

The Art of Yoga Nidra

Yoga Nidra of Swami Satyananda Saraswati

**A calm mind is the investment for success.
If you know how to free yourself of tension
you know how to solve your problems in life.**

The rishis who first formulated the practice were not concerned with the complexities of modern life.

They devised yoga nidra as a direct pathway for the attainment of self-realization.

Within the last century or two, diseases have sprung up with new dimensions and manifestations.

While Medical science has put an end to the great plagues of the past, there is a new epidemic of tension or stress-related disorders often caused by our inability to adapt to the highly competitive pace of modern life. Do you text while driving?

Yoga nidra is a powerful tension relieving technique in which you can learn to relax consciously. It can be used as a steppingstone to greater awareness, efficiency and achievement in life.

In yoga nidra, sleep is not regarded as relaxation nor is collapsing in an easy chair with a Starbucks coffee while reading a newspaper - that is a considered sensory diversion!

True relaxation is actually an experience beyond this for total relaxation you must remain aware, sometimes referred to as psychic sleep or inner awareness. It is a threshold state between sleep and wakefulness, contact with the subconscious and unconscious dimensions occurs spontaneously. A dynamic sleep state!

Worries originate in the attempt to will a stressful situation away. When we are sad, angry or irritated we often attribute that condition of the mind to some superficial cause. When it can really be caused by accumulated tensions on the mental plane. All too often, mental tensions are the result of excessive mental activity, like multitasking.

These tensions accumulate in the muscular, emotional and mental systems of the body. Muscular tensions are related to the nervous system and endocrinal imbalances. Emotional tensions often stem from various dualities, such a love/hate, profit/loss success/failure, when these are repressed the tension can become deeply rooted and ordinary sleep or relaxation in not possible.

As the equilibrium of the body, even at rest, becomes increasingly disturbed, a variety of nervous symptoms usually manifest, including insomnia, anxiety and irritability, with further aggravation, physical changes in sensitive or weakened organs can result, such as high blood pressure, intestinal malfunctioning, asthma and hypertension. Sometimes leading to surgical or long-term pharmacological management.

HOW CAN YOGA NIDRA HELP?

Yoga Nidra can be used as a steppingstone to greater awareness, efficiency and achievement in life, it enables a balance of psychic and vital energies.

When one is completely relaxed receptivity to input is greater so it can be used to develop memory, increase knowledge and creativity or even transform one's nature.

It is suggested that the yoga nidra state represents an integrated response by the hypothalamus, the part of the brain serving as the control center of the whole autonomic nervous system. When the hypothalamus receives input from the external environment via the sensory/motor areas of the brain, it also receives information from the more subtle psychic dimensions of existence through various other areas of the brain.

Among other functions the hypothalamus forms a part of the reticular activating system or that part of the brain stem responsible for patterns of sleep, arousal and wakefulness. Practitioners of yoga nidra can then begin to mediate their altered sleeping patterns.

Yoga nidra also appears to work by changing the neurohormonal reactivity to stress, creating somatic conditions opposite to those prompted by sympathetic over stimulus. The organs and systems of the body attain deep physiological rest. As a result body tissues are physiologically braced against stress, becoming less susceptible to its harmful influences.

During yoga nidra the organs and systems of the body attain deep physiological rest and the body's powerful, regenerative mechanisms are set in motion.

There can be a profound experience of muscular, mental and emotional realization.

People seeking relief of long standing symptoms of depression and anxiety who have a daily yoga nidra practice report that not only is it a place to go to for calming relief it is also an effective coping device enhancing their appreciation and experience of life.

Studies at the Menninger Foundation, University of California Medical Center at Davis, Presbyterian University College Hospital, Pittsburg to name a few have reported that yoga nidra can improve the lives of patients in several distinct ways by:

- * Relieving insomnia

- * Maintaining moderate pain outside the field of conscious awareness. Yoga nidra relieves pain by stimulating the pituitary gland to release its own potent pain-suppressing compounds.

- * Provides effective symptomatic relief to depression long standing anxieties, which so often complicate the outlook in chronic disease.

- * Decrease the requirements for analgesic, hypnotic and sedative drugs.

In tantric yoga the ajna chakra is considered to be situated at the top of the spinal column, directly in line with the mid-eyebrow center (bhrumadhya) Using concentration and meditation upon this point (shambhavi mudra), and the practice of visualization in yoga nidra awakens this third eye, which in most people remains closed.

This faculty of awareness, which is awakened in yoga nidra is termed "the inner guru" with this additional dimension of awareness, the yogi has a vision of mysteries of life, which ensures success, even where others inevitably fail.

Where willpower fails, the imagination succeeds.