

Dear future Partner,

Thank you for stepping up to the challenge of helping to fulfill the mission of Operation RSF to decrease the impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) through physical activity and exercise. This mission cannot be accomplished without the support of gyms, coaches, professionals, and trainers willing to step up and commit to helping those dealing with PTSD to take control.

As a partner of Operation RSF we have five simple yet powerful expectations in helping to change the life of someone dealing with PTSD.

Expectation 1: ACCOUNTABILITY. We look to build accountability through relationships. You can help the individual remain consistent and resilient by getting to know them and letting them know they are welcome and expected at the gym. A simple phrase such as, “See you tomorrow!” can have a huge impact on an individual who might be feeling like an anchor or drain to those around them.

The 4-Week Challenge, which many individuals start with, requires them to sign and have a sponsor sign their pledge. We have seen a lot of success when coaches take an active role and sign as sponsor. It allows them an opportunity to build relationships, get tied in, and remind the individual of their commitment while being able to answer any questions relating to working out.

Expectation 2: ENCOURAGEMENT / MOTIVATION. The main focus of Operation RSF is to fill the gap from the point of commitment until the benefits of physical activity can be experienced by the individual. We call this, “From the Couch to the Habit.” Most research has shown a lasting impact on symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, and depression around 3 weeks of consistent physical activity. During this period, we look to an outside source of motivation that hopefully leads to the individual enjoying the activities and turning more to intrinsic motivation.

This can be different for everyone, and during this period, individuals might be fighting the desire to stay in bed all day or to isolate from everyone. A text reminder or building relationships in the gym can help the individual overcome the desire to stay in and away from everyone.

Expectation 3: COMMUNITY. Community is such a vital part of human existence that it must be initially intentional to help introduce them to the community. Within a community, we can find purpose, identity, protection, and support. Having strong ties to a community can also create greater intrinsic motivation for individuals, which can help them persevere through the initial difficult weeks of the program.

Suppose you have veterans or individuals who played competitive sports. In that case, they might be in a situation where they feel as if they are not connected to a community/tribe, which can severely impact their identity and purpose. Introduce them to other members at your gym/club and get them tied in with local events.

Expectation 4: BE A LIGHT TO YOUR COMMUNITY. Reach your community through engagement. Time and again, it has been proven that the greatest way to create change is through relationships. We expect partnering gyms and coaches to be active in reaching their

communities, having difficult conversations, and sharing research about the benefits of physical activity for mental health. We hope that through relationships and education, people will see going to a mental health professional for a mental health concern as common and accepted as visiting a physical therapist for a torn ACL.

Expectation 5: **BUILD YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK.** Find local LICENSED mental health professionals whom you can build a relationship with. When you spot red flags in your athletes, it is better to be able to refer them to someone you trust and whom you have established a relationship with.

NOT an Expectation 1: We do **NOT** expect you to give away free memberships. We see the memberships as an investment into themselves, which can help increase perseverance of attendance. Putting a monetary value on their activities can increase drive and motivation as the importance of the activity is increased.

We firmly believe in working as a team, and as such, we strive to give as much support as possible to our partners. We have recently started a slack channel for partners and certified coaches to discuss, share ideas, and read the latest research. We also include our partners on an interactive map on our website, which allows participants in the 4/10-Week Challenges to find the nearest partnering gym to get the support they need as they begin their journey.

What does the future of Operation RSF look like? We have plans to hold an annual seminar for partners that will include subject matter experts on the impact of exercise and mental health and open up opportunities to network and work out with other coaches/gym owners who support the mission.

The last point I would like to make is to remember your purpose. We are here for them. We are not here to pat ourselves on the back for doing something good or because we are going above and beyond a normal coach/gym. We are committing to helping someone, who is suffering, take back control of their life by sharing our passion for physical fitness and exercise. We are committed to working hard, building relationships, and stepping out of our comfort zone to help others live better lives.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for stepping up to the plate and becoming a partner on our uphill journey. Together we can change lives for the better and hopefully leave the world better than how we found it.

Very Respectfully,

Tyler W. Meade
CEO
Operation RSF, Inc.

Why the 4-Week Challenge?

Within a simple document, we can provide a personal challenge, external support, and a consistent reminder of the purpose of their pursuit. Many individuals we have worked with come from competitive sports or military backgrounds; both communities strive for competition and accomplishing goals. They excel in the face of challenges.

The challenge is more than a commitment to the self; it will help increase the participant's intrinsic motivation to follow through. ORSF's sole purpose with the challenge is for the individual to remain consistently physically active long enough to experience the benefits of physical activity in decreasing the severity of their symptoms, allowing them to work through the underlying causes. These challenges aren't magical fixes that make all problems go away; they give back power and control to the participant, but everyone is different and walks a different journey.

The three central pillars of Operation RSF are an internal and external application for the individual.

Accountability:

- *Internal:* They have a commitment, which they signed and have a sponsor sign. They write their motivation for starting as a reminder to keep them focused.
- *External:* The gym/coach/sponsor they team up with for the 4-Week Challenge helps by building a relationship and helping the individual to remain resilient and persistent in following through.

Encouragement/Motivation:

- *Internal:* The reminder of their initial motivation to start can be a consistent foundation of drive on the most challenging days. As they grow, gain strength, and cover more distance, they will also gain self-efficacy, confidence, and intrinsic motivation to continue pursuing their goals.
- *External:* The gym/coach/sponsor can help motivate the individual through conversations, text messages, or joining them for workouts. Something as simple as letting someone know you are excited to work out with them the following day can give them a boost of motivation to show up.

Community:

- *Internal:* Communicating honestly about oneself, even to oneself. The power of exercise can force individuals to conquer challenges that can help build momentum to work through other situations in life. We hope it also opens up opportunities for some individuals to work through issues they might have held back for a long time.
- *External:* The gym/coach/sponsor can introduce the individual to the community, and events, in the gym and the local area involving physical activity. This is a new opportunity for the individual to find their 'tribe', which may be something that has been missing from their lives since leaving competitive sports or the military.

What happens after the 4-Week Challenge is over?

We recommend continuing their journey towards a physical goal (race, competition, or event) or just continuing to live a physically active lifestyle to focus on the physical and mental health benefits of being physically active. Research has shown that the mental health benefits experienced from physical activity can begin to reverse as soon as 1-month after ceasing physical activities. We hope they continue their journey and become active members of your community.

Operation RSF also offers a 10-Week Challenge to follow the 4-Week Challenge, which concludes with accomplishing a difficult task (e.g., a race, a challenging hiking trail, mastering a new skill). The 10-Week Challenge is meant to transition the individual into a life-long habit of being physically active and a member of your gym/fitness community.

After the 10-Week Challenge, if the athlete is ready for it, having them train (under your mentorship) to become an accountability partner is an excellent way to take ownership of the gym and its outreach while sharing their own experiences.

What are the benefits of being a partner?

The primary benefit is having an opportunity to change someone's life for the better. We understand that you are running a business, and your time is precious. We work hard to support our partners as they support our mission.

Currently, the benefits for our partners are:

- Your business will be listed on our website's interactive map displaying your location, business information, and business contact information to help participants of the mission find a partnering gym in their location.
- We will repost/share information regarding any significant functions your business is holding/supporting if they relate to athletic competitions, mental health awareness, or opportunities for individuals taking on an Operation RSF challenge to participate. We also like to highlight partnering gyms for being awesome, so please tag @operationRSF in your posts, so we don't miss them.
- A monthly newsletter is sent out every month ONLY to partners from the CEO. We include summaries of recent peer-reviewed studies and methods for applying the research to your business.
- If you need research about a topic relating to physical activity and mental health, our research and development team will gladly do the leg work and develop the products you need to reach your community. Once we research and build your product, give us the final okay, and we will have the items shipped to your gym or the final digital versions emailed to you. (Please provide enough lead time to research and create the things you need, as the R&D department is comprised of all volunteers).

We have big plans for the future as Operation RSF continues to grow. We want to find ways to educate our partners on the latest research, give them the tools needed to succeed, and help them make a lasting impact on their communities. Take a moment to reflect on your willingness to

support and commit to the mission of Operation RSF. After taking time to reflect, if you are interested in becoming a partner, please fill out the information on the following page and e-mail the completed form, along with a digital copy of your logo, to Tyler (tyler@operationrsf.org).

Please note in your e-mail when the best time would be to get ahold of you for a short phone interview relating to the partnership which will allow our CEO to personally welcome you and to answer any of your questions.

Thank you!

Partnership Commitment Sign-up Form

Thank you for being so willing to join Operation RSF in our mission to help fill the gap from the sedentary life to the active life by using exercise to combat the symptoms of PTSD. We use a 4-Week Challenge, a 10-Week Challenge, coaching courses, and a network of partnering gyms/coaches to help accomplish our mission.

The 4-Week Challenge is an individual's commitment to be active for a minimum of 45 minutes a day, 3 days a week, for 4 weeks. It requires the individual to sign the personal bond and have a sponsor, who commits to holding the individual accountable, sign the bond. We recommend and have seen success when coaches are the sponsor signing the bond, which allows the coach to be a constant supporter throughout the entire journey while also being able to answer fitness-related questions.

The minimum requirements we expect our partners to fulfill include:

1. **Accountability** – Have a way to track the individual's attendance or activity, making sure they meet the requirements of the 4-Week Challenge, which has been based on research on the impact of exercise on the symptoms of PTSD.
2. **Encourage/Motivate** – While getting to know the individual, help to encourage and motivate them during their journey. A phrase such as "I will see you tomorrow" can go a long way to let them know they are expected and welcome at the gym. Overcoming their symptoms can be difficult, but it can be more accessible when they have the support and encouragement to persevere.
3. **Build Community** – Introduce the individual to the gym or local community. Often, individuals leaving competitive sports or the military struggle to find a connection after leaving their 'tribe.' Becoming part of a community can help build purpose in their training and has been shown to increase the quality of life.
4. **Be a Light to Your Community** – We expect you to use your relationships within your local community to spread the word on the research and science relating to mental health to combat the stigmas acting as hurdles and barriers to people in need. We also expect you to use your relationships within your local community to help increase the health and wellness of those around you through your passion for physical fitness. Partnering gyms must host at least one outreach event a year focusing on mental health.

Any other steps you decide to take beyond the above requirements are yours. We do NOT require you to give free memberships or discounts for those taking part in challenges.

Please note that now that the certification program is officially released, it will be **REQUIRED** of all partnering gyms to complete the certification course and receive their certification to maintain partnership status. The certification course is intended to give you a foundation of knowledge on neurophysiology, psychology, trauma-based disorders, how to spot red flags, relationship building, and building a mental health support network in your community.

If you have questions about partnering or the certification program, please e-mail tyler@operationrsf.org.

Contact Information:

The following information is used only for our interactive map on our website, which allows individuals looking to take part to find a partnering gym close to them.

Business Name:

Business Full Address:

Business Phone:

Business e-mail:

Business Website URL:

Business Instagram:

Newsletter information: *The following information is used only for our Partnership newsletter, which is mailed out monthly.*

Point of Contact first and last name:

Point of contact e-mail:

By typing your name, and date, you are certifying that the above information is correct and that you commit to the above partnership requirements of Operation RSF.

Name (type):

Date:

Please include a logo we can use when updating our site/social media. E-mail the completed form to tyler@operationrsf.org