
Rest, Reset, Manifest

The Practice of Yoga Nidra

By Michelle Dalbec, e-RYT 500



Introduction

Yoga nidra is a guided deep relaxation. In Sanskrit the word “nidra” means sleep and the practice is often referred to as Yogic Sleep. In yoga nidra, the practitioner not only enjoys the complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation but also gets to explore the immense capacity hidden in the deeper layers of the subconscious and unconscious mind. In normal sleep, consciousness is absent and the unconscious is in charge. In yoga nidra the conscious mind directs the unconscious mind to relax. In deep relaxation the state of the mind is in between sleep and wakefulness and it is many times more receptive than in a wakeful state. Yoga nidra is an ‘alert-sleep’ where all the burden, stress, strain, and anxiety are released, to attain a more blissful state of awareness. This relaxation is much more effective than ordinary sleep. Yoga nidra is a key to penetrating the untapped territory of the mind and training the mind to access the limitless powers of the subconscious and unconscious, tapping into the deeper layers of the mind. In an awoken- state, while aware of all senses ... physical body, energy level, thoughts, and emotions ... receptivity is lower than while in the deep state of relaxation. When the senses are withdrawn receptivity is much greater. In yoga nidra, being in that ‘resting-conscious’ state enables nurturing a great intention, inspiring the higher self, and enjoying the vitality of life. Yoga nidra offers the power to influence the nature of the mind, by withdrawing it from the outer world, where between deep sleep and being fully awake, any impressions planted at that time grow and enrich life.

Most people think that relaxation is very simple, just lay down, close your eyes, and go to bed assuming they’ll be rejuvenated in the morning. But unless tension and stress have been released there cannot be complete relaxation. Tension and stress tend to be held in every layer: muscular, emotional and mental. Yoga nidra is highly beneficial due to its systematic way of relaxing the body, mind and emotions. Bad habits, tension and stress are created in part due to a lack of awareness of the inner world. Even while

sleeping, worries and thoughts revolve continuously in the mind, resulting in waking up feeling exhausted. That's exactly where yoga nidra helps, it is the scientific method to remove all these tensions. A single hour of yoga nidra is as restful and refreshing as four hours of conventional sleep.

Progressive muscle relaxation, conscious breathing, creative visualization, and guided imagery techniques are effective methods that are incorporated into this practice of deep relaxation. However setting a resolve or intention is probably the most powerful and valuable technique that is unique to this practice. It has been said to be "the secret to total transformation".

Part of each yoga nidra practice includes a time to set a sankalpa, Sanskrit for resolve or intention. Its purpose is creation, specifically to become something or to create something in life, and has the potential to reshape habits and beliefs, giving positive new direction to life. Sankalpas are stated in simple, positive language, contained within one sentence, made in the first person, and in the present tense as if it is already happening. They are best set when not intellectually active, but when the mind is calm and quiet. Imagine it is a seed, which is created and then sown in the fertile soil of the mind. When the mind is clear the sankalpa grows well. Setting a sankalpa at the beginning of practice is like sowing the seed and repeating it at the end is like irrigating it. When there is deep trust and belief in a sankalpa and it is practiced regularly, this potent seed will eventually manifest itself again and again at a conscious level and bring about the desired transformations in life.

The purpose of a sankalpa is not to fulfill ego driven desires. A sankalpa should help support the alignment and understanding about one's true purpose and meaning in life.

Yoga Nidra can be practiced at any time of the day, except right after a meal, and 15-45 minutes is all the time you need to set aside.

It can be done in savasana pose which is simply lying on your back with your legs separated a comfortable distance from each other and your arms separated a comfortable distance from the sides of your body. You can lie on your side if you are pregnant, or tend to snore or cough when you lie on

your back. Make sure your body feels supported, comfortable and **warm**. If you choose Savasana pose, place pillows under your knees, a folded towel or blanket for cushioning under your head rather than a pillow, a blanket or two covering your entire body and an eye pillow to help block out light and relax the muscles of your face. If you choose to lie on your side, place a pillow between your knees, a pillow behind your back and one in front of your chest to help stabilize you, a pillow under your head, a blanket or two covering your entire body and a covering for your eyes to block out light. Make sure to practice in a quiet place where you will not be interrupted or disturbed.

The benefits of yoga nidra are immense. Yoga Nidra is highly effective at:

- lowers high blood pressure and cholesterol levels,
- strengthens the immune system
- balances and strengthens the endocrine system
- stabilizes the mind and emotions
- revitalizes and recharges essential energy
- improves the quality of sleep
- enhances the ability to focus and concentrate
- reduces stress
- harmonizes the two hemispheres of the brain
- balances between the sympathetic (fight or flight) and parasympathetic (the relaxation response) nervous systems
- stimulates different parts of the brain and much, much more.

The goal is to stay awake and alert during the practice but if you fall asleep you will still receive the benefits. There is little effort in this practice, instead of trying to "do" what the guide is telling you, simply listen to the guide and just let it happen. Try to let go of all "doing" and enter into a state of "being."

Deep resting and happy manifesting