

Beinners Yoga Nidra Course

Class Two: Psychological Purification

Multidimensional Beings

Yoga nidra is a means for you to experience total relaxation on the gross, subtle and causal levels of your being. Humans are multidimensional beings and just as we have a physical body, we also have a subtle dimension of our being composed of thought and emotion. Further more, just as we have a conscious mind, we also have a subconscious and even an unconscious mind, as well. Fortunately yoga nidra was developed in a manner that addresses these three dimensions of your being. Therefore, by using yoga nidra you can experience not only physical and mental relaxation, but you can experience the absolute rest of the deep sleep state while awake!

Such total and profound relaxation is achieved sequentially from outer to inner, or from gross to subtle:

First we relax the gross level: The body. Then we relax the subtle level of your being: The breath, as well as the thoughts and emotions. Finally this leads us to experiencing true yoga nidra in the silence of the mind, where you are between waking and dreaming.

Normally we only experience total mental silence during unconsciousness while we are in deep sleep. However, in yoga nidra we learn to stay awake while we enter into the no-mind state so that you can experience that total bliss beyond the mind entirely.

The Structure of Yoga Nidra

This brings us to the structure of yoga nidra, which is the focus of today's class. By understanding the structure of a single session you will have a much better theoretical understanding, which will enrich and empower your personal practice in many ways, much like holding a map and compass will assist anyone on a long journey.

First we seek to relax the gross level your being. In yoga nidra we do this with the body scan technique. By rotating the awareness from the right hand thumb to all the various body parts we are systematically putting the body to rest. This brings about total physical relaxation, and should be enough for most people suffering from insomnia to be able to fall asleep.

In fact sleep is a barrier for entering into the higher stages of meditation, and we must be resolved to stay awake to enter into **the state** of yoga nidra, between waking and dreaming where we rest in the totality of pure consciousness. However, for many beginners- sleep inevitably comes during yoga nidra whether you wanted to fall asleep or not. Don't worry too much when this happens as it is most likely exactly what you need at this moment. After some time yoga nidra will assist you in releasing a lot of the pent-up psycho-emotional baggage that was preventing you from relaxing and staying awake in the first place. With less psychological baggage you will enjoy more serenity, mental clarity and improved energy levels, which empowers you to go deeper in your practice of yoga nidra and meditation.

When we can stay awake after total physical stillness and relaxation then we enter into the second stage of yoga nidra. Let's take a quick step back and be sure we understand the first stage. The first stage was for achieving physical relaxation, that is - the body. We put the body to sleep, while remaining awake. Now the second stage of yoga nidra is for the subtle body and here we are seeking to relax the breath, thoughts, and emotions. This is first done by conscious breathing exercises, then with visualization techniques.

What is the subtle body? It is the inner non manifest mind, emotions and psyche. You cannot see the contents of the psyche anywhere in the brain or nervous system. that is because this part of your being is not on the physical dimension. Sure it may be facilitated by the electrical transmission of brain signals being sent across neural networks, but those neural pathways are not the actual lucid experience of the thought or memory. Therefore, we can understand that the subtle body corresponds to the inner being, which includes the psyche, mind, intellect, ego and emotions.

How do we calm and relax the subtle, psychic and non physical level of our being? The subtle body is intricately connected to the breath. Therefore, by relaxing the breath we relax the mind, as well. And what is the best way to relax the breath? If you remember from your first lecture from class one; from awareness comes relaxation! Therefore just by becoming aware to the breath, it becomes calm, deep and rhythmical.

Just as body scan relaxed the physical body, now conscious breathing exercises help to relax the mind and emotions.

Therefore in the sequence of yoga nidra after body scan you are asked to develop awareness to the natural breath. The various exercises done with the breath are only meant to facilitate total breath awareness, not to alter, modify or change the breath in any way. This is not pranayama! Pranayama means techniques to consciously alter the breath in order to influence the brain and nervous system. In yoga nidra we are not trying to alter, modify or change the breath - only to heighten our sensitivity and awareness to it!

After breath awareness then we move on to either polar opposite sensations or we can go straight into the visualization sequence. These are both for the subtle body as well. However the second half of the visualization sequence culminates in total silence, which is for the third body and the unconscious mind. We will talk more about that in the next class, class three.

Purifying The Subconscious Mind

Let us fully understand what your role is during all of this as the meditator. All as you have to do is keep following along with the verbal instructions of the facilitator. When the visualization stage begins try to see the items being described with vivid clarity. As the visualization sequence progresses you should become aware to any spontaneous reactions you have to the items being named. Some items listed may not provoke any reaction, but you may find yourself suddenly reliving a past memory when some other item is named.

There are two ways we can respond to the items mentioned during the visualization stage. Either via direct association or via abstract association. Direct association is easy enough to understand: It is when you visualize the object named without any other related thoughts coming to the surface of your mind. There is nothing to do there, just enjoy the mental imagery and continue allowing the mind to relax. However, an abstract association is when you pull up all sorts of related or unrelated thoughts in response to the object named.

Let's use an example: Perhaps when I mention a palm tree you have no response to it and you just see a mental image of a palm tree; perhaps on a peaceful tropical beach. However the person next to you is remembering a family vacation to Florida, the first time they saw a palm tree, and memories of their childhood start to come flooding back. Some repressed emotion may start to surface. The former is direct association (no reaction) and the latter is abstract association (reaction).

It is during the abstract associations that you have the opportunity to learn about yourself, your mental tendencies and patterns, as well as the repressed matter in your psyche that is now coming to surface. This is why sometimes unpleasant things are mentioned during yoga nidra, because they are meant to provoke a response from the listener and giving them a chance to reveal unconscious hangups, repressed memories and other such 'baggage'.

Revealing the previously unconscious matter of the psyche is a form of purification. As you illumine unconscious mental patterns, they are no longer 'unconscious' and lose their power to influence you unconsciously. It is like playing hide and seek with your ego. Once you see their disguise that mask will not fool you any longer.

As the psyche becomes more illumined during this process, not only are you transitioning from unconscious reactivity to conscious self control, but you

experience deeper and deeper states of mental silence, along with greater inner peace and bliss. This is when the real healing can begin.

Developing Self Awareness

Again it is sakshi bhava, or witness consciousness, that helps you through this process of inner purification. You must simply know what you are thinking and feeling while you are experiencing it. Know how the mind reacts to certain items listed during the visualization. Know the various scripts and dialogues that the ego likes to run. Reveal the mental tendencies, repressed thoughts and memories, and all that is coming up from within you with neutral higher self awareness. Do not repress it, but do not indulge in it from the first person narrative either! Just observe this repressed thought form and the emotional energy it carries from a detached third part perspective. As if it is all happening outside of you. As if you are watching a B movie, where you are not able to get totally lost in the drama because of poor acting, or bad plot lines, sub par special effects, etc.

You are giving an audience to your own thought processes as if from outside yourself.

Again, that higher natural awareness does not judge, label or criticize. It just knows. It just sees, and understands. And with that self knowledge you can understand yourself more and can transcend any outdated beliefs, thoughts and behaviors and replace them with more fulfilling ones congruent with your heart.

If you recall from class one; during body scan you developed higher awareness to any thoughts and emotions that came about as a result of muscular tension and/or relaxation. Now you are extending that same awareness to any thoughts and emotions that come to surface as a result of breath awareness and then as a result of the visualizations.

Breath awareness tranquilizes the emotional-mind.

Polar opposite sensations helps to build new neural pathways of total control over your nervous system so you can fully self manage your inner state and even control your own physiological responses to pain, heat, cold, etc.

The visualization sequence is like prodding the mind to see where it is weak and sensitive. Strength is develop just by increasing the intensity of the light of awareness. You don't have to over analyze anything. From higher neutral awareness comes self control. From awareness comes personal power.

In this way, we can understand that the structure of yoga nidra is to lead you from physical relaxation of the body, to subtle relaxation of the mind. When the body and mind are still and silenced, then you experience true relaxation, meaning you experience your own natural inner state of being without any distractions nor

distortions. In stillness and silence you experience that perfect contentment, joy and bliss that is your own true nature.

Becoming Established In Bliss

There is no greater peace and bliss than your own natural state of being free from thought when the mind is perfectly silent. Through yoga nidra you can not only release chronic tension and transcend the negative traits and aspects of your personality, but you can experience your own true nature, free yourself from the binding nature of the ego, and become increasingly more established in that higher awareness of your spiritual truth all the time.

Hari Om