



### **Yoga Nidra and choosing a Sankalpa**

Yoga Nidra is a state of conscious deep sleep. During the practice of Yoga Nidra, one appears to be sleep, but the consciousness is functioning at the deeper level of awareness. It is sleep with a trace of deep awareness. It is state of mind in between wakefulness and dream. Normally when we sleep, we lose track of our self and cannot utilize this capacity of mind. Yoga Nidra enables the person to be conscious in this state and nurture great will power.

In the yoga nidra state, the mind is exceptionally receptive. Languages and other subjects can be learned rapidly. Suggestions given at this time are successful in removing unwanted habits and tendencies.

Yoga Nidra and Hypnosis brings about a state of sensory withdrawal. But they are two very different sciences.

- Although they may start at the same point of relaxation and receptivity, Yoga Nidra proceeds in one direction and Hypnosis in another.
- When the mind is dissociated from the sensory knowledge, it passes through a hypnotic state but the state of mind achieved in yoga nidra is far beyond hypnosis.
- The aim of yoga nidra is to take consciousness as far as you can lead it. When you are transcending up to a certain point, you are actually passing through the range of hypnosis.
- During yoga nidra, the brain is completely awake and it receives a higher quality of stimuli and develops a different type of awareness.

You practice Yoga Nidra while lying prone and follow the spoken instructions of a teacher in person or via a recording. Sessions usually last between half an hour and forty-five minutes. The recording you have lasts just under half an hour. In the first phase of the session, you progressively relax your body by quickly running attention through different parts of the body. This is followed by breathing awareness and then the awakening of sensations of pairs of polar opposites, such as heaviness and lightness. The last phase is a guided visualization of some nature images, colours and senses.

From neurophysiology we know that each part of the body has a different control centre in the brain – curiously, small ones such as the fingers or armpits claim a large brain area than larger areas of the body such as the thighs. The movement of awareness through different parts of the body not only relaxes them, but also clears nerve pathways to the brain.

Becoming conscious of your breathing whilst in this very deep state of relaxation enables you to let go of old breathing patterns and habits and let the breath flow freely. The alternating of opposite sensations such as heat and cold, heaviness and lightness, helps to improve the body's ability to regain balance and brings the related involuntary functions under conscious control. Visualization is a method of consciously using a symbol or image as a catalyst to provoke a reaction in the unconscious mind. This phase helps to resolve suppressed conflicts, desires and memories.

It is common to 'fall asleep' during the practice of Yoga Nidra or awake with no memory of most of the practice. This is completely normal and fine. Research has shown that even though we appear to be asleep, our mind is still absorbing the information and benefits. In time, you will be able to stay 'awake' listening for longer periods of time.

Yoga Nidra can be practiced as often as you like, although it is advised to listen to the recording once a day.

At the start and close of your practice you will be repeating mentally a Sankalpa which can be translated as resolve or resolution. It is a short, positive statement in the present tense, a determination to become someone or do something in life. This mental statement is impressed on the subconscious mind when it is receptive and sensitive to autosuggestion. When you have settled on your Sankalpa it is advised to keep to it until it has come to pass or you feel the need to change it.

If you wanted a Sankalpa to help you sleep then here is an example of how to and not to phrase it:

'I sleep well every night' Good

'I am going to sleep well at night' Bad as not in the present tense

'I don't sleep badly anymore' Bad as the mind will only hear 'sleep badly'

Other examples to do with diving could be:

'I am relaxed on every dive'

'My body and mind are in perfect condition when I dive'

It is up to you to take some time to work out the Sankalpa that will help you the most in your life.

Further reading

Yoga Nidra – Swami Satyananda Saraswati – Yoga Publications Trust, Bihar, India

Yoga Nidra – Richard Miller – Sounds True, Boulder, Colorado

Further recordings

[www.yummymummyyoga.co.uk](http://www.yummymummyyoga.co.uk)