

Free Yoga Nidra Course

Class One: The Key To Relaxation

Introduction

Yoga nidra is a beginners relaxation technique that allows you to regularly and reliably receive the healing and restorative rest that you so desperately need.

This is a systematic and scientific approach to relaxation and meditation where we use the mind's wandering tendencies to first relax the body with body scan, then calm the breath with breath awareness, then silence the mind with guided visualizations.

Therefore, this form of meditation does not first demand a disciplined or concentrated mind. You don't have to be a meditator to do yoga nidra! You only need to listen to the instructions and follow along, that is it! Gradually over the course of a single session the mind calms down and naturally becomes still and silent of its own accord.

Working With The Mind

If we ask the mind to sit still and be silent, what happens? It revolts! But if we insist that the mind continue moving, first with the body scan, then with breathing practices and finally with visualizations, then eventually it rebels by withdrawing and becoming still and silent. Which is exactly what we wanted in the first place. Therefore, the ego-mind is like a childish polar responder at times, and in yogic forms of meditation we don't fight the mind's tendencies, but we use them in a form of reverse psychology.

Therefore, you don't have to go to battle against your own mind. That will just leave you feeling more tense and exhausted, any way. But we must enroll the assistance of the mind by befriending it, and learning to make yoga nidra and meditation something that is fun and always to be looked forward to!

The Joy Of Meditation

Your meditation practice should always be a joy! A time for you to just be one with yourself and set aside all the various hats, masks and roles we have to play in the world. Yoga nidra is a time to just be with yourself in this present moment. To allow the body to become still, for the breath to become calm and for the mind to become silent. Then you can perceive the perfect bliss of your own true nature within the stillness and silence of the heart.

Relaxation and Awareness

The first two major points of yoga nidra is that it is a method of developing relaxation and awareness. You are learning to deepen your relaxation, and heighten your awareness.

Here is the key for this stage of your practice: From awareness comes relaxation. Just by asking you to become aware of your breath right now, and to feel all the various muscles of relaxation - I don't even need to say the word 'relax', as relaxation is a natural response to awareness.

Therefore, just as there is a correlation between relaxation and awareness, there is also a correlation between tension and a lack of awareness.

We constantly tense various muscles unconsciously throughout the day in response to various external factors giving rise to stress. Some of the muscles remain tensed for much longer than is necessary. There very well may be certain muscles that carry chronic stress and tension in your body all the time, and they also carry the psycho-emotional energy of that stress, as well.

During the first stage of yoga nidra you learn to relax the physical body with the body scan technique. This releases those muscles that experience chronic tension and allow you to experience several minutes of total stillness and perfect physical relaxation. In fact during yoga nidra you can experience deeper physical relaxation than during even sleep because on the simple factor of awareness. With the presence of awareness you can relax much deeper than when unconscious.

Therefore, yoga nidra for sleep is a godsend not just for insomniacs, but for all of us - as it allows you to first achieve total physical relaxation before falling asleep - giving rise to much deeper and better quality rest than usual.

Psycho-emotional Purification

We must mention a word of caution here. Some people experience the release of pent-up psycho-emotional energy during deep relaxation, which can result in anxiety or other disturbing emotions to be felt for the brief moment that they are coming to the surface. This is a natural and expected stage of yoga nidra, and corresponds to the deep psychological purification that is occurring as a result of the deep relaxation brought about by yoga nidra.

When we release those muscles that carry chronic tension we may also release the psycho-emotional energy that was causing the muscles to become tense in the first place. Various repressed thoughts, emotions, memories, desires, fears, etc. may come to the surface during this time.

As a result of doing the body scan technique, and developing heightened awareness of the physical body, you may become aware to various muscles where you habitually and unconsciously hold muscular tension, known as 'clenching'. As a response to fear you may tense the large muscles in the arms and legs, for example. This is known as the 'fight or flight' response. Or in response to shame and guilt you may clench the muscles in the abdomen. Grief may cause habitual tension in the chest, affecting your ability to breath deeply. General stress may cause you to clench the muscles of the shoulders, etc. Everybody is a little different and as a result of prolonged body awareness during yoga nidra you reveal these previously unconscious tendencies to carry tension, and release them.

Most of the time when we do yoga nidra we just experience deep relaxation, serenity and bliss. However, we all have some unresolved matters hidden in the shadows of the psyche that are preventing you from experiencing even deeper relaxation. What is keeping you from knowing perfect relaxation spontaneously? Eventually we must face these repressed thought forms and allow them to express themselves in the light of natural awareness, so that they can be released and you can become free from them.

Everything must come out in the light of conscious awareness, repressing doesn't work!

This inner illumination of the skeletons in the closet of our psyche happens slowly over time. We all have things hidden in the shadows. Painful memories we avoid, relationships we have yet to receive closure on, as well as various fears, anxieties, phobias, etc. that we are repressing. That which we repress just goes on to influence our mood and behaviour unconsciously.

By doing yoga nidra you are giving yourself a safe way to ventilate psycho-emotional steam and to de-stress your body and mind on a regular basis. This improves your health on more ways than can ever be known. Yoga nidra is one of the best preventative forms of therapy.

Yoga nidra gives you a way to resolve the psychological tensions that otherwise just go on to create problems in the form of psychosomatic illnesses and eventually even physical disease. We all desperately need a reliable way to de-stress the body and mind; to experience total physical and mental relaxation - so that you can declutter your heart and become established in that perfect contentment and serenity of your own true nature.

Witness Consciousness

Purification may sound great in theory, but truth is it is a very uncomfortable process. This next point is very important to understand: Whatever you experience during yoga nidra is coming up from within yourself to be understood, healed and integrated into a more holistic version of your self. And with that perspective you

can never have a bad session. Leave all expectations aside when you do yoga nidra, and just be willing to be with yourself and whatever comes up; whether bliss or suffering. What will help you during this stage of karmic purification is a yogic attitude called 'sakshi bhava', which means witness consciousness.

Sakshi bhava is taking the attitude of a third-party witness to your own thoughts and emotions. You observe what you are thinking and feeling from a detached perspective. You remind yourself that these thoughts and feelings are not the real 'you'. Let's explain what we mean by this. Although you have a body, you are not your body. Although you have a mind, you are not your mind. Try to contemplate like this, 'because I can know what I am thinking, and because I can influence and change what I am thinking, that means there is an intelligence beyond the mind'.

That intelligence beyond the mind is the higher Self, the silent observer, the inner seer, the knower and the one experiencing the mind, body and senses. This kind of higher awareness is neutral, it just observes, it just sees, and it simply knows - it never judges nor condemns. If you are judging your thoughts with criticism then that is not coming from higher intelligence, that is just the mind criticizing the mind. Therefore we must learn to simply know what we are feeling, and to know what we are thinking - while we are experiencing it, with a detached higher 'third party' awareness. Our mandate is as Socrates said so many millenia ago, "Know Thyself!"

This kind of higher awareness empowers you to remember that you are not the mind nor its contents, which allows you to dissociate from and diffuse the emotions and dramas of the ego. Then you can allow whatever needs to come up from within to reveal itself in the light of neutral awareness, where you can develop the higher understanding that leads to healing and self growth.

A Means To Enriching Your Life

Awareness is a beautiful thing, and if there is one thing I could have you take from this lecture today, then it would be this: Just become self aware! Self awareness sorts everything out on its own! Just by becoming aware to your mind and emotions they lose power over you. By exposing the disguises of the ego they can no longer fool you. They no longer influence you unconsciously. With this type of detached and neutral higher awareness you can begin to transition from unconscious reactivity to conscious self control!

You don't need to judge, criticize, or condemn yourself. Just know yourself, know what kind of mind you have, know your tendencies and habits, and reveal the various disguises of the ego which are keeping you from experiencing deeper relaxation and the serenity of total peace and inner silence.

Truth is - we create our own obstacles to joy, bliss and ecstasy! Yoga nidra is a means for you remove those obstacles which are preventing you from enjoying life most fully. It is **not only** a means for removing the dross from your heart, but with

yoga nidra you can experience profound levels of healing relaxation, rejuvenation, as well as the supreme self-born joy and eternal bliss that is your own true nature.