

Introduction to YogaNidra

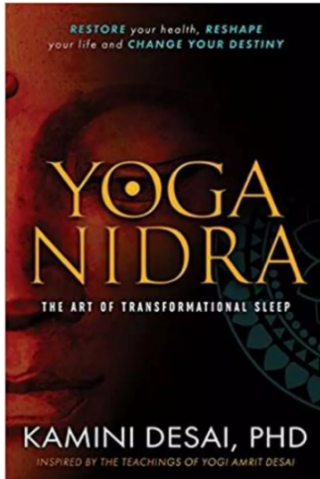
Yogesh Haribhau Kulkarni

Introduction

Introduction to Yoganidra

- ▶ Yoga Nidra (योगनिद्रा) is a deep relaxation technique that:
 - ▶ Relieves stress.
 - ▶ Improves sleep.
 - ▶ Accesses the bliss state (Ananda आनन्द).
- ▶ Composed of series of body, breath, imagination acts to guide into progressive states of relaxation (non-doing)
- ▶ Inspired by the Bihar School of Yoga, this script follows the inward journey through the Koshas.

What is Yoga Nidra ?



– INTRODUCTION –

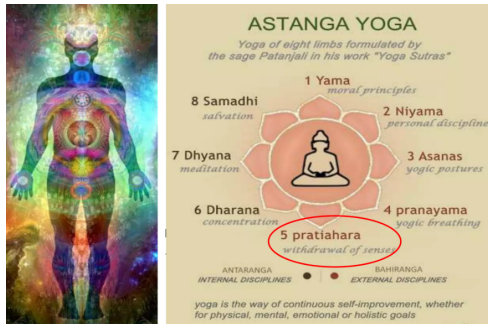
Yoga Nidra: The Art of Non-Doing

Yoga Nidra is one of the least known and most under-appreciated practices of Yoga, yet its potential reach is immense. In our modern society, many of us are accustomed to *doing more to get more*. Even when we want to relax, we ask, “How do I *do* that?” Relaxation doesn’t happen by *doing* more, yet this is how most of us go about it. Yoga Nidra is not about doing more, it is about doing less. Yoga Nidra is about releasing the struggling and striving to get somewhere. It is the art and practice of doing *nothing* to arrive exactly where you want to be.

(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

What is Yoga Nidra ?

Its is Pratyahara प्रत्याहार : Prati प्रति (inside) + ahara आहार (food), ie food to inside, that is, contrary to our attention being always external looking, here we are looking inside. Plus, there is tantra word 'nyasa' न्यास , meanings seating. meaning you put attention at different places.



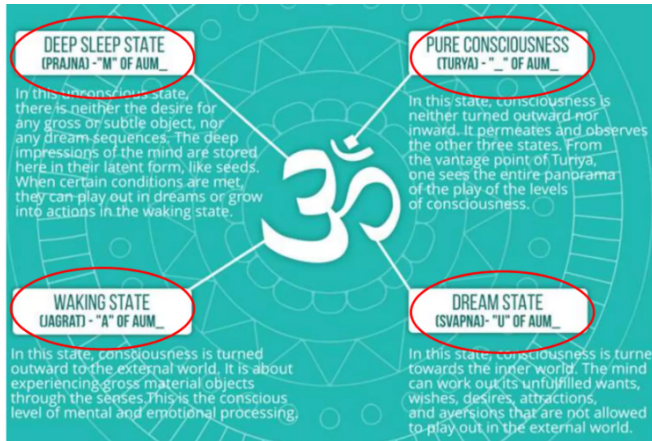
(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

History



(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

Four Stages of Human Consciousness

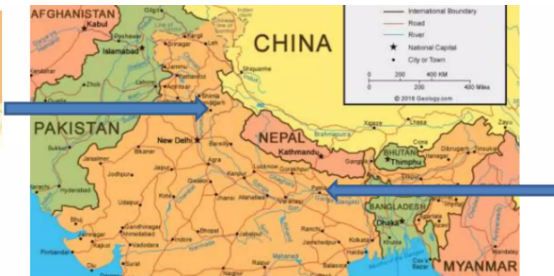


(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

Brain Wave States in Yoga Nidra

- ▶ During Yoga Nidra, consciousness fluctuates between :
 - ▶ Introversion and extroversion states
 - ▶ Alpha and theta wave states
- ▶ The Nidra State :
 - ▶ Located at border between alpha and theta waves
 - ▶ Mind becomes highly receptive
 - ▶ Allows contact with subconscious and unconscious dimensions
 - ▶ Access to dormant potential and hidden solutions

Practitioners



(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

Modern Development

Swami Satyananda Saraswati's Contributions :

- ▶ Systematized Yoga Nidra in the 20th century
- ▶ Founded Bihar School of Yoga
- ▶ Made the practice accessible to modern practitioners
- ▶ Emphasized scientific approach to traditional practice
- ▶ Developed structured methodology for teaching

Research

Richard Miller

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF YOGA THERAPY – No. 21 (2011) 23

Research

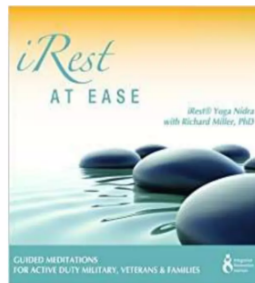
Transforming Trauma: A Qualitative Feasibility Study of Integrative Restoration (iRest) Yoga Nidra on Combat-Related Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

L. Stankovic, MA, RYT

John F. Kennedy University, Pleasant Hill, CA

<https://www.irest.org/users/richard-c-miller>

(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)



Sleep vs Yoga Nidra

Sleep :

- ▶ Unconscious state
- ▶ No awareness
- ▶ Natural occurrence
- ▶ Brain in delta waves

Yoga Nidra (योगनिद्रा) :

- ▶ Conscious relaxation
- ▶ Maintained awareness
- ▶ Guided practice
- ▶ Brain transitions through various wave states
- ▶ One hour equals 4 hours of regular sleep

Meditation vs Yoganidra

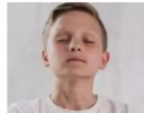
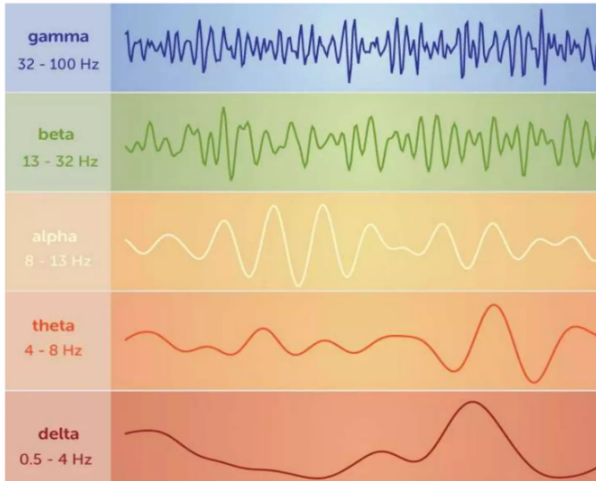
Meditation :

- ▶ Typically done sitting up
- ▶ Focuses on one point of concentration
- ▶ Requires active mental effort
- ▶ May be challenging for beginners

Yoga Nidra (योगनिद्रा) :

- ▶ Done lying down
- ▶ Systematic rotation of awareness
- ▶ Guided relaxation practice
- ▶ Accessible to all skill levels

Science : ECG



(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

Science : ECG

Levels: Parker & Bharti (2013)

- Level 1: Alpha waves and reduced BP
- Level 2: Theta waves and creativity
- Level 3: Theta followed by Delta waves
 - Like NREM sleep, but indl is aware
- Level 4: Simultaneous sleep and awareness
 - Alternates between theta and delta waves (?)

(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

8 Stages of Yoganidra

1. Preparation (Shavasana): Deep breaths in Shavasana (शवासन).
2. Resolve (Sankalpa): Optional positive affirmation (संकल्प).
3. Body Awareness (Rotation): Relax body parts.
4. Breath Awareness: Relaxation through breath.
5. Opposite Sensations: Experience and release emotions.
6. Visualization: Reach the subconscious with imagery.
7. Resolve (Sankalpa): Repeat the Sankalpa again.
8. Exiting: Return awareness to external surroundings.

Key Instructions

- ▶ No movement during Yoganidra.
- ▶ Stay awake, do not fall asleep.
- ▶ Do not think, just follow the instructions.

The Koshas (कोश)

- ▶ Annamaya Kosha (अन्नमयकोश) - Physical Body
- ▶ Pranamaya Kosha (प्राणमयकोश) - Energy Body
- ▶ Manomaya Kosha (मनोमयकोश) - Emotional Body
- ▶ Vijnanamaya Kosha (विज्ञानमयकोश) - Wisdom Body
- ▶ Anandamaya Kosha (आनन्दमयकोश) - Bliss Body

Koshas in Yoganidra

- ▶ Body Awareness (Rotation): Annamayakosha (अन्नमयकोश) - Physical Body : Focus on different body parts (right palm, right arm, legs, back, etc.).
- ▶ Breath Awareness: Pranamayakosha (प्राणमयकोश) - Breath Awareness : Reverse breath count from 27.
- ▶ Opposite Sensations: Manomayakosha (मनोमयकोश) - Emotional Body : Experience opposite sensations (hot/cold, wet/dry).
- ▶ Visualization: Vijnanamayakosha (विज्ञानमयकोश) - Subconscious
Visualization: Visualize calming scenes like deserts, lakes, and waves.

Tips for Practicing Yoganidra

- ▶ Use simple and precise language in the script.
- ▶ Speak in a clear and even tone.
- ▶ Sit comfortably and be still during facilitation.
- ▶ Practice in a warm, comfortable space. Use props (pillows, blankets) to support the body.
- ▶ Remain still, but do not fall asleep.

Important Considerations

- ▶ Consult Healthcare Provider if:
 - ▶ Pregnant or recently post-partum
 - ▶ Have serious medical conditions
 - ▶ Experiencing severe mental health issues
- ▶ Practice Guidelines :
 - ▶ Avoid practice immediately after meals
 - ▶ Ensure comfortable room temperature
 - ▶ Practice at consistent times
 - ▶ Stay awake during the practice

Instructions

Setting Up the Environment

- ▶ **Room Requirements :**
 - ▶ Quiet, peaceful space
 - ▶ Comfortable temperature
 - ▶ Dim lighting
 - ▶ No distractions (phone on silent)
- ▶ **Best Practice Times :**
 - ▶ Not immediately after meals
 - ▶ Early morning or before bed
 - ▶ Consistent practice time

Props and Session Duration

- ▶ Recommended Props :
 - ▶ Yoga mat or comfortable surface
 - ▶ Bolster or pillow under knees
 - ▶ Blanket for warmth
 - ▶ Eye pillow (optional)
- ▶ Session Duration :
 - ▶ Beginners: 20-30 minutes
 - ▶ Experienced: Up to 60 minutes
 - ▶ Regular practice: 1-3 times per week

Preparation

- ▶ Lie in Shavasana (शवासन).
- ▶ Bring your awareness to the space between your body and the earth.
- ▶ Let your body soften and sink into the floor.



(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

Setting the Sankalpa (संकल्प)

- ▶ A positive “I am” statement to guide your Yoganidra practice.
- ▶ Examples :
 - ▶ "I am strong."
 - ▶ "I am peaceful."
 - ▶ "I am the witness."
- ▶ Repeat the Sankalpa 3 times at the start and end of Yoganidra.

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Breath Awareness Techniques

Progressive Breath Work:

- ▶ Place right hand on belly, left hand on chest
- ▶ Observe natural breath pattern
- ▶ Make breath bigger gradually:
 - ▶ Feel belly rise first
 - ▶ Then chest expansion
 - ▶ Hold briefly
 - ▶ Release with gravity
- ▶ Count breaths backwards from 27
- ▶ Visualize breath as golden light

Opposite Sensations

- ▶ Bring awareness to the sensation of heat
- ▶ Feel your whole body becoming warm.
- ▶ Shift awareness to cold. Feel the entire body cooling down.
- ▶ Release both sensations.
- ▶ Similarly: heaviness and lightness, pain and pleasure, love and hate, etc

Guided Imagery

Journey through Nature :

- ▶ Imagine standing in a meadow, surrounded by a lush forest.
- ▶ Feel the warmth of the sun and smell the wildflowers.
- ▶ Walk into the forest, following a path that leads uphill.
- ▶ Reach a cave and discover a lit candle inside.
- ▶ Meditate on the candle's flame, with your Sankalpa inscribed on it.

Exiting the Practice

- ▶ Repeat your Sankalpa 3 times.
- ▶ Bring awareness to the sounds around you.
- ▶ Slowly move and break Shavasana.

Post-Practice Reflection

Journaling Guidelines :

- ▶ Record your experience immediately after practice
- ▶ Note any physical sensations experienced
- ▶ Document emotional states encountered
- ▶ Track progress over time
- ▶ Record any insights or revelations
- ▶ Compare experiences across different sessions

This reflection helps deepen your practice and track your progress.

Best Practices for Teachers

- ▶ Voice and Delivery :
 - ▶ Speak in a soothing, even tone
 - ▶ Maintain consistent pace
 - ▶ Use clear, simple language
 - ▶ Allow adequate pauses
- ▶ Session Management :
 - ▶ Start with shorter sessions (20-30 minutes)
 - ▶ Progress gradually to longer sessions
 - ▶ Always complete all stages
 - ▶ Monitor student comfort

Children's Practice Considerations

- ▶ Session Duration :
 - ▶ Keep sessions shorter (10-15 minutes)
 - ▶ Use age-appropriate language
 - ▶ Include playful visualization
- ▶ Special Elements :
 - ▶ Use simple counting exercises (40 to 1)
 - ▶ Include light visualization exercises
 - ▶ Incorporate gentle encouragement
 - ▶ Allow natural breaks in concentration
- ▶ Closing Practice :
 - ▶ End with positive affirmations
 - ▶ Include sharing of "light" with loved ones
 - ▶ Gentle return to regular awareness

Conclusions

Benefits

- Improves Sleep¹
- Reduces Stress² and improves general well being
- Can help in improving glycemic control in Type 2 DM³
- Improves creativity, enhances memory and learning⁴
- Reduces cognitive and physical symptoms of anxiety⁵

1. Datta K, Tripathi M, Mallick HN. Yoga Nidra: An innovative approach for management of chronic insomnia-A case report. *Sleep Science and Practice*. 2017 Dec;1(1):7.
2. Dwivedi MK, Singh SK. Yoga Nidra as a stress management intervention strategy. *Purushartha: A Journal of Management Ethics and Spirituality*. 2016 May 12;9(1).
3. Amita S, Prabhakar S, Manoj I, Harminder S, Pavan T. Short Communication - Effect of Yoga-nidra on blood glucose level in diabetic patients. *Indian J Physiol Pharmacol*. 2009;53(1):97-101.
4. Bhushan S. Yoga Nidra: its advantages and applications. *Magazine of the Bihar School of Yoga*. 2001.
5. Ferreira-Vorkapic, C., Borba-Pinheiro, C. J., Marchioro, M., & Santana, D. (2018). The Impact of *Yoga Nidra* and Seated Meditation on the Mental Health of College Professors. *International journal of yoga*, 11(3), 215–223.

(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

Benefits

- Yoga Nidra has beneficial effects
- Can begin from 10 min, twice weekly
- 20-30 min, 4-5 times per week
- Online videos
- Courses
- As a behavioural intervention
 - Acceptable
 - Feasible
 - Cost effective
 - No side effects
 - Not limited to any diagnosis

(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

Additional Benefits

- ▶ **Mental Benefits :**
 - ▶ Increased learning capabilities
 - ▶ Enhanced memory and intuition
 - ▶ Boosted creativity
 - ▶ Mental reprogramming capabilities
- ▶ **Physiological Benefits :**
 - ▶ Balanced nervous system
 - ▶ Increased endorphin production
 - ▶ Reduced cortisol and noradrenaline levels
 - ▶ Deep skeletal-muscular relaxation
- ▶ **Therapeutic Applications :**
 - ▶ Relief from depression and anxiety
 - ▶ Help with insomnia and headaches
 - ▶ Management of fibromyalgia
 - ▶ Treatment of chronic fatigue
 - ▶ Support for hypertension

Summary

- A meditative form, 8 stages
- State of deep relaxation with awareness
- EEG changes simulate sleep pattern (NREM)
- rCBF changes and endocrinal effects
- Improved general well being, coping and resilience
- Reduces symptoms of anxiety, depression, PTSD & insomnia
- Benefits in chronic pain, DM and PMS

(Ref: Yoga Nidra - Dr Amit Chail)

Common Challenges and Solutions

- ▶ **Falling Asleep :**
 - ▶ Practice at times of higher energy
 - ▶ Maintain lighter room temperature
 - ▶ Keep eyes slightly open
- ▶ **Racing Thoughts :**
 - ▶ Focus more on physical sensations
 - ▶ Return to breath awareness
 - ▶ Practice regularly to improve focus
- ▶ **Physical Discomfort :**
 - ▶ Use additional props as needed
 - ▶ Adjust position before starting
 - ▶ Practice progressive muscle relaxation

Resources for Further Reading

► Books :

- "Yoga Nidra" by Swami Satyananda Saraswati.
- "Yoga Nidra: A Meditative Practice for Deep Relaxation and Healing" by Richard Miller.
- "Yoga Nidra: The Art of Transformational Sleep" by Kamini Desai.

Thanks ... yogeshkulkarni@yahoo.com