



Sweet Dreams are made of this...

Goodnight sweetheart! **Jayadevi** shows us how Yoga Sleep (Yoga Nidra) can kiss our soul by sinking us into a deep, sublime relaxation.

Yoga Nidra made a massive impact on me from the start... I vividly remember how the first session seemed to pass in no time. In fact I thought I'd been meditating for five minutes rather than the full hour that had passed. I felt fully relaxed and tranquil and my yoga friends also experienced this same sweet sensation. This wonderful experience led me to explore Yoga Nidra in a deeper way. Through my research and experiences I began to understand that Yoga Nidra is a method that enables complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation.

Yoga Nidra, derived from the tantric scriptures, means 'union' (Yoga) and 'sleep' (Nidra). Whilst it may appear that you are asleep, Yoga Nidra enables you to go into a deep relaxation with inner awareness. Swami Satyananda Saraswati describes Yoga Nidra as: 'Relaxation by one-pointedness of the mind... in which all emotions are brought to the surface and whatever type they are, throw them out. Complete relaxation is brought to every part of the body... through willpower. In this lies the secret of self healing. In Yoga Nidra we deal with the underlying causes (of tension)'.

Teaching Yoga Nidra is so rewarding... to see students after the session with stress, tiredness and tension erased from their faces. And the joy of it is that anyone can do it – those partaking don't need to be an 'expert' as the session is fully guided, making it a great tool for everyone. Students lie in a comfortable position on a mat or rug, preferably not on your bed as your subconscious mind associates that with sleep. The student has full control over their experience as the instructor acts purely as a

guide through the eight stages of the meditation which includes sankalpa (setting a positive intention affirmation), awareness of breath, sense perception and visualisation.

As well as benefiting us on a physical level, it is a key for unlocking our full potential. Yoga Nidra can also be used to absorb knowledge, experience and instruction. Drawing us into a state between sleep and being awake, allows the mind to slightly withdraw and enables information to enter the mind in a powerful way increasing the chance it will be retained.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati recalls when a little boy presented himself at his ashram for sannyasa [taken by individuals to dedicate their life to spiritual pursuits]. "I wanted to send him to school but he flatly refused. He was a very naughty boy, an absolute monkey. Finally I began to use Yoga Nidra on him. I began by chanting the 15th chapter of the Gita to him – about three minutes after he had fallen asleep. Then when he got up in the morning I would have him read through the chapter, which he would do, of course, mindlessly. After one week he was able to recite the whole chapter by heart."

By comparing regular sleep brain scans with Yoga Nidra scans, researchers have been able to see that during the Nidra meditation the participants were in a meditative state from start to finish, clearly showing the areas of the brain that were activated. The research revealed a high level of concentration throughout but with no effort involved. There was just the requirement to relax and listen to the instruction, almost like a child listening to a bedtime story.

Yoga Nidra can play an important therapeutic role with widespread benefits. Its practice can relieve asthma, migraines, stress-related conditions, anxiety, insomnia, heart disease, hypertension. It can also be used for prevention, enabling people to lead a healthy, active life, to recharge the body and mind. The practice works well with wide ranging groups such as children, the elderly, during pregnancy and for palliative care. Recently teaching at a festival, it was heartening to see children bringing their parents along to the Yoga Nidra sessions!

We can learn to trust the flow, access deeper parts of ourselves, discover our full potential. We honour the body and mind by giving it time to rest and heal. I would highly recommend trying a workshop or a recorded version of Yoga Nidra. Your body, mind and soul will fully appreciate the sweetness of this experience...

Jayadevi (Julie Bladon), based in Devon, teaches regular Yoga Nidra workshops & has released a guided meditation CD & downloads. www.juliebladon.com