Yoga Nidra
Meditation for Busy Minds

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What is Yoga Nidra?

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About Your Teacher

Cheryl Fenner Brown
C-IAYT, E-RYT 500

- 740-hr training with Hatha teachers at Piedmont Yoga Studio in Oakland, California, in 2004
- 800-hr Integrative Yoga Therapy training at Kripalu in 2015.
- I am certified as an E-RYT 500 and continuing education provider through Yoga Alliance.
- In 2016, I was among the first teachers certified through the International Association of Yoga Therapists as a C-IAYT.
- I have over 12,000 hours of experience working with adults, elders, and cancer patients, exploring how posture, breath, and attention can completely transform how they feel in their bodies and about themselves.

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What is Yoga Nidra?

- Yoga Nidra is a systematic method of guided relaxation that has a profound effect on the body, mind and emotions. You enter the stages of deeper relaxation where you turn your awareness to the inner landscape, away from external experiences

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History of Yoga Nidra

- Swami Satyananda Saraswati formulated the basis of this technique while serving as a disciple of his guru, Swami Sivananda, in Rishikesh, India during the 1940s and early 1950s.
- He describes how, as a young student, he fell asleep while a nearby group of people chanted mantras – many of which he had not heard before. Even though he was deeply asleep during the chanting, when he awoke and heard these mantras again, he seemed to know them.
- His *subtle body* had heard the mantras and thus led to his interest in systematizing a technique that enabled activation of brain states that were in between wakefulness and sleep where such deep experiences could be attained.

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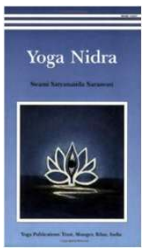
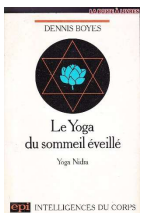
Yoga Nidra Books



Yoga Nidra, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, 1976

- He drew from many techniques, including:
  - Nyasa – Tantric practice of placing a mantra in various areas of the body to build concentration
  - Pratipaksha Bhavana – cultivating the opposite thought, which is the basis of Sankalpa



Le Yoga du sommeil éveillé; méthode de relaxation, yoga nidra' or 'The Yoga of Waking Sleep: method of relaxation, yoga nidra' Dennis Boyes, 1973

- This book was the first published reference to Yoga Nidra; sadly, it is not available in English

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Structure of a Yoga Nidra Session

Shorter Yoga Nidra (15-20 min)

1. Introduction
2. Relaxation
3. Sankalpa
4. Body Scan
5. Dualities
6. Repeat Sankalpa
7. Return

Traditional Yoga Nidra (30+ min)

1. Introduction
2. Relaxation
3. Sankalpa
4. Body Scan
5. Breath Awareness
6. Dualities
7. Rapid Image Visualization
8. Guided Journey
9. Repeat Sankalpa
10. Return

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WEEK 1: Homework

Yoga Nidra Prop Setup

- For reference to set up at home on the floor or on the bed.

Body Scan
Short Yoga Nidra

- Listen to each at least twice before our next class (not on the same day).
- Try listening at different times of day and notice when it helps you the most.

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Pancha Maya Kosha Model

Five Layers of Being

- Anamaya Kosha - Food body, earth element, skin, muscles, organs
- Pranamaya Kosha - Energy body, water element, breath, prana
- Manomaya Kosha - Mental, emotional body, fire element, thoughts, reactions, judgments
- Vijnanamaya Kosha - Wisdom body, air element, innate knowledge, witness awareness
- Anandamaya Kosha – Bliss body, space element, soul, innate bliss and connection

"In our innocence we identify with the Pancha Maya Koshas rather than what they encase, the true Divine Self." - Taittiriya Upanishad

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The Importance of Relaxation

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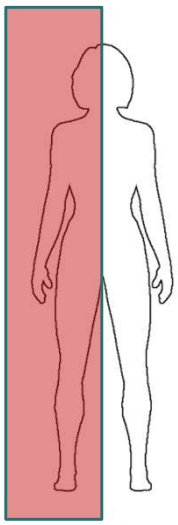
Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)

- Right nostril dominant
- Left brain hemisphere dominant
- Usually the active state, needed to stand up and get moving in the morning
- Increased heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature
- Respiration rate increased and airways more open
- Cortisol, testosterone, and endorphins increased

Often referred to as the
STRESS RESPONSE



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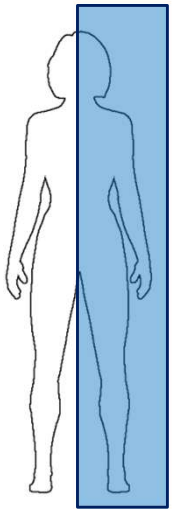
Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS)



- Left nostril dominant
- Right brain hemisphere dominant
- Usually the resting state, needed to fall asleep
- Reduced heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature
- Decreased respiration rate; oxygen sent to brain
- Digestion and eliminatory response increased
- Cortisol and testosterone reduced

Often referred to as the
RELAXTION RESPONSE

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Cortisol

- Cortisol secreted when a threat is perceived
  - Raises blood sugar, and reduces inflammation to maintain homeostasis
  - Metabolizes white blood cells for fuel to provide energy for the fight or flight response

- Chronic stress causes cortisol levels to remain high, even during sleep

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Adrenaline

- Adrenaline secreted when a challenge is perceived
  - Increases blood pressure and heart rate to creates a rush of energy in order to mobilize the body to respond to a challenge
  - Over time sustained fight or flight responses in the body cause a higher-than-normal baseline to be set which can result in organ damage such as increased insulin production and higher blood pressure

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Your Brain on Happy Chemicals

- ENDORPHIN = Pain Reliever
  Laughing, singing, exercising, dark chocolate

- DOPAMINE = Reward Chemical
  Completing tasks, doing self-care, eating, and celebrating small wins

- OXYTOCIN = Love hormone
  Playing with pets and children, hugs and touch, giving compliments

- SERATONIN = Mood Stabilizer
  Meditating, exercising, and being in nature

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Six Responses to Stress

- DENT© Model (Dynamic Experiential Narrative Theory) from psychological coaching explains the six responses to trauma, stress, anxiety, and triggers:
  - FLIGHT - Lower body tension, nervousness
  - FIGHT - Upper body tension, anger, frustration
  - FREEZE - No response, chronic tension, isolation, disassociation
  - FAWN - Codependence, people-pleasing, ignoring own needs, guilt, anger, poor boundaries, submission
  - FLOOD - Uncontrollable emotional reaction
  - FATIGUE - Shutting down, sleep, depression

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FLIGHT Stress Pattern

This response is common with men, but not exclusively so.

- Often the first reaction
- Situations that we want to FLEE from, the lower body prepares to move. When that doesn't happen, lactic acid builds up in the lower body, causing pain and tightness

→ Nervousness, anxiety, hypervigilance
→ Low back pain, tight hamstrings, tight hips, poor standing posture

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FIGHT Stress Pattern

This response is common with men, but not exclusively so.

- In situations we want to FIGHT, the upper body tightens to either to prepare to fight or as protection.

→ Anger, frustration, lashing out, self-criticism, negative self-talk
→ Headaches, chronic neck, upper back & shoulder pain, protective posture, TMJ issues,

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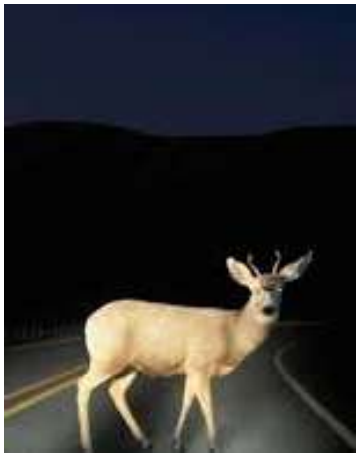
FREEZE Stress Pattern



- Since it is not socially acceptable to fight or flee, the body instead FREEZES
  - Like a deer caught in headlights, we don't do anything and clamp down on the body

→ Internalizing reaction, 'biting your tongue', hypervigilance
→ Inaction, chronic tension, isolating, under digestion

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FAWN Stress Pattern

This response is common with women, but not exclusively so.

- Emotionally FAWN over others, making sure they are ok, ignoring your own needs
- Often generational, learned behavior

→ Codependence, deflection, lack of boundaries, acquiescence, people pleasing, 'put on a happy face'
→ Guilt, repressed anger, surface-level engagement

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FLOOD Stress Pattern

This response occurs 80% more with men.

- Uncontrollable wave of emotion FLOODS over us
- Happens out of nowhere and can be very difficult to stay mindful in the moment

→ Out of control, cannot think or communicate, lack of reasoning
→ Extremely negative feelings, lashing out

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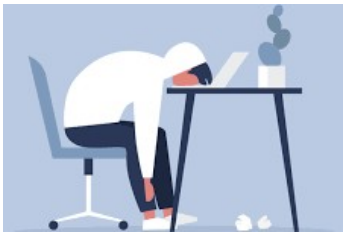
FATIGUE Stress Pattern

- FATIGUE/FAINT occurs when other responses do not restore calm
  - Research shows that a horizontal position may increase blood supply to brain, restoring balance



→ Need to sleep more than normal, complete exhaustion
→ Rejecting interactions, isolation, depression, inability to focus or think clearly

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Yoga Nidra: Relaxation Section

- Goal is to induce the relaxation response to prepare for the practice of yoga nidra.
  - Relax the body in parts
  - Bringing breath into each part of the body; relaxing on exhalation; doubling relaxation on exhalation
  - Listening to sounds outside of the body in order to place the mind in an attitude of observation; move from far away sounds to sounds of body
  - Counting backwards with cues for relaxation
  - Relaxing into points of contact with the floor
  - Taking color, light or Om symbol into parts of body

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Other Ideas?

- What other techniques have you experienced that help you relax?
- Be sure it is something that occupies the mind and keeps it in the present moment

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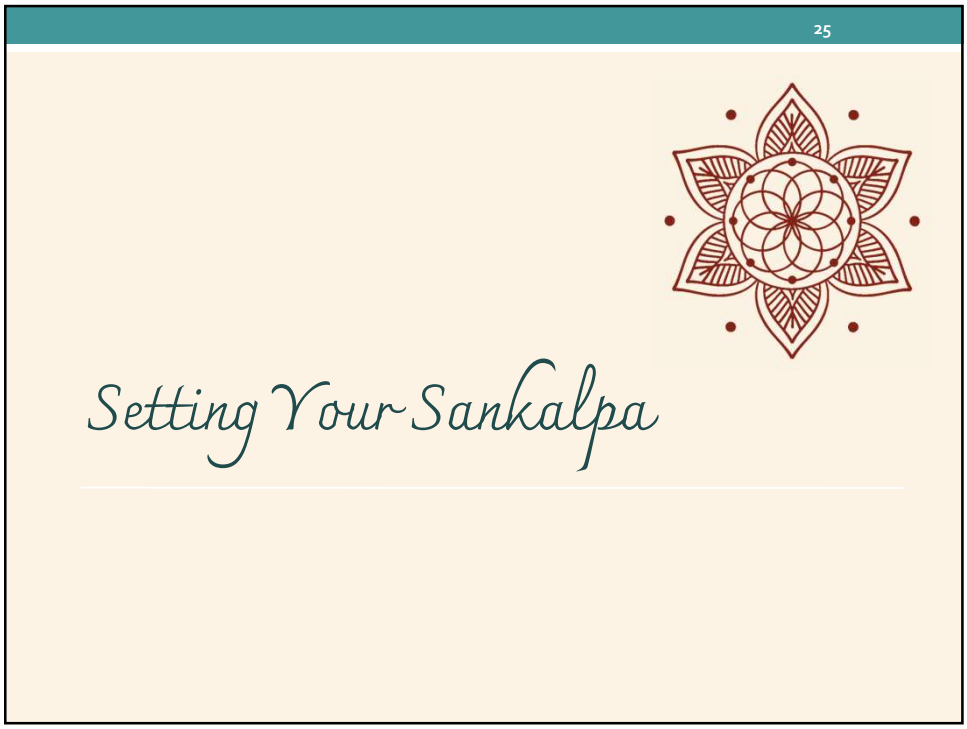

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What is a Sankalpa?

- The word Sankalpa translates to:
  - Idea, volition, conviction, thought, persuasion, intention, will personified, declaration of purpose, will, determination
- It isn't just a wish to be fulfilled, but a deeper idea that enables a connection to our highest truth.
- While creating intention, give yourself time to look at your core beliefs, especially those about worthiness that are outdated, and you are ready to move beyond
- The Sankalpa should speak to some idea we have about ourselves that is getting in the way of our spiritual progress.

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Two Types of Sankalpa

- I AM Statement
  - This type of Sankalpa is a statement of your innate worth and goodness
    - I am peaceful
    - I am happy
    - I am healed
- Goal/Wish Fulfillment
  - This type looks at your goals and guides you to take a specific step toward that goal
    - I focus on the positive
    - I love and accept myself in every moment
    - My work fulfills me financially, mentally, and emotionally

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Samskara

- Samskaras are the deeply ingrained mental impressions and habitual patterns that we all develop over time.
- They come from our repeated experiences and can significantly shape our personality traits.
- Our past actions, thoughts, and experiences play a significant role in shaping how we see the world and ourselves.
- They can deeply influence our future behavior, and it's important to recognize that understanding this connection can help us grow and move forward with compassion for ourselves and others.
- In the Vedic texts, there are 16 samskaras, or sacraments, that occur at each stage of development from the womb to the tomb.

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Pratipaksha Bhavana

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Using Sankalpa in Yoga Nidra

- It is repeated at the beginning three times silently to implant this intention in the consciousness, like planting a seed into fertile soil.
- It is also repeated at the end of the practice again three times silently to water the seed.

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Using Sankalpa in Yoga Nidra

- Use the same Sankalpa until it comes to fruition; this may take months, even years.
- With consistent practice, thoughts, words, and deeds are brought into alignment with the sankalpa.
  - Be careful how the statement is crafted - "I wish I were rich" and "I see the abundance in my life" both deal with prosperity but have a very different meaning.
  - Write down Sankalpa and post it where you will see it throughout the day to continue fertilizing the seed

What we think, so we create!

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Setting Sankalpa with Mudras

- Mudras are hand positions that work with the natural energy vortices located in the palms of the hands and fingers.
- When we place the fingers together to create certain shapes, we redirect this energy back into the body. Mudras can bring focus and attention to certain areas of the body through breath awareness; they can also have an immediate effect on the emotions.
- There are three mudras in this lesson that highlight the importance of considering the main stressors of your life, contemplating your goals for this time, and how you might achieve those goals.

The link showing mudras is also on the course website.

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Purna Hridaya Mudra

Setting Your Sankalpa: Hold this mudra while you contemplate the challenges you are facing

Seal of the Strong Heart

- Interlace fingers inside of palms, touch thumbs together, and reach them towards the chest so that a heart shape is formed with the hands.
- Opens you to a sense of self-resilience. Use to connect with the deep emotions of the heart.

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Padma Mudra

Setting Your Sankalpa: Hold this mudra while contemplating your goals for this time

Seal of the Lotus

- Place hands together at the heart, keep thumbs and little fingers together, open other fingers and create cup shape between palms.
- Elevates heart energy, integrates body and mind. Use to stay open while healing your emotional heart.

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Vajrapradama Mudra

Setting Your Sankalpa: Hold this mudra while imagining yourself achieving your goal

Seal of Unshakable Trust

- Clasp fingers and open palms toward heart; point thumbs upwards. Hold a few inches away from the chest.
- Builds confidence, security, and opens the heart very gently. Use when frightened, anxious, or filled with self-doubt.

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WEEK 2: Homework

Setting Your Sankalpa

1. Take a look at the linked page with Mudras on the website, then listen to the audio meditation to guide you through the process of setting your Sankalpa.
2. Write it down, say it out loud, to yourself, and feel how it resonates with you.
3. Email your sankalpa to Cheryl (cherylbrownyoga@gmail.com) and she will help you create a Sanskrit mantra with the same meaning.

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Creating a Personal Mantra

- There are many mantras to choose from, each holds a specific energetic vibration within the consonants and vowels that are pronounced.
- The power of mantra arises from the energy of the sounds which creates physical vibration creating different energetic effects.
- Some mantras draw energy inwards, some project energy outwards, while others are helpful to remove stubborn energies from one's life.
- As you chant mantras, it is helpful to visualize the quality you are chanting about and hold that intention in your mind to create a stronger vibration.

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Mantra Creation Process

- Using the Sanskrit list of qualities on the next page:
  - **Mantra to Attract a Quality** - insert a positive quality into the mantra
- Spoken Sanskrit Dictionary to help with translating English words into Sanskrit https://www.learnsanskrit.cc/
- Google your Sanskrit word and "pronunciation" to see if there is an audio clip of the word being spoken

These mantras hold profound power, so please treat them with respect.

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Mantra of Attraction

- "**Om Bhraṁ _____ Namaha**" Health, wealth, success
- "**Om Frauṁ _____ Namaha**" Courage, strength, happiness
- "**Om Klīṁ _____ Namaha**" Magnetic attraction
- "**Om Krīṁ _____ Namaha**" Electric, manifesting, transforming
- "**Om Shrīṁ _____ Namaha**" Abundance, health, inner peace

Combine bijas for increased power behind mantra

COMMN POSITIVE QUALITIES:

- love - bhakti
- patience - sahana
- peace - śānti
- prosperity - sugātu
- well-being - svasti
- acceptance - svīkrti
- compassion - karuṇā
- courage - abhaya
- friendship - sakhya
- forgiveness - ksamā
- gratitude - kṛtajñā
- joy - sukha

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Mantric Melody

- **Un-notated syllable** = starting/neutral note (A)
- **Underscored syllable** = note below or (G)
- **Hyphened note'** = ½ note above the neutral note (A#)

No matter how many syllables are in the mantra, the last five syllables are always chanted with the same pattern:

- The 'Om' and bijas are always the starting/neutral note or (A)
- The second to last syllable of the inserted quality word is always one note below (G), and the rest are (A)
- The middle syllable of "Namaha" is always ½ note above the starting/neutral note or (A#), and the rest are (A)

EXAMPLE:

A A G A A A# A
Om klim bhak-ti na-ma'-ha

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How Do I Know My Mantra is Working?

- Be sure that you can call up your mantra from memory effortlessly both during your japa mala, yoga nidra, other meditation practices as well as at times off your mat.
- How does the mantra make you feel?
  - Does it help to bring mental focus? Promote alertness?
  - Does it help you break through negative though loops?
  - Do you have an emotional reaction to the mantra? Does it bring calm, joy, gratitude? Does it ring true?
  - Do you feel any physical sensations while using your mantra?

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Benefits of Yoga Nidra

- Balances autonomic nervous system, reduces sympathetic activity
- Reduces stress in the moment and Increases stress hardiness
- Increases body awareness, awareness of sensations, and the connection between the brain and body
- Enables conscious mind to withdraw so subconscious mind can move to the forefront, this may bring with it thoughts, memories, and conditioning to be released

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Benefits of Yoga Nidra, cont.

- Engages both the intuitive/right and logical/left hemispheres of the brain
- Can reduce pain by stimulating the release of natural analgesics, increased body awareness can also act to reduce chronic tension.
- Increases creativity and ability to visualize
- Provides deep rest (30 min nidra = 2 hours sleep)

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Contraindications to Yoga Nidra

- Yoga Nidra is not recommended for students with severe anxiety, depression, or psychological issues
  - We often must build a tolerance for negative emotions during the duality, rapid image, and journey sections.
- What does "red ball" bring up for you?

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Yoga Nidra and PTSD/Trauma

- Tips for practicing Yoga Nidra or PTSD
  - Choose meditations with general topics
  - Shorter length meditations may ease restlessness
  - Simple breathing and grounding relaxation techniques
  - Innocuous dualities and rapid images
- Deeper emotional processing may be possible
  - By working privately with a teacher who writes the meditation with your feedback and consent

This is a yoga therapy service I provide; we discuss what you want to process, I write the script, and then, after your approval, I will record it for you.

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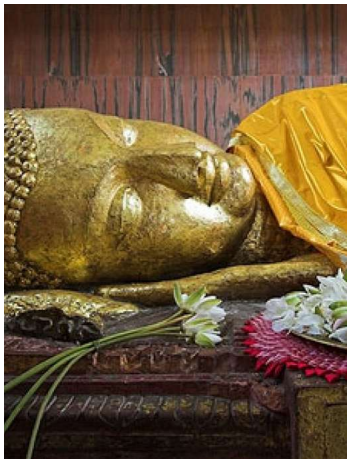
To Stay Awake, or Not to Stay Awake?

- Even though the word 'Nidra' means sleep in Sanskrit, it is best to stay awake throughout the practice.
- Yoga nidra is a cumulative practice in that the effects increase the more it is practiced, and it takes some time to learn how to stay awake.
- A 50-year-old has fallen asleep at least 18,250 times. In Yoga Nidra, you are trying to maintain this in-between state, so you are working against a very ingrained habit of falling asleep from the alpha state.
- Most of us are so chronically sleep deprived that Yoga Nidra may be one of the only times we can really let go.



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WEEK 3: Homework

Yoga Nidra for Insomnia

1. Listen to this in bed at least one night before you go to sleep.
   - The difference here is that you will not be brought back up to sitting at the end.
   - Just listen and feel free to fall asleep at any point during the meditation.

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The Hypnagogic State

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The Hypnagogic State

- The hypnagogic state is a temporary state that lasts 3-5 minutes as we naturally fall asleep. It is a state where we are able to release physical tensions, sometimes resulting in jerking body movements.
- Awareness of the external world dissolves and the dreaming subconscious mind begins to take over or thought processes.
- Through the process of yoga nidra, we learn to stay rooted in this Alpha state of brain function, turning our attention toward the internal landscape of sensation, thought and breath while staying conscious of the instructions being given. Resulting in a profound experience of relaxation and connection to our witness

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The Hypnagogic State

- When we dream, we are typically not aware of ourselves in the same way as when we are awake. We either watch or participate in a series of events that seem fantastical, often not doubting their reality or understanding that we can become the author of the dream through the act of lucidity.
- Yoga nidra is one way to increase lucidity in the dream state as we are engaging the witness while remaining aware of what is arising in the mind.
- The fourth superconscious state of "turyia" includes simultaneous awareness of all states of consciousness, or the witness where we have a deep awareness of self at the same time as a reduction in emotional reactivity and judgment. Over time, this witnessing state can be brought off the mat as well.

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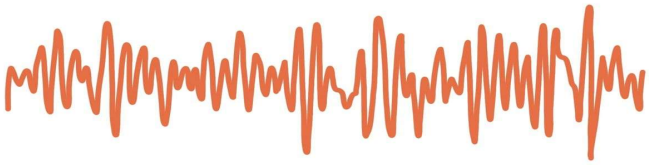
Gamma Brain Waves



- **Deep Meditation (40-100 cps)**
  - Integrating information, multi-tasking, focus, learning, memory, sensory perception, problem solving
  - Promotes production of stem-cells, cortisol regulation, positivity, happiness, compassion, creativity, peak mental state
    - ➢Yoga Nidra increases gamma activity

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Beta Brain Waves

- **Waking State (13-20 cps)**
  - The conscious mind (thinking and analyzing), sensory awareness, knowledge of the external world, goals
  - Fear, stress & anxiety cause higher than normal beta activity and higher levels of stress hormones
  - Yoga Nidra reduces beta waves in the brain
    - Specifically active during the Body Scan

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Alpha Brain Waves

- **Wakeful Rest (8-12 cps)**
  - Hypnagogic borderline between wakefulness and sleep
  - Deep relaxation, place of visionary states, conscious dreaming, archetypal imagery, superconscious mind (turiya)
  - Where mental coordination, alertness, mind/body integration occurs
  - Increases positive feelings of compassion and love
  - Promotes serotonin production, greater immune function, heart regulation
  - Yoga Nidra increases alpha waves
    - Specifically during the breath awareness, and emotional exploration of dualities sections

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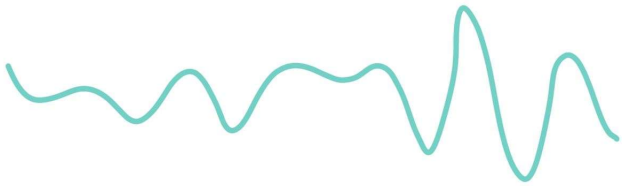
Theta Brain Waves



- **Dreaming & Light Sleep (4-6 cps)**
  - Subconscious mind, relaxed attention from inner witness
  - Release of emotions, suppressed fears and desires happens here
  - Promotes repair of DNA, and cell regeneration
  - Occurs as you move between wakefulness and deeper meditative states
    - Especially during the Guided Journey

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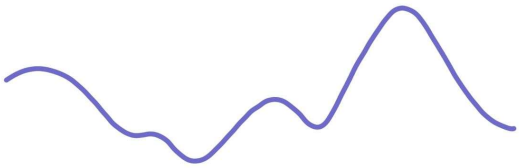
Delta Brain Waves



- **Dreamless Sleep (0-4 cps)**
  - Unconscious mind
  - Awakening of instincts and primitive drives, without conscious thought
  - Promotes immunity, neuron regeneration, repairing nerves
  - Yoga Nidra increases theta waves
    - Active especially during the experience of oneness, bliss, “S”elf

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Brain Images in Yoga Nidra

- In 1999 at The State University of Copenhagen, the Scandinavian Yoga and Meditation schools worked together to research PET scan images of someone listening to Yoga Nidra to measure "awareness"
- Tested seven Kriya Yoga teachers who were asked to practice Kriya Yoga in the morning before their 90-minute scan.
  - "Experience Yoga Nidra", by Swami Janakananda
- Dopamine production increased by up to 65%
- Due to EEG measurements, theta activity increased 11%
  - https://www.yogameditation.com/reading-room/pictures-of-the-brains-activity-during-yoga-nidra/

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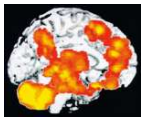
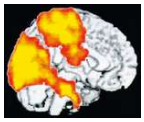
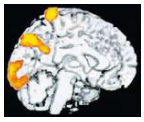
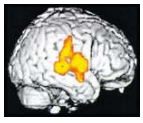
Brain Areas Activated in Yoga Nidra









- Resting Waking State (closed eyes)
  - Frontal brain (executive function, processes deeper emotions)
  - Brain Stem & Cerebellum (action readiness)
- Yoga Nidra State
  - Visual Center (back of head – ability to visualize)
  - Somatosensory Center (top - touch, body position, in touch with emotions)
- Body Scan/Visual Images
  - Tactile Center
  - Visual Center
- Abstract Experiences (oneness, identity)
  - Speech/Language Center -

https://www.yogameditation.com/reading-room/pictures-of-the-brains-activity-during-yoga-nidra/

58

Body Warmups for Chanting and Vowel Spiral

Practice

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Body Warmups for Chanting

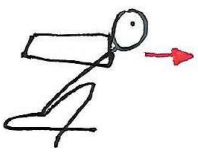

Ankle Rotations


Shoulder Circles (backwards)


Shoulder Circles (forwards)


Wrist Circles (both directions)


Barrel Rolls


Chest Stretch (press jaw forward)


Shimmy (twist torso, head opp)

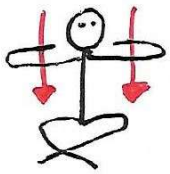

Twist (elbow to opp knee)

60

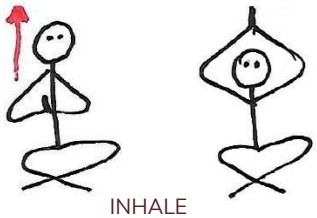
Body Warmups: Breathing

INHALE
(arms out and up)

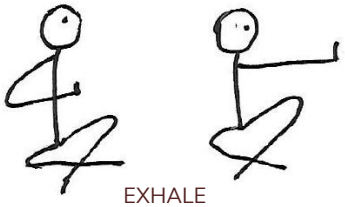
Palms Together



EXHALE
(press hands down)



INHALE
(palms together and up)

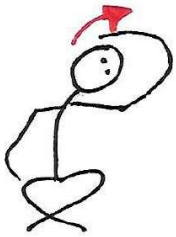


EXHALE
(press hands forward)

61

Body Warmups, cont.

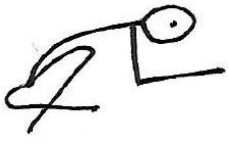
Head Circles



Lateral Neck Stretch

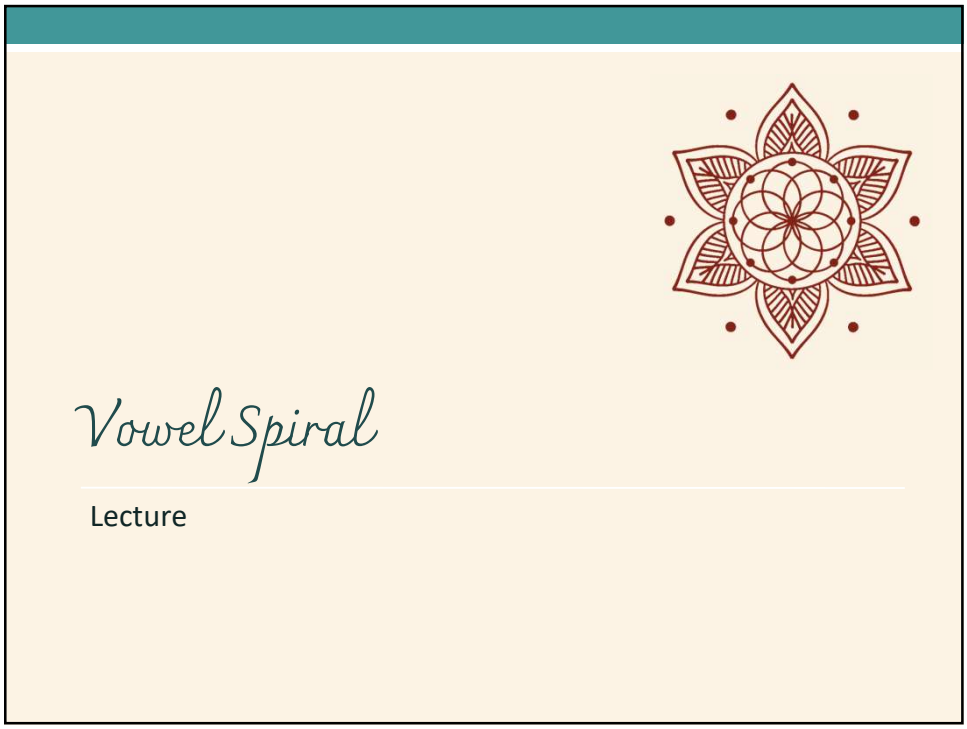
Hands Clasped Overhead
(turn head)

Chest Opener



Forward Fold

62



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Vowel Spiral

- The Vowel Spiral is a sound practice that uses vowel sounds (plus humming) to move vibration around into different areas of the torso and head.
- It is used for relaxation, mindfulness, to increase awareness, and to direct prana.
- Rather than chanting loudly, reserve some of the energy for yourself by directing it inwards to create a stronger sensation of vibration.
- A relaxed inhale directed into the belly prevents the shoulders from rising.
- A slow and smooth exhale creates a smooth tone and builds control over the diaphragm and breath.
- This is an excellent practice to do alone when you are feeling stressed or hurried, before bed, or before other meditation or yoga practices to help you center and ground.

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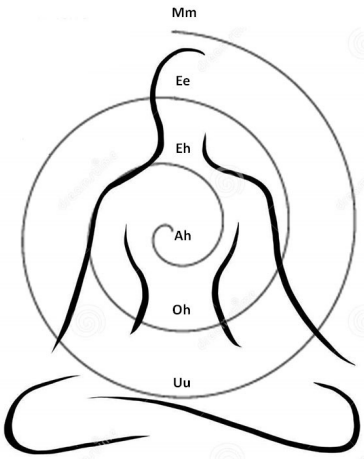
Vowel Spiral

- Place hand over area of body indicated and chant at natural speaking pitch



1. ***AHH*** *at the* ***Heart***
2. ***EHH*** *at the* ***Throat***
3. ***OOO*** *at the* ***Belly***
   (lips round, jaw forward)
4. ***EEE*** *in the* ***Head***
   (smile wide and show teeth)
5. ***UUU*** *in the* ***Pelvis & Legs***
   (lips round, jaw forward)
6. ***MMM*** *at the* ***Crown***
   (tongue tip at roof of mouth)
7. ***AHH*** *at the* ***Heart***

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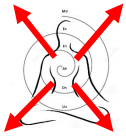
Vowel Order



Spiral <u>outward from center</u> helps with stimulating Vyana Vayu

Practice from <u>bottom to top</u> to create uplifting effect (UU to MM)

Practice from <u>top to bottom</u> to create grounding effect (MM to UU)

Choose <u>one or two sounds</u> to bring prana to a location in need of healing

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Shruti Box

Chanting is typically accompanied by an instrument that creates a droning sound that you voice will meld into.

A Shruti Box is a type of accordion, similar to a harmonium without the keyboard

- There are openings on one side of the instrument that allow air to pass through a reed, making the sound.
- You can plan one or more notes at the same time but cannot play any kind of melody.
- Online Shruti Box

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The Symbol Aum

Lecture

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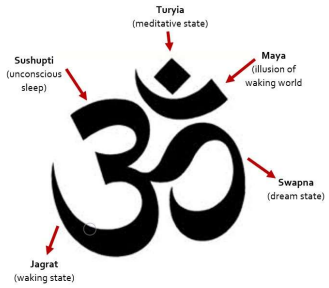
The Symbol Aum/Om



- The **lower curve of the Sanskrit letter A** symbolizes the waking state, or *jagrat*, which is experienced through the senses.
- The **upper curve of the A** symbolizes unconscious sleep, or *sushupti*, where desires are not present.
- The **middle curve of the A** which lies to the right symbolizes the dream state, or *swapna*, where consciousness turns towards the ethereal visions and impressions of the sleeping mind.
- The **dot at the top, or M**, symbolizes the meditative state or quiet pause, the *turiya*, where consciousness turns away from all sense perceptions and imagination and experiences pure blissful peace and connection with universal consciousness.
- The **curve under the dot, or U**, symbolizes the illusion of the world, or *maya* that catches us in its seductive net and prevents us from experiencing the blissful state of union with universal consciousness.

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Meaning of Aum

- According to Hinduism, Brahman first created primal sound from which the material world manifested. This sound was aum, the cosmic vibration that is the mantra of all mantras, or mother sound. This vibration holds the atoms of the universe in resonance and can still be heard reverberating in deep space.
- The Latin word *omne* and the Sanskrit word *aum* are both derived from the same root meaning 'all,' and both words convey the concepts of omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence.
  - 'Amen' comes from *omne*
- Each letter arises from a specific location in the mouth and represents the act of manifestation
- Aum represents reality coming into being as it is vocalized

https://health.usnews.com/health-news/blogs/eat-run/2013/10/02/your-brain-on-om-the-science-of-mantra

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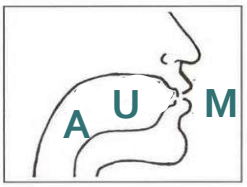
Chanting Aum



- **A** (ä, as in "car") is the first letter of the Sanskrit alphabet and is formed at the back of the mouth.
  - It is expressive and usually lasts just a moment as the sound is begun.
  - Feels expansive when chanted, represents the awake conscious mind
- **U** (o͞o, as in "soup") is created as the sound continues through the center of the mouth as the lips begin to close
  - Narrows and funnels consciousness into the subtle dream state
- **M** is pronounced by closing the lips, vibrating the skull (anuswara)
  - "it makes the cranium vibrate in a kind of undifferentiated and ubiquitous earthquake over the convolutions or valleys in the cerebral cortex, approximating the deep dreamless sleep state of consciousness" Gabriel Axel
- **Turyia** is the silence after the sound when you breathe in.
  - Just as important as the aum itself and is where the benefit of the chant is absorbed.

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Chanting - Which Pitch?

- *When you chant by yourself, you can choose a note or tone that is comfortable to chant with:*
  - *Higher notes resonate more in the head*
  - *Lower notes resonate more in the pelvis and lower body*
  - *Your speaking pitch is also called the "heart pitch" and is best for all-purpose chanting.*
    - *For women, this tends to be in the A-G range*
    - *For men, this tends to be in the C-E range*

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Chair Joint-Freeing Series

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Chair Joint-Freeing Series

- From chair move all joints gently through their natural range of motion
- Move from feet to hips, hands to shoulders, head to torso
- Breathe with movements
- Repeat each 3-5 times with the breath
- Mobilizes prana throughout the joints to alleviate pain
- Perfect for those dealing with chronic joint pain or those with mobility issues

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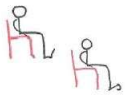
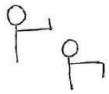
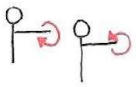
Chair Joint-Freeing Series

 Toes Flex / Extend	 Ankle Flex / Extend	 Ankle Rotation	 Knee Flex / Extend	 Hip Flex
 Finger Touches	 Hand Series	 Wrist Flex / Extend	 Wrist Rotation	 Elbow Flex / Extend
 Shoulder Elevation / Depression	 Shoulder Retraction / Protraction	 Shoulder Rotation	 Head "Yes"	 Head "No"
 Nose Circle	 Lateral Bend	 Cat / Cow	 Spinal Twist	 Chair Belly Breathing

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Body scan

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Body Scan, cont.

- Moves awareness of throughout the body
  - Most will enter the witness consciousness here, or they may start to fall asleep
- Engages many channels of communication:
  - Auditory by listening to the teacher's voice say the body part
  - Speech by repeating the body part mentally
  - Visual by imagining the part externally
  - Proprioceptive by feeling the part internally
  - Kinesthetic by sensing movement from one place to the next

The body scan relaxes the body by relaxing the brain.

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Body Scan

- A typical order is: Right fingers up, arm down, right side of torso to toes, repeats on left, then moves from the crown of the head and down the face, touching on the sense organs, then moves from right to left to the center down the torso, and up the back to return to the crown.
  - Can be done in any order without skipping around too much.
- Helpful as a standalone practice for relaxation, anxiety, and insomnia.

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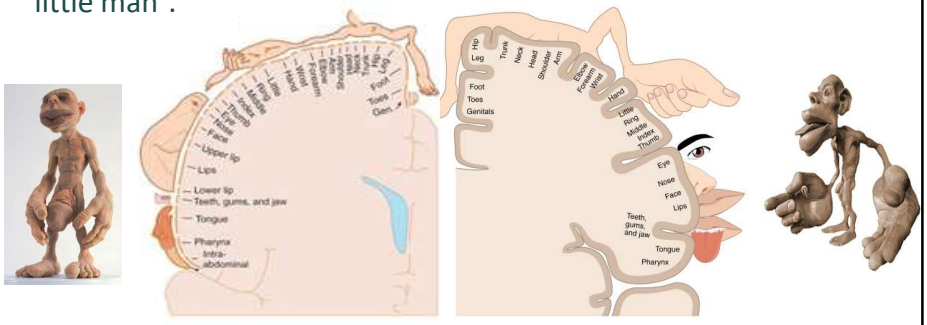
Sensory & Motor Homonculus

Within the sensory and motor cortex of our brain, there is a neural map of the parts of the body called the homunculus, or "little man".



A pictorial representation of neural density in the motor cortex.

A pictorial representation of neural density in the motor cortex.

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WEEK 4: Homework

Chair Joint-Freeing Series

1. Do the **Joint Freeing Series** several times this week. First thing in the morning or right before bed are perfect times, but you can also do this anytime you are feeling achy. Try combining the **Joint Freeing Series** and then listen to the **Body Scan**.
2. **Download Body Scan PDF** if you would like to have a printed copy of the body scan order.
3. BONUS: Listen to **Long Yoga Nidra** at least once this week.

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Japa Mala

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Using a Mala

- A *mala* is a set of 108 prayer beads that are used to count the recitation of a *mantra* or sound.
- Chanting a mantra with a mala is called *japa mala*.

- Hold the mala over your middle finger, the index finger represents the ego and has no place in this meditative practice.
- The large tasseled bead, called the "guru" bead should face the heart.
- Using the thumb, pull the beads towards the heart starting with the bead beside the guru bead.
- For each recitation of your mantra, count off another bead until you reach the guru bead again.

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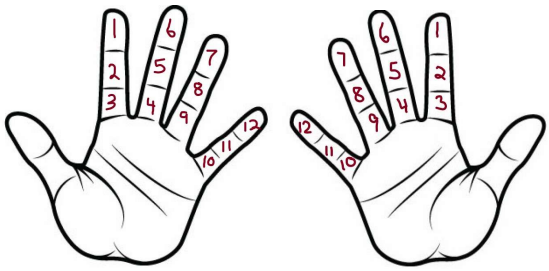
Mala Finger Counting



If you do not have access to a mala, you may use your fingers in order to count to 108.

- You will count to twelve on your dominant hand using your thumb as the counting finger.
- With the other hand you will keep track of the sets of twelve in the same pattern.
- Once nine sets of twelve have been counted, you will have reached 108

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Why 108?

- 108 represents wholeness in Hindu mythology
- Celestial Measurements
  - The distance between the earth and the sun is approximately 108 times the sun's diameter.
  - The diameter of the sun is about 108 times the earth's diameter.
  - And the distance between the earth and the moon is 108 times the moon's diameter.
- Tantra estimates the average number of breaths per day at 21,600, of which 10,800 are solar energy, and 10,800 are lunar energy (15 times per minute, 900 times per hour).
  - The maximum number of times we could chant japa mala is 10,800. Divide that by 100 and you have the 108 beads on the mala which produces 100% benefit.
  - If one is able to be so calm in meditation as to have only 108 breaths in a day, enlightenment will come.

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Why 108?

- Hindu deities have 108 names, and India is said to have 108 sacred sites, there are also 108 Upanishads, and 108 types of meditation
- There are 108 energy lines, or *nadis*, converging to form the heart chakra and 108 marma points in the body.
- 108 is a Harshad number, which is an integer divisible by the sum of its digits (Harshad means "great joy")
- There are said to be 108 earthly desires in mortals, 108 lies that humans tell, 108 human delusions, and 108 feelings
- There are 54 letters in the Sanskrit alphabet. Each has masculine and feminine, Shiva and shakti.

https://www.stephen-knapp.com/108_the_significance_of_the_number.htm

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Breath Awareness

Lecture

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Yoga Nidra: Breath Awareness

- Move into the energetic experience of the body by focusing on the breath
- Connects to Pranamaya Kosha
- Keep techniques simple at first
  - Use counting of breaths in multiples of 108, for example 3-9-18-27
  - Awareness of breath in belly, ribs, chest, nostrils
  - Breathe into chakra areas
  - Explore pranavayus
  - Any calming pranayama or prana vidya technique can be used, nadi shodhana for example (psychic not digital)

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Langhana & Balancing Pranayama

Pranayama expands and directs our life force energy within the body and these Langhana or "lengthening" practices engage the para-sympathetic nervous system, reduce metabolism, cool the body, calm the mind and emotions.

- **Observe Natural Breath**
- **Adhama Svasa** (reclined belly breath)
- **Madhyama Svasa** (ribcage breath)
- **Adya Svasa (clavicular breath)**
- **Dirga** (3-part breath)
- **Rechaka Kumbhaka** (exhale retention)
- **Psychic Chandra Bhedana** (inhale and exhale left nostril using imagination)
- **Psychic Chandranuloma Viloma** (inhale left, exhale right using imagination)
- **Psychic Nadi Shodhana** (alternate nostril using imagination)

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Why Exhalation is So Important

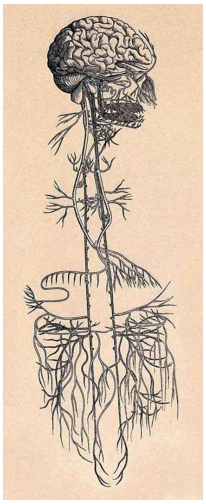
INHALE

Brain sends messages to body through vagus nerve

Activates SNS

Activate

Encourages quick shallow breathing



EXHALE

Vagus nerve sends sensory information to brain

Activates PNS

Relax

Encourages long, slow exhalations

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Observe the Natural Breath

- Lie down comfortably, close the eyes and feel the breath moving in and out of your nostrils. Notice what the inhale feels like coming in and moving down into your lungs, creating a full sensation. Notice what the exhale feels like moving up and out of the body through the nostrils, creating a surrendered feeling in the body.
- Therapeutics: Builds mindfulness and awareness

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Adhama Svasa (Belly Breath)

Lowest Breath

- Begin lying down with head and knees supported. Rest hands on abdomen and feel movement of abdomen. Notice fullness in the belly as you inhale and relaxation as you exhale. Imagine a balloon in the lower belly that inflates when you inhale and deflates when you exhale and concentrate on the feeling of breath dropping down into that part of your torso with soft transitions between inhaling and exhaling. Emphasize a soft open belly so that the abdominal organs can expand as the diaphragm descends. Repeat for 1-3 minutes.
- Benefits: Activates relaxation response, opens Svadhisthana Chakra
- Practice Tips: Use when feeling overwhelmed or anxious

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Madhyama Svasa (Rib Breath)

Middle Breath

- Begin lying down with head and knees supported. Rest hands on middle rig cage and feel movement. Notice lateral expansion in the ribs as you inhale and relaxation as you exhale. Imagine a balloon in the lower ribs that inflates when you inhale and deflates when you exhale and concentrate on the feeling of breath moving in that part of your torso with soft transitions between inhaling and exhaling.
- Repeat for 1-3 minutes
- Benefits: Activates middle lobes of lungs, opens Manipura Chakra

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Adya Svasa (Clavicular Breath)

Highest Breath

- Begin lying down with head and knees supported. Rest hands on upper chest and feel movement there. Notice lift of sternum and upper ribs as you inhale and relaxation as you exhale. Imagine a balloon in the upper chest that inflates when you inhale and deflates when you exhale and concentrate on the feeling of breath lifting into that part of your torso with soft transitions between inhaling and exhaling. Repeat for 1-3 minutes.
- Adhama svasa, madhyama svasa and adhya svasa together are purna svasa, or "full yogic breathing"
- Benefits: Increases lung capacity, opens Anahata Chakra
- Practice Tips: Use when feeling fatigue

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Rechaka Kumbhaka (Exhale Retention)

- Rechaka Kumbhaka means "empty pot"
- Inhale through nostrils, then exhale completely through nostrils and pause after the exhalation holding the breath out. The length of the pause should be comfortable to maintain.
- Therapeutics: Calming and grounding, quiets the mind

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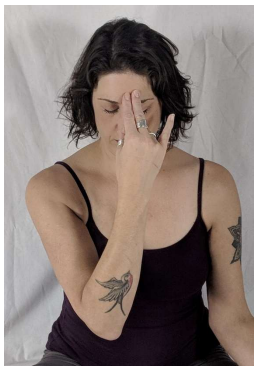
Psychic Chandra Bhedana



Single Nostril Moon Breath

- Use your imagination to focus on inhaling through left nostril, pause at the top of the inhalation. Then imagine exhaling through the left nostril as well, pausing at the bottom of the exhalation.
- Practice Tips: Can be used for, stress reduction, with nasal allergy

Benefits: Cooling, relaxing, calming and soothing, stimulates parasympathetic nervous system. Draws cool calming energy in and out through the left nostril to activate ida nadi and the right hemisphere of the brain and creative thought

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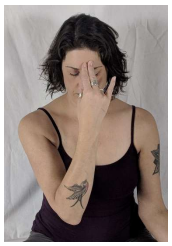
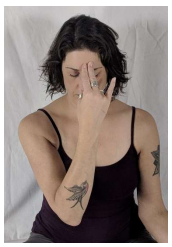
Psychic Chandranuloma Viloma





Alternate Nostril Moon Breath

- Use your imagination to focus on inhaling through left nostril, pause at the top of the inhalation.
- Then use your imagination to focus on exhaling through the right nostril, pause at the bottom of the exhalation.

Benefits: Stimulates parasympathetic nervous system. Draws cool calming energy in through the left nostril and releases warm active energy out through the right nostril

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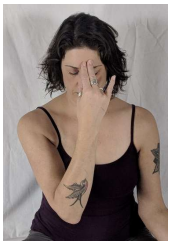
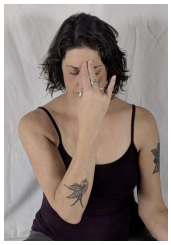
Psychic Nadi Shodhana





Alternate Nostril Breath

- Imaging that you are inhaling through the left nostril, exhale through the left, inhale through right, exhale through left.
- Psychic method is subtler than the digital (with the fingers) method, but it is easier to do when lying down.
- Nadi Shodhana means "channel purifying"

Benefits: Balances the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight) and the parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest), increases communication between the right and left hemispheres of the brain.

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Duality and the Brain

Lecture

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What are Dualities?

- Pairs of opposites move the awareness of sense perception and moves from the physical experience of the body in the Body Scan through the koshas to the mental/emotional experience.
- The witness consciousness enables a memory or experience of the pairs without allowing the thinking mind to dwell on what they might trigger within us - we can recall an experience or intense feeling without reacting emotionally.
- It also makes us aware of the duality of our experiences, that they are neither inherently good nor bad.

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Good or Bad?

- All experiences exist on a continuum from our perception of “negative” to “positive.”
- When we move back and forth between them, we realize that they dissolve into one another and become null.
- The pairs are described to keep the experience conceptual rather than encouraging us to delve into our histories/stories or too deeply into thinking.
- Typically, scripts begin with the negative aspect (if there is one) first so that you follow up with the positive aspect.

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Heavy/Light Duality


- Experience of the body as heavy/light is typically the first duality
  - Heavy allows the body to continue to release into the support of the earth
  - Lightness or weightlessness asks the sensory cortex to create the opposite sensation.
  - Moving between the two prevents either sensation from being ignored by the brain.
  - It also increases nervous system's ability to feel physical sensation.

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More Physical Dualities

- ✓Heavy/Light
- ✓Hot/Cold
- ✓Dry/Wet
- ✓Empty/Full
- ✓Outside/Inside
- ✓Contraction/Expansion
- ✓Engaged/Relaxed
- ✓Pain/Pleasure
- ✓Exhausted/Refreshed
- ✓Dark/Light

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Emotional Dualities

- ✓Anxiety/Calm
- ✓Fear/Safety
- ✓Bad/Good
- ✓Despair/Hope
- ✓Sadness/Joy
- ✓Ungrateful/Gratitude
- ✓Frustration/Patience
- ✓Indifference/Compassion
- ✓Critical/Compassionate
- ✓Repulsion/Attraction
- ✓Vanity/Humility
- ✓Memory/Future
- ✓Unforgiven/Forgiven
- ✓Confused/Focused
- ✓Suspicious/Trusting

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Conceptual Dualities

- ✓Bad/Good
- ✓Fear/Safety
- ✓Lack/Abundance
- ✓Unstable/Stable
- ✓Stillness/Motion
- ✓Rigid/Fluid
- ✓Noise/Silence
- ✓Disharmony/Harmony
- ✓Untruth/Truth
- ✓New/Familiar
- ✓Unheard/Heard
- ✓Unknown/Known
- ✓Duality/Non-duality
- ✓Temporal/Timeless
- ✓Finite/Infinite
- ✓Ordinary/Divine
- ✓Disconnected/Connected
- ✓Struggle/Thriving
- ✓Ungrounded/Grounded
- ✓Excitement/Boredom

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WEEK 6: Homework

Ocean Yoga Nidra

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Rapid Image Visualization

Lecture

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Yoga Nidra: Rapid Image Visualization






- A list of physical, mundane, and archetypal images to seed the imagination and engage the witness that is seen on the chidakash or mind screen.
  - elemental images
  - symbols of human development

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Yoga Nidra: Rapid Image Visualization

- spiritual iconography, family symbols
- symbols for death or spiritual evolution (they are intended to be evocative so know your audience well)
- Images can relate to the content of the guided meditation or be more generic.









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Elemental Images

- Earth (vast desert, moon's surface, plowed field)
- Water (deep lake, ocean waves)
- Fire (crimson sunset, golden sun, flames dancing)
- Air (gentle breeze, treetops swaying)
- Space (vastness of space, inside of an atom, empty bowl)





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More Image Categories




- Human Development (cave paintings, apes in the forest, storytelling by a fire, creating tools)
- Early Civilizations (Egyptian pyramids, Mayan ruins, Star of David)
- Religious iconography (cross, priest praying, Buddha meditating, yogi in the forest)
- Family (mother, father, child, puppies) helpful for processing familial stress
- Death (corpse, skeleton, grave, funeral) to ultimately help us release the fear of death.

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WEEK 7: Homework

Forest Yoga Nidra

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