

YOGA NIDRA

THE POWER OF YOGIC SLEEP

THE EBOOK



WHAT IS YOGA NIDRA?

Yoga nidra involves the gradual implementation of certain practices that lead to a deep state of conscious sleep.

To put it simply, yoga nidra is “the sleep of the yogi.”

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Yoga nidra has grown in popularity due to its wide range of benefits and its ease of use. It's accessible to anyone regardless of physical condition, and there are many different styles to choose from. If you're interested in a more traditional practice, you might choose the yoga nidra style taught by Swami Rama. Or if you're interested in a more secular, Westernized approach, you might pick iRest.

No matter what type you're comfortable with, they all have one thing in common—they're done while lying down. Once lying down, you'll be instructed to pass through stages of relaxation while keeping your mind awake and aware.

In some styles, you will be asked merely to observe your thoughts, in others, to direct your thoughts as you head toward a state of being that's untouched by the stresses of life.

When practicing yoga nidra, you will be focused on the here and now, allowing your inner wisdom to emerge and your stress to melt away. Awaken and simultaneously relax your mind and body with yoga nidra.

Reading through this guide, you'll learn why you should begin your yoga nidra practice and how to get started.

Swami Rama showcased his mastery of yoga nidra at the Menninger Clinic by deliberately controlling his bodily processes under laboratory conditions. In this study, he produced delta brain waves (the brain waves associated with deep sleep) for 25 minutes while appearing to be asleep, but he could remember almost everything said around him during that time. He also was able to purposefully stop his pulse for seventeen seconds.



YOGA NIDRA AND SLEEP

Yoga nidra and sleep are closely entwined. By understanding the benefits of sleep, you'll begin to understand how yoga nidra can impact your life.

Sleep must be useful. After all, the average human spends 26 years of their lives sleeping. While all of us sleep, most of us have no idea why.

William C. Dement, founder of Stanford University's Sleep Research Center, who researched sleep for 50 years, was asked the reason why people sleep. He answered, "As far as I know, the only reason we need to sleep that is really, really solid is because we get sleepy."

However, scientists do have a few theories about why we sleep...

Sleep could be for restoration. We know sleep accelerates wound healing and supports the immune system.

Or it could be to support brain functioning. When we're sleep deprived, it's difficult to process memories. Our brains are constantly sorting through memories and will process them differently depending on what stage of sleep we're in.

There may not be a current consensus on why we sleep, but we do know how sleep benefits us.

Sleep helps our wounds to heal, improves memory, boosts the immune system, manages pain, and lowers stress. The same healing power is found in yoga nidra, with added benefits. When you're practicing yoga nidra, your body will relax, but your mind will also be awake and one-pointed as it is in meditation.



Sleep is so important that all animals need to sleep. Yes, even fish! You might see fish swimming all through the day, but they're actually sleeping sometimes. They can turn off one side of their brain to sleep while keeping the other side conscious.



THE
BENEFITS
OF YOGA NIDRA



1 PROBLEM SOLVING

Sometimes the answers to our most pressing questions are hidden in our unconscious. Yoga nidra gives us the gift of accessing buried thoughts and delivering them to the conscious mind.

2 IMPROVED MEMORY

While their mind is engaged during yogic sleep, some yogis will play a recording of material they'd like to learn. With yoga nidra, the mind will be fully aware to absorb the teachings.

3 ACCESSIBILITY

It doesn't matter what body type you have or how old you are, yoga nidra can be done by anyone. All it requires is that you can lie down and be guided into a conscious yet deep sleep.

4 THERAPY

Yoga nidra is being used to treat those suffering from trauma and addictions. It's used to calm, refresh, and bring relief to those who may otherwise be unable to relax.



EASE OF USE

Even if you fall asleep, there's no way you can do yoga nidra wrong. In fact, yoga nidra can help insomniacs get their needed rest. It's as easy as allowing the natural stages of relaxation to take over.

CREATIVITY

Some of the greatest works of art have been inspired by the unconscious mind. Yoga nidra allows us to tap into that creative center and pull it into the conscious world.

HEALING

The relaxing aspects of yoga nidra can strengthen your immune system and reduce stress.¹ Decreasing stress leads to better overall health.²

UNDERSTANDING

Swami Rama taught that yoga nidra supports and strengthens meditation. Not only does yoga nidra help you understand yourself better, but it also helps you understand your meditative practice better as well.

¹ Segerstrom, Suzanne C., and Gregory E. Miller. "Psychological Stress and the Human Immune System: A Meta-Analytic Study of 30 Years of Inquiry." *Psychological Bulletin* 130.4 (2004): 601-630. PMC. Web. 6 Feb. 2017.

² Schneiderman, Neil, Gail Ironson, and Scott D. Siegel. "Stress and Health: Psychological, Behavioral, and Biological Determinants." *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 1 (2005): 607-628. PMC. Web. 6 Feb. 2017.



THE
STAGES
OF YOGA NIDRA



ABOUT THE STAGES

OF YOGA NIDRA

Western thought emphasizes three human states: physical, mental, and energetic. Traditionally, yoga nidra emphasizes seven sheaths (or Sanskrit: kosha, meaning body) with a stage focusing on each.

During your yoga nidra practice, you'll pass through one sheath to the next, awakening your inner wisdom and discarding unnecessary stress as you're guided to your natural state of happiness (sahaj), a changeless part of yourself.

Before yoga nidra, our minds are pointed in all directions. We're distracted by our surroundings, instead of focusing our awareness. As you begin your practice, you should set an intention.

This intention should be set in the present and be stated as a positive affirmation, no matter if it is true right now or something you are hoping for in the future. For example, rather than saying, "I want to be more compassionate," your intention might be "Compassion is my true nature" or "I am compassion itself." Focus on the now.

Then, you can move along through each stage listed on the following pages.

These stages will give you an understanding of the practice, but to fully immerse yourself in the experience, especially if this is your first time, you should use guided audio or a teacher. Recommended resources can be found at the end of this guide.



1

PHYSICAL BODY

Annamaya Kosha | AWARENESS OF SENSATION ³

In this stage, observe the sensations of the physical body. Listen to feedback from your body and become more aware as you send your focus first to the head, then to the shoulders, arms, and down to the feet. Become aware of your body resting on the ground and allow all sensations to emerge without impression or repression.

2

ENERGY BODY

Pranamaya Kosha | AWARENESS OF BREATH & ENERGY

Your focus will become more subtle as you move through each stage. In the energy body stage, you'll count during each breath. When distracted, recount, until your mind becomes attuned to the breath, the life force of the body.

³ Miller, Richard. Yoga Nidra: A Meditative Practice for Deep Relaxation and Healing. Boulder: Sounds True, 2005. 38. Print.



3 EMOTIONAL BODY

Manomaya Kosha | AWARENESS OF FEELINGS & EMOTION

Deep emotions will arise as you let the body relax. Allow these emotions to wash over you while keeping yourself focused on each feeling, without judgment. Then, open yourself to experiencing opposite emotions like happiness and sadness. Contemplate how one value would not exist without the other, how each helps define the other's meaning.

4 BODY OF INTELLECT

Vijnanamaya Kosha | AWARENESS OF THOUGHTS, BELIEFS & IMAGES

Naturally, as you embrace opposites, images and thoughts will sprout into your consciousness. As in the emotional body, these images might be opposites. These could be thoughts that are part of your larger belief systems or new thoughts or beliefs that you've never imagined before. This is all okay, and all are welcome.



5 BODY OF JOY

Anandamaya Kosha | AWARENESS OF DESIRE, PLEASURE & JOY

Welcoming opposites will eventually lead to joy. You'll learn that joy is not dependent on anything. It's a natural state of being that becomes exposed with pinpoint precision in yoga nidra. When pleasure emerges, focus on it and contemplate how this is your natural state of being once all of life's daily distractions have been removed.

6 BODY OF EGO/I

Asmitamaya Kosha | AWARENESS OF THE EGO

In this state, you'll turn your awareness outside of yourself. You'll have a unique perspective without the ego's influence. Existential contemplations—for example, of the nature of being—appear in this stage. Here, you'll investigate what “I” truly means.



7 NATURAL STATE

Sahaj | AWARENESS OF THE CHANGELESS BEING

This is the final state. The changeless Being awakens inside of you, and you observe Being as something expressed throughout all life. Richard Miller, in his book Yoga Nidra, wrote, “Awakening from the dream of ‘me’ reveals that everything is an expression of nondual Being. Just as the facets of a diamond are not separate from the diamond, everything we see, touch, taste, hear, smell, and think is a facet of Unity.”





WHAT IS iREST

iRest is a powerful style of yoga nidra that takes a more secular, Westernized approach. iRest was created by Richard Miller, PhD, a clinical psychologist, author, researcher, and yogic scholar.

Since it is being used to treat soldiers suffering from PTSD, the stripping of all religious-sounding terms was necessary to conform to military standards. In 2010, the US Army Surgeon General and the Defense Centers of Excellence endorsed iRest as a complementary and alternative medicine.

Even if you're not suffering from trauma, you can benefit from iRest.

It's being used in hospitals and schools and is useful to anyone interested in their personal development and well-being. Molly Birkholm, a teacher of iRest, calls it a practice of "profound welcoming" and "a gentle guide through the process of being human."

iRest is about uncovering the deep, untouched space of wholeness and stillness within. This part of you doesn't need to be created—it's already there, a place untouched by the stresses of life. Uncovering this

piece of yourself isn't difficult. Your iRest teacher can guide you there.

Like traditional forms of yoga nidra, iRest has stages that you'll pass through as an inner, unchanging part of yourself emerges.

LEARN MORE WITH THE
iREST YOGA NIDRA
GUIDED MEDITATION
with Molly Birkholm

Included in the workshop is a 45-minute guided yoga nidra to help you with your practice.

ALL WORKSHOPS ARE FREE WITH A Yoga International Digital Membership

PREPARING WITH GENTLE MOVEMENT

These simple movements will help you relax before you attempt your yoga nidra practice. All steps should be done gently, without tensing harshly.





- 1 Stand with feet hip-width apart, make fists, and swing your arms forward and back.



- 2 Keep swinging your arms, but now also bend the elbows when swinging back, like you are punching the air.



3



4



3

Swing both arms horizontally in different directions like a scissor in front of you. As you continue, soften your upper chest while keeping your shoulder blades open.

4

Move your feet slightly farther apart; then, keeping your hands in light fists, twist from side to side. As you twist to one side, let the opposite heel lift off of the floor.



5



6



5 Step your feet closer together again, and raise your arms out to the side and up overhead. Interlace your fingers, turn the palms up, and then press the heels of the hands toward the sky for three breaths. Release your hands and slowly drop your arms back down to your side. Repeat a few times.

6 Lean over with your hands resting above your knees. Exhale as you squeeze your navel toward your spine. Inhale as you release the pressure around your navel. Do this seven times.



7



7

March in place by lifting your knees toward your navel gently.

8



8

With your knees and hands on the ground, take your right leg to the side and lift it. Raise it behind you, and then bring it down. Do the same with your left leg.



9



9

Return to standing with arms swaying.
Slowly cool down until naturally
stopping.



STARTING YOUR YOGA NIDRA PRACTICE

YOGA NIDRA RESOURCES



CERTIFIED COURSE OFFER

ROLF SOVIK'S 7-HOUR YOGA NIDRA

Comprehensive Video Training & Guided Audio Yoga Nidra Practice

IN THIS DIGITAL COURSE, YOU'LL LEARN

- The theory and guided practice of the five steps of yoga nidra
- A look at sleep, the stages of sleep, and the associated brainwaves
- Helpful tips to stay awake while moving through relaxation toward deep sleep
- The short method of yoga nidra - the 10-minute power nap



START HERE

iREST WORKSHOP

WITH MOLLY BIRKHOLM

AVAILABLE FOR FREE WITH A
Yoga International Digital Membership

IN THIS DIGITAL COURSE, YOU'LL LEARN

- A complete breakdown of the iRest practice.
- How iRest can help those with trauma or PTSD
- How to relax the body and awaken the mind with a long guided meditation
- An easy, effective practice to bring your whole , unchanged self to focus

INCLUDES GUIDED VIDEO PRACTICE

START HERE