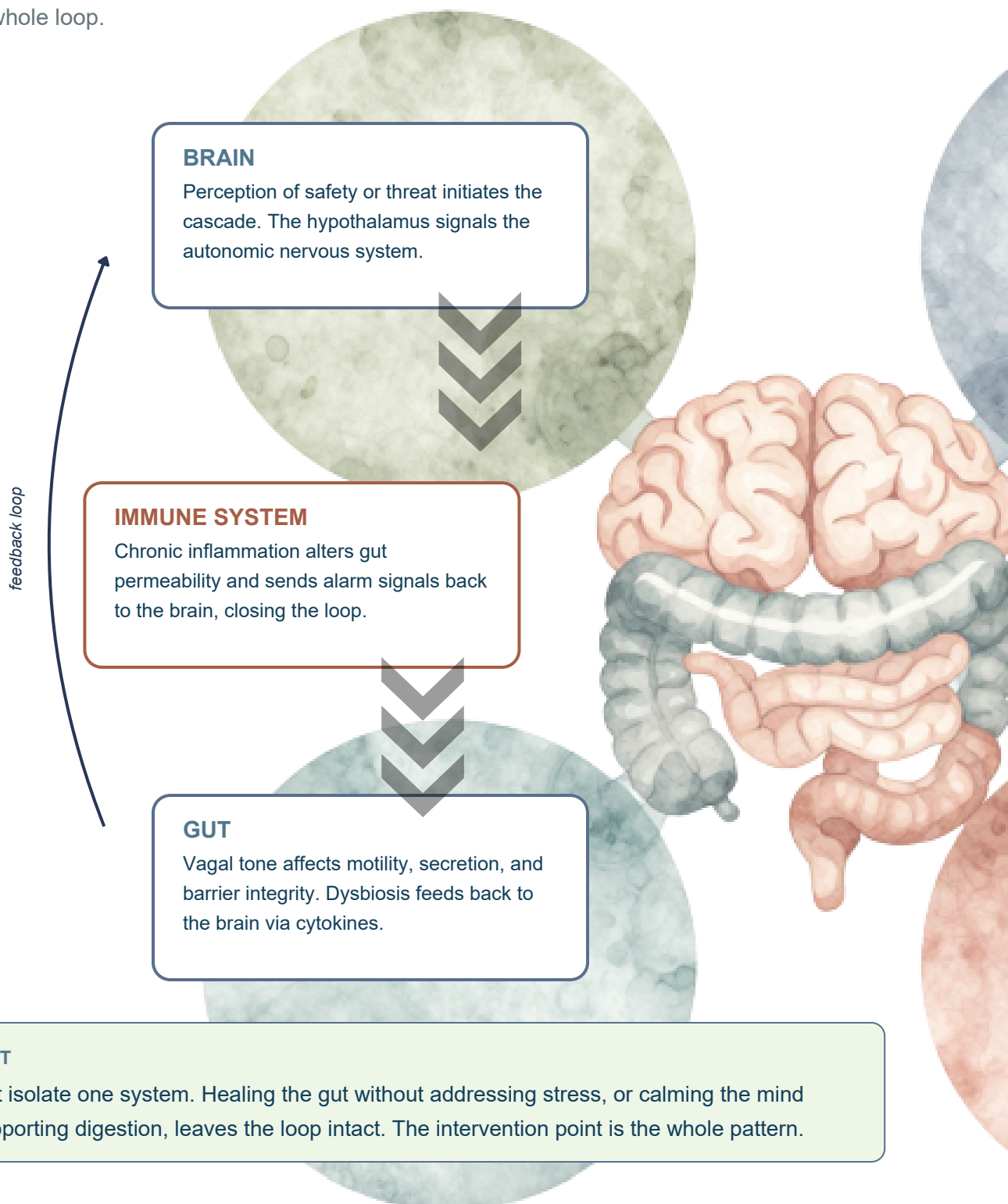
It is important—but it is not a magic on/off switch, and “vagal tone” should not become another score to chase.

[READ: AN INTRO TO THE VAGUS NERVE ↗](#)

THE GUT-BRAIN-IMMUNE LOOP

Why "north to south" digestion begins before food reaches the stomach.

Your brain, gut, and immune system communicate constantly. Disruption at any point changes the whole loop.



PARASYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

Build the brakes with short, repeatable practices.

Choose one. Practice briefly. Repeat often. The aim is a reliable path back toward regulation.

01

Longer exhale

Allow the exhale to become slightly longer than the inhale.

02

Physiological sigh

Two nasal inhales followed by one slow, relaxed exhale.

03

Hum, sing, chant

Use vibration, vocal cords, breath, and play.

04

Progressive release

Gently tense, notice, and release muscle groups.

05

Orient to safety

Name what is stable, supportive, pleasant, or simply okay.

06

Chew + arrive

Sit down, remove distraction, and cue digestion.

07

Guided imagery

Use a body scan, calming visual, or mindful walk.

08

Mini vacation

Pause, breathe, look outside, laugh, or connect.

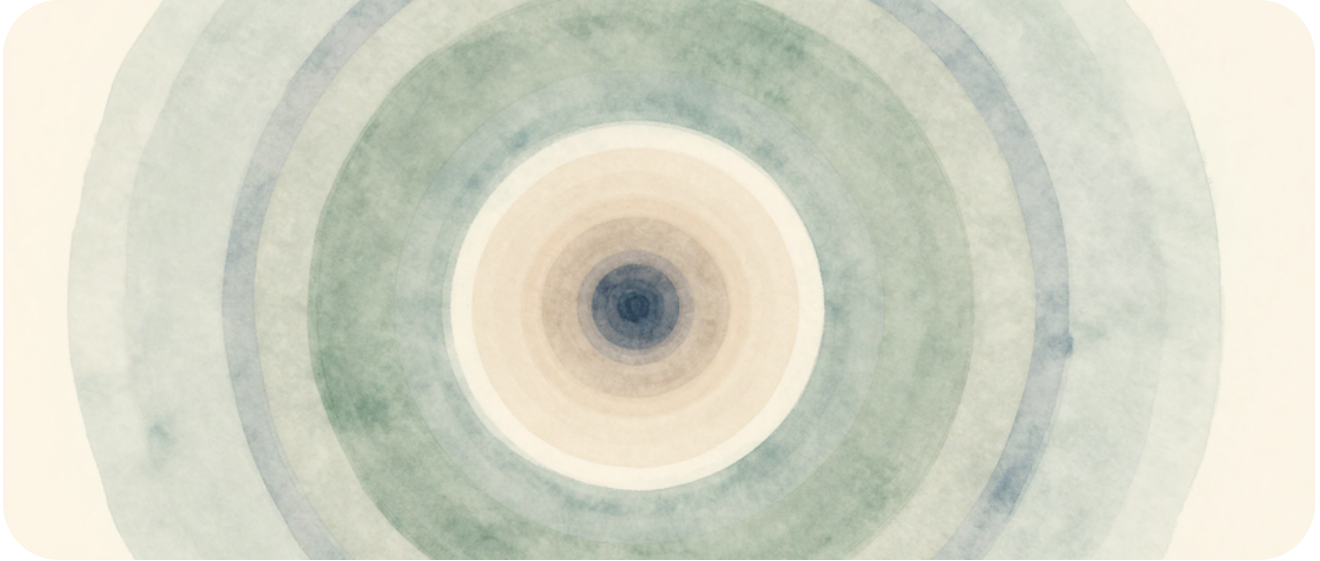


TOOLS: While absolutely achievable without extra gadgets, a few devices to directly enhance parasympathetic activation include **HEARTMATH** and **TRUVAGA**

YOGA + REGULATION

Yoga as practice, not performance.

Yoga creates a repeated conversation between breath, attention, movement, choice, and state.



Interoception

Noticing internal signals—tension, breath rate, temperature—without needing to fix them.

Variability

Building a wider range of responses so the body isn't locked in one gear.

Agency

Choosing how to respond rather than being hijacked by reflex or habit.

Returning to regulation

The real skill: finding your way back, not staying calm forever.

The skill is returning—not staying calm forever.

EVIDENCE MAP

What the research says—and what it doesn't.

The evidence below is promising and growing—but it is not universal proof. Biology is complex, individual, and context-dependent. Use these themes as starting points for conversation with qualified clinicians.

01



Autonomic function ↗

Studies commonly examine heart-rate variability and other autonomic measures.

02



Blood pressure ↗

Reviews suggest yoga may support blood-pressure management alongside standard care.

03



Pain + function ↗

Research explores pain tolerance, function, and neurological adaptation.

04



Whole-body review ↗

Broad reviews examine cognition, cardiometabolic health, inflammation, and quality of life.



USE RESEARCH WISELY

Ask: Who was studied? What kind of yoga? How often? Compared with what? Which outcome changed (and by how much)? Evidence can guide curiosity without erasing individual context.

KEEP LEARNING

More Education from The Facility

Continue your learning with hand-selected resources from the Facility. These tools and teachings are designed to deepen your understanding and support your whole-person health.

PODCAST EPISODES

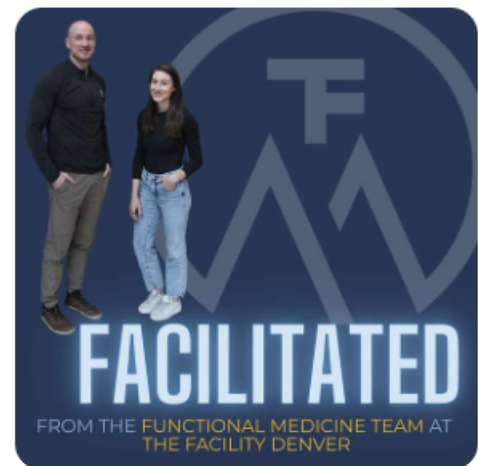
- [Gut Health Inventory — Facilitated Episode 3](#)
The north-to-south assessment used in clinic.
- [The Metabolic Roots of Modern Disease](#)
Inflammation, LDL, metabolism, and modern chronic disease.
- [The Ripple Effect](#)
Why one small health shift can affect an entire community.

BLOG POSTS

- [An Intro to the Vagus Nerve](#)
A practical introduction to vagal anatomy and function.
- [Understanding the HPA Axis + Stress Hormones](#)
The stress-response pathway and the cost of chronic activation.
- [The Food–Mood Connection](#)
Gut, brain, diet, mood, and systemic inflammation.



- [Explore the Facility Blog](#)
More education-first resources.



- [Explore Facilitated](#)
Show notes, listening links, and episode transcripts.

CURATED RESOURCES

Go deeper.

Books, research, and talks >> Start anywhere that sparks curiosity.

BOOKS

The Body Keeps the Score

Bessel van der Kolk — Trauma, the nervous system, and pathways to recovery.

Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers

Robert Sapolsky — Chronic stress physiology explained with clarity and humor.

The Inflamed Mind

Edward Bullmore — Depression, immunity, and the inflammatory connection.

RESEARCH

Vagal tone and the inflammatory reflex

Pavlov & Tracey, 2012 — How the vagus nerve modulates immune response.

Yoga for anxiety and depression

Cramer et al., 2018 — Systematic review of controlled trials.

Gut microbiota and brain function

Mayer et al., 2015 — Bidirectional signaling in the gut-brain axis.

TALKS

How stress affects your body

Sharon Horesh Bergquist — TED-Ed on the physiology of chronic stress.

The brain in your gut

Heribert Watzke — TED on enteric nervous system intelligence.



ABOUT US



Education-first functional medicine for people who want to understand their bodies.

We live in the middle ground between rushed conventional care and vague wellness. Our work combines detailed history, comprehensive biomarker testing, functional nutrition, lifestyle strategy, and collaboration with other providers.

OUR ROLE

We listen. We advocate. We investigate. Then we teach.

Because the person living in your body deserves to understand the 'why.'



CO-FOUNDERS

Dr. Mitchell Rasmussen, DC, CFMP

Functional medicine doctor, co-founder, clinician, educator, and lifelong asker of 'why?'

Kate Daugherty, MS, CNS

Functional nutritionist, co-founder, educator, and translator of science into everyday food and habits.

[Meet the team + read our story ↗](#)

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Four ways forward.

Each path leads to deeper understanding and better care.

| 01

Become a patient

Start with a comprehensive visit, baseline biomarker testing, and an individualized action plan built around your physiology.

[EXPLORE PATIENT CARE ↗](#)

| 02

Find the right referral

We collaborate with trusted specialists and help patients advocate for the care their situation requires.

[EXPLORE OUR NETWORK ↗](#)

| 03

Invite Mitchell to teach

Bring nervous-system physiology, inflammation, or gut-brain education to your training, studio, or community event.

[START A CONVERSATION ↗](#)

| 04

Create together

Invite The Facility onto a podcast or collaborate on useful public education that reaches more people.

[PROPOSE A COLLABORATION ↗](#)

Let's live better. Together.

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