

**Texas DPS 2024 November Fitness Institute In-Service Training  
Instructor Bio's**

**Dr. Joshua Tomchesson – Sustaining Tactical Superiority**

Dr. Tomchesson is one of the first two Customs and Border Protection (CBP) operational psychologists and is currently located in El Paso, TX. Prior to joining CBP, “Doc T” was the Command Psychologist for Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC). As the Director of Psychological Performance, he was the subject matter expert responsible for organizational psychological capabilities, performance enhancement, and workforce care programing. With 34-years of operational military experience, his career began as an enlisted aircrew member. He became a clinical psychologist after graduating from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USHUS) in 2006. In 2008, he deployed to FOB Kalsu Iraq with the Army as the Combat Stress Outreach Advisor, providing psychological treatment and performance consultation to forward deployed units. As a one of the first CBP operational psychologists, he is part of the inaugural Workforce Operations Division cadre for the Workforce Care Directorate under CBP Enterprise Services.

**Sally Wendel – Fitness and Mental Health: Where the Mind Meets the Body**

Sally has a master’s degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, specializing in acute mental health care and crisis stabilization and holds a License in Counseling. She has worked in Victim Employee Support Services for the Texas Department of Public Safety since October 2023 providing clinical services to Law Enforcement Officers through her role as a First Responder Counselor. Prior to employment with DPS, Sally worked as a clinician within an acute mental health care unit of a hospital system in a high exposure morally challenging environment. This experience provided her the ability to understand fitness and mental health, which broadened her clinical skillset to train on preventative strategies to the law enforcement population.

**Demetrius Bailey – Transfer of Force: Plyometric Training**

Demetrius Bailey has earned a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science from the University of Alabama, and a Master of Science in Physical Education and Human Performance from the University of West Florida. Bailey started his Strength and Conditioning career in the private sector training professional athletes in the MLB, NBA, and NFL. He then spent 5 years as a Collegiate Strength Coach at the Division I, II, and III levels. Prior to joining Texas Department of Public Safety in September of 2023, Bailey spent 3 years working as a contractor for Air Force and Marine Forces Special Operations. He holds his Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist Certification from the National Strength & Conditioning Association and has recently obtained the Certified Personal Trainer from the American College of Sports Medicine. As a part of Bailey’s continuing education efforts to maintain his credentials he has attended several courses and seminars pertaining to sleep.

**Dr. Drew Gonzalez – Tactical Athlete Nutrition: Considerations for Health and Performance**

Dr. Drew Gonzalez is currently the Texas State Director for the National Strength and Conditioning Association. Drew is a postdoctoral research associate in the Exercise and Sport Nutrition Laboratory at Texas A&M University. He completed his doctoral degree with Dr. Rick Kreider at Texas A&M University, wherein his dissertation research primarily focused on the impact of a dietary antioxidant (astaxanthin) among career structural firefighters. Largely, Drew's research is focused on tactical athlete nutrition and strength and conditioning for the tactical athlete. Drew is a certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) and a tactical athlete facilitator (TSAC-F).

**John (JD) Mata – Sleep is a Life or Death Habit for the Tactical Athlete**

J.D. Mata serves as the United States Air Force (USAF) Special Warfare Human Performance Squadron Research Exercise Physiologist at Joint Base San Antonio - Lackland and was an initial US Army H2F pilot Strength & Conditioning Coach and Program Manager from 2017 to 2021 at Fort Drum, New York and Fort Bliss, Texas. His primary areas of research include wearable performance technology and physical training program evaluation in collaboration with the Human Performance Staff. J.D. holds a Master of Science in Kinesiology and previously conducted athlete health and performance research at Texas Christian University, focused in muscle physiology and biomechanical evaluation, and is currently completing his PhD. He also served 10 years in the USAF from 2004 to 2014, with deployments supporting OEF, OIF, and C-JTF Horn of Africa.

**Josh Epstein – Unconventional Training Methods: Integrating the Entire Body**

Josh Epstein has been working as a strength and conditioning coach since 2014. He has worked with youth athletes, college athletes, and Olympic athletes throughout his career. Josh has an undergraduate degree in Psychology from the University of West Florida and a graduate degree in Exercise Science from the University of Texas – Arlington. Josh currently works as a strength and conditioning coach for the Special Warfare Human Performance Squadron in San Antonio, TX. Prior to his current role he spent two years working as a strength and conditioning coach for the Air Force Special Operation Command at Hurlburt Field Air Force Base. Josh has also worked in college athletics working previously at Penn State University, James Madison University, the University of Texas – Arlington, Texas Christian University, and the University of West Florida.

**Nikki Pepper – Prioritizing Health & Creating Sustainable Habits**

Nikki Pepper has over 15 years of experience in the health and wellness industry and is passionate about helping individuals achieve their highest potential through holistic well-being. She is the Founder & CEO of L.Y.F.E. with Nikki, LLC, a company that focuses on functional strength training, Reiki and sound healing, and nutrition coaching. Nikki is also a Performance Coach at Kollektive, recognized as the top gym in America by Men's Health Magazine. In this role, she develops and implements fitness programs for a diverse clientele, leads the yoga and sound healing program, fostering a holistic approach to wellness. Prior to her time at the Kollektive, she was the Lead Instructor & Specialty Programming at Echelon Fitness Multimedia. In this role she designed and delivered specialized fitness programs and developed innovative programming strategies that significantly increased client engagement and retention, conducting live and on-demand fitness classes for a global audience on high-tech platforms like the Echelon mirror and studio. Her diverse skill set is backed by numerous certifications, including the National Academy of Sports Medicine – Certified Personal Trainer, National Strength & Conditioning Association, Pain-Free Performance Training Specialist, Resistance Training Specialist, Trunk & Spine, Lower & Upper Extremity, and Functional Range Systems – FRC Mobility Specialist.

**Lacy Wolff & Vanessa Frost – The Healing Power of Breath**

Lacy Wolff currently serves as the Coordinator for Statewide Wellbeing Initiatives at the Employees Retirement System of Texas where she oversees wellness initiatives for close to 200 state agencies and higher education institutions across the state of Texas. In 2003, after graduating from Texas A&M Lacy and her husband moved to Europe to support the US Army. From 2009-2014 while in Vicenza, Italy, she served as the director of an Army Wellness Center, a clinic that focused on performance enhancement and behavior coaching for Airborne Infantry soldiers. Lacy left her work for the army to return to her home state of Texas to train State Troopers at the DPS Training Academy. During her time at DPS, she helped build the 6-week DPS Fitness Institute, the fitness component of the Leadership Command College, and a statewide resilience program. Lacy has served as a subject matter expert of the FBINAA Officer Safety & Wellness Committee since 2015 and helped develop the Comprehensive Officer Resilience Program that has been facilitated both nationally and internationally. Lacy continues to serve and train first responders as an instructor through ILEA, LEMIT, and the FBINAA Officer Safety & Wellness Committee, and the Pflugerville Police Department. Lacy holds her Certified Exercise Physiologist Certification through the American College of Sports Medicine, Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialist through the National Association of Sports Medicine, and has her Yoga for First Responders certification. Vanessa Frost-Piedrahita currently serves as the Health & Fitness Coordinator for the Pflugerville Fire Department. Since 2016, she has overseen all aspects of health and performance for the department's active firefighters and multiple academies. She focuses on balancing health and performance for tactical personnel through movement quality, evidence based practices, and realistic approaches. Prior to coaching the fire service, Vanessa was a strength & conditioning coach for Southern Illinois University. Vanessa received her Masters of Science in Education (Kinesiology) from Southern Illinois University in 2015 and a Bachelor of Science (Biological Sciences) from Southern Illinois University in 2013. She is a certified strength and conditioning specialist with distinction through the National Strength and Conditioning Association, as well as a registered strength and conditioning coach (CSCS\*D RSCC). Vanessa also holds credentials from The Ready State, USA Weightlifting, Brianna Battles Pregnancy & Postpartum Athleticism, Master Resilience Training from USAF, and Crossfit.